

A TALE OF TWO FESTIVALS: EXAMINING SAMA/BAJAU CULTURE IN THE KAMAHARDIKAAN FESTIVAL OF BONGAO, TAWI-TAWI PROVINCE, PHILIPPINES AND THE REGATTA LEPA FESTIVAL OF SEMPORNA, SABAH, MALAYSIA

¹Hanafi Hussin & ²MCM Santamaria

¹Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,

¹Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences (IOES)

University of Malaya

²Asian Centre,

University of the Philippines, Diliman

(hanafih@um.edu.my, constanciomat@yahoo.com)

Abstract

A cursory review of tourist events in the southern Philippines and East Malaysia reveals the emergence of quite a number of festivals that veers away from the nature of traditional ones. These festivals are non-traditional for the two important reasons. First, they are instigated by authorities above the *kampung* or village level. Second, they are largely secular festivals that have less to do with the respective cosmologies of communities, but rather have more to do with a perceived need to create a sense of pride or solidarity beyond the family/clan or village level. Generation of income through tourism revenue may also be added to these two reasons. Two examples of this relatively new type of festival are the *Kamahardikaan* Festival of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi Province, southern Philippines and the *Regatta Lepa* Festival of Semporna, Sabah State, East Malaysia. This chapter compares the two festivals through Eric Hobsbawn's (1983) concept of "invention of tradition." The invention of new festivals is seen as a function of the need of asserting identity(ies) and/or creating new ones simultaneously. Part 1 discusses old and new festivals found among the Sama or Sinama-speaking peoples of maritime Southeast Asia. It also connects this to the concept of the "invention of tradition." Part 2 interrogates the comparability of the *Kamahardikaan* and *Regatta Lepa* festivals as subjects of academic inquiry through a discussion of the character of their sites and their respective histories. Part 3