

SCAPING THE BAJAU THROUGH RITUALS AND CELEBRATIONS IN MARITIME OF MALAYSIA AND THE PHILIPPINES

Hanafi Hussin¹ and Judeth John Baptist²

¹Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences (IOES)

Social Advancement & Happiness Research Cluster

University of Malaya

²Independent Scholar

(hanafih@um.edu.my, judeth.baptist@sabah.gov.my)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/brj.sp2019no1.2>

Abstract

Lexically, the word *scape* is referred to a specific analogical view of something visible to people on the ground. In cultural studies, the *scape* is interpreted beyond a physical and visible context. It is a blend of both tangible and intangible cultural dimensions such as music/soundscape and dancescape. Bajau-Sama communities on the East Coast of Sabah and Bajau Laut in the Philippines live harmoniously in an environment where the living of the spiritual world is significant and vital. Balancing the people in the physical and spiritual world through rituals as efficacies are to be performed according to the bonding through inheritance of heirloom for many generations. All scheduled ritual performances not only are fulfilling the agreement between the physical and the spiritual world, but it also produces sounds and movements which add to the scapes of these communities' world. Music and dance performances in these rituals are identic to the soundscape and dancescape with many types of specific ritual music and dances, i.e., *igal* soundscape and *igal* dancescape. The male and female music sounds, dance movements, and phrases in different kind of rituals are not only fulfilling the "manifest functions" but also signify the "latent functions". Based on the observations of a few rituals among these communities in Semporna, Sabah and Sitangkai Island, Philippines; this paper analyses the scapes of Bajau as both tangible and intangible. This paper will also discuss the significance of these scapes in sustaining Bajau-Sama identity of these areas particularly to Malaysia and the Philippines.

Keywords: Bajau-Sama, ritual, celebrations, igal music and dance, identity, Malaysia, the Philippines