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**A Poetic and Musical Approach to
Sung Narratives.
A Comparison Between Ifugao *hudhud* of Northern
Luzon and Sama Dilaut *kata-kata* of Tawi-Tawi
(Philippines)**

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Abstract :

The comparative method we would like to present here, through a Sama Dilaut *kata-kata* and an Ifugao *hudhud*, focuses on the *epos* as a score and attempts to analyze the multimodal relationships inherent to this "genre" in two epics of the Philippines archipelago, at the poetic, rhythmic, melodic, praxemic, semantic and narrative levels. Here we are in a strict oral tradition.

We shall describe and analyze the performance of the singers of tales, the musical, vocal or verbal accompaniment, the mental text and melodies mastered by the performer in his singing body, and the semi-formulaic style of the chorus, this thought in motion during the *proferatio*.

After the musical analysis, we shall attempt to clarify the relationship between music and narrative during the performance.

We aim at showing the interrelations between music and narrative in two very distinct cultures and societies of the Philippines and to bring out their respective features

IFUGAO

Ifugao, as a set of dialects, is spoken in the province by the same name and belongs to the Central Cordillera subgroup of the Philippines languages together with Central and Eastern Bontoc, Balangaw, Kalinga, Itneg, Isinai and Kankanay in the Austronesian Family (L.E.Newell,1993; H.C.Conklin, ethnographic and linguistic studies that began in 1960).

Singing *hudhud* among Ifugao was described, transcribed, translated and published by F.Lambrecht (1957) in collaboration with Lourdes Saquing Dulawan as she was then a young lady, it was also collected at the beginning of World War II by R.F. Barton (lost texts), and later on by Mrs. Saquing (1980) then by A.Daguio (1983).

Today we know it is attested in Southwestern areas of the province, namely in Kiangan, Asipulo, Lagawe. It is also found in the more Central area of Amganad.

In the Northern area, the word *hudhud* refers to "folk narratives told to entertain adults, childrens, commonly with animal characters personified as people" and epic characters like *Aliguyon* or *Bugan* are referred to in invocations and rituals, but *hudhud*, as long sung narratives, are not performed. (L.E. Newell,1993, and personal communication).

It is sung in Kiangan dialect, or *Tuwali*, "the real one", historically the prestigious dialect, and in Lagawe dialect that shares many cognates with Kalanguya (, the Northern most extension of the Southern Cordillera subgroup together with Ibaloi, I'wak, Kalanguya, Pangasinan and Ilonggot. (P. Afable, personal communication)

It is a collective act implemented by a group of more or less ten to twelve middle age and older women, during community rituals and events. It is usually transmitted from older mothers to their mature daughters.

Hudhud di mati, is sung at home during a wake for the dead, Nicole Revel together with Lourdes Dulawan, witnessed, taped and video-taped this ritual event in Kiangan, in 1993, for an old and wealthy man who had died of natural causes after a full life: it is usually performed at night time, on one or two successive nights. Then the singing group of women are seated in a row on a bench, close to one another with the leading chantress at one end, not far away from the opened coffin, a new practice for the corpse as the people today are christianized. They drink strong rice beer, *bayah*, and eat a piece of roasted pig or water buffalo, when offered to them and the visiting members of the village, by the mourning family hosting the wake. It is surrounded by a lot of other activities outside the house: people playing cards, men playing *gangsá* music, a

set of flat gongs. It is also performed during secondary burial ceremonies, *bogwa*, when the bones are cleaned.

Hudhud di page or *Hudhud di 'ani*, "hudhud of the rice" or "of the harvest" takes place in day time while harvesting local varieties of rice, in a collective work in the terraces, *payoq*. This free labor harvest was traditionally done by women who used to sing together following the lead voice as they were scattered in the rice field. This collective activity is interrupted by a meal taken *in situ* during a pause. This custom of free labor harvesting was part of wedding ceremony and tends to disappear (M. Stanyukowich, 1993). Then, it is much more difficult to tape. *Bugan nak Panga'iwani* was performed in the rice terraces; then it was retaped indoors, for the song itself by Lourdes Dulawan.

Hudhud di kolot, "hudhud of the haircut" it has been located in Hanglulu (Asipulo), M. Stanyukovich refers to it (1997). Last performed in the eighties, according to her male informant, it was part of a rite of passage of the elder son, around 7 to 9 years old, in a wealthy family.

Between 1993 and 1995, we attended Lourdes Saquing Dulawan and I, a *hudhud di mati*. Later, in harvesting season, a *hudhud di pagi* took place. These two events bring the community together: sharing of rice and bounty in the journey of life and marriage/ accompanying the deceased person in the journey of death. This dimension is somehow reflected in the collective way of singing the epic. However we are not focusing on the shamanistic nor ritualistic aspects of *hudhud* performance today (M. Stanyukovich, 1997), but rather, on the musical and poetical composition.

While one woman, who is also a shaman, leads, as a soloist *munhaw'e* narrating the plot, the others, usually around ten, sing as a chorus, *munhudhud*. Two women can successively function as *munhaw'e*. It is the case in the present recorded, transcribed and translated *hudhud* performance.

As one listens to the sung narrative, he is rocked by the alternating voice of the soloist and that of the chorus in every "stanza" or by a sequence of two lines uttered by the soloist and the chorus in alternation. It seems that there is no word in ifugao to identify this macro unit, nor the line.

The plot unfolds thanks to the leading chantress's voice, then in alternation the chorus sings toponyms and landscapes, times of the day and kinship. In other words, the chorus is conveying to the audience the names of the actors and their family ties, a topography and a social space in a time frame or if we shift to linguistic register, the chorus sings the deixis and the interrelations between twelve characters acting in three villages and three places in the forest thereby alternating social space and wilderness, or culture / nature. Meanwhile the soloist is telling us a story solving a major problem of alliance

and bringing it to a positive conclusion in accordance to Ifugao values and customary law.

In the present case, *Bugan nak Pangani'wan*, is a child rejected by her mother and abandoned by her father in the forest . She is taken care of by a foster father as a young girl; then she is found by Aliguyon and reintegrated in the society and the group of wealthy people, *Kadangyan*, to which she belongs by filiation, through the proper affinity links, namely, the "restricted exchange" between two men marrying each other's sister. In order to do so, they have to solve the alliance of their respective sister and to follow the various and progressive rituals that are required to keep one's status in Ifugao society.

The first manuscript was established and translated in English by Lourdes Saquing Dulawan, and edited in collaboration with Nicole Revel (1995 -1996.) The second manuscript of the same epic, was edited and layed out by Patricia Afable in collaboration with Lourdes Saquing Dulawan (1999 -2001). The musical and poetical form analyzed her are based on the second manuscript.

Musicological comments

Listening more carefully to the melodic system, one perceives a higher ranking pattern based on the distribution of three alternating melodic formulae: **Soloist formula 1/ Chorus formula 2 / Soloist formula 1/ Chorus formula 3**

In general, this pattern is characteristic of this *hudhud* at the melodic level. A noticeable transformation of the melodic formula of the leading chantress occurs in record 3. It goes with a shift of chantress. However the two formulae are close and interchangeable.

The scale is tetratonic stable and constant.

The chant is somehow measured, we mean to say it is submitted to a more or less regular measure of time. The words are more important to the soloist than the singing as she narrates the events of the plot, the periods may vary a lot as she favors her mental text rather than the rigor of a meter while the chorus is more stable. Hence as the story unfolds, tempo varies. It is particularly slow in records 3 & 4 and linked to a change of soloist.

The variable length of the utterances influences the melodic formulae: they expand by a mere repetition of groups of notes within the formulae, but never at the end.

In general, the chorus's voices sing the same unit more or less at the same time and this corresponds to heterophony.

However there is an overlapping , between the soloist and the chorus: as the first accompanies the entry of the chorus, the second often anticipates over

the end of the utterance sung by the soloist. This fact together with several consonances as the sung narrative unfolds, bring us close to polyphony. Often we have inventoriated consonances of fourths and sometimes of sixths. However, we are not in presence of a genuine polyphony, because of the lack of systematic occurrences of these consonances in their locations and very nature.

Music and Narrative:

- As the whole piece is sung, it seems that no specific relationship links a melodic formula and the narrative. Music underlines the story and seems independant from its content and mood. At line 390 and following beginning of record III, a change of atmosphere is noticeable, as two soloists have taken turn and shifted. The new one has a more hesitant delivery.

- The utterance unit is made of a line composed of the alternation [S/Ch] while the musical unit is made of two lines unit composed of the alternation [S/Ch/S/Ch].

On the basis of the first 100 lines, we notice several features:

- **alternance:** it can happen on two words or, more often, on the last syllable of a word. The best example - and the more stable one - is the name *Bugan*. Systematically cut into two: [*Bu* (S) / *gan* (Ch)] as in lines 27, 33, 17, 34, 44, 57, 68, 71, 76.

The same happens with *ammod* : [*am* (S) / *mod* (Ch)] as in lines 5, 8, 21, 43, except for 29.

On the contrary, a systematic vagueness on *pantal* is noticeable (lines 27, 33, 50, 52, 87) and *Iken* (Lines 72, 77, 78, 92, 95).

- **melodico textual cells:** they are numerous, an exhaustive inventory of them will be necessary. They are the privilege of the chorus.

If the following utterance is exclusively linked to the first melodic cell, as in lines 1, 3, 14, 56, 70, 74:

most of them are being sung in the two melodic versions.

The following example is a recurrent one:

If this utterance unit is frequently linked to the second melodic formula, as in lines 2, 4, 17, 57, 71:

it is often associated with the first melodic formula, as in lines 12, 14, 34, 44, 68, 76:

Now let us consider a totally different culture, evolving on the extreme Southwest of the Philippines Archipelago and the Northeast of Borneo .

SAMA DILAUT

Sama Dilaut, "Ocean Sama" are (or were) Sea Nomads, speaking one of the many dialects of Sama in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi archipelagos and coastal Borneo, (A.K.Pallesen 1985).

Silungan Baltapa was sung on October 22nd 1997, by Binsu Lakbaw. He was called and came on his outrigger boat from *Manunggul Siasi*, "Siasi Shaol" , and sang for the occasion of our visit.

The sung narrative was taped and video-taped by Nicole Revel in cooperation with Talib Sanggot in the house of his in laws, at *Tubig Dayang* , "Princess Water", South Ubian.

After the performance, the singer of tales left again in the clarity light of a peaceful night . These moral songs are performed at full moon to cure the sick by frightening or softening the evil spirit of the sea and to chase away his curse. Then the audience must listen to the narrative silently, solemnly. It is also sung or narrated for death in the graveyard or during weddings and other festivities to entertain the guests and visitors.

Kata-kata (<Skt.*katha*) are either narrated or sung by a *wali jin* , a medium-shaman who conducts many rituals. Around the XIV century, the Sama people were trading with Muslim Arabs, then South-Indian merchants-predicators and progressively they adopt Islam. With these contacts, came the influence of Persian Sufism, a refined Mysticism uniting music and poetry to the faith in Allah in a spirit of tolerance. Islam in Southeast Asia was blending harmoniously with many aspects of the pre-islamic cultural and religious worldviews, that of the *wali jins*, and the people. (A.K.Pallesen 1985, paper in press). In today's world, sung narratives reflect this moral and religious presence of Islam that tends to be more omnipresent and rigid .

Kata-kata belong to the Sama Lipid' and Sama Dilaut' repertoires and can be transmitted from mother to son in adulthood - usually after the first child - with a strict memory of the story in verses.

The singer of tales is lying on a mat, one leg folded, the other extended, with an open diaphragm, as I often observed in Palawan and in Borneo.

Silungan Baltapa was transcribed and translated in 1998 by Talib Sanggot. We worked together again to finalize the translation with Gérard Rixhon, (Unpublished Manuscript , 1999).

The epic sings the Journey to Heaven , to hell and to Paradise of a Sama hero, in the quest for his beloved wife, who passed away after giving birth to their son, *Datu' Mu'min*, "Believing Datu".

A sung prelude, *sambahakan*, opens the performance in three stanzas and is briefly repeated after each pause. On that evening, the singer of tales stopped fourtimes and picked up the story five times. We consider these as the macro units of this variant of the narrative we are presenting today, while the actors are fourteen, namely:

- the heroic couple, *Silungan Baltapa*, "Shadow-Place-to-Pray-and - Meditate"and his wife, *Musa Dalmata* , "Unic Pearl".
- *Ugbusan Sahaya*, "Source-of-Light"the mother of the hero and *Muslim Magkapala* , " Supreme -Muslim-Lady", his sister.
- The helpers: the male servant of the hero, the female servant of his mother; the *nuli* birds, omens and messengers; the tiny parrot carrier of the santol fruit.
- the opponents: *Datu' Misil Balan* , "Powerful-Iron-Datu", "the pirates and the two large birds, *Galura*.

In 210 stanzas, the narrator unfolds the plot. The manuscript of the transcription and translation is in Sinama (49p.) and in English.(49 p.)

Parts I and II, the singer evokes an initiatic journey (from stanza 10 to 100) made of five trips (on earth, to the sky and on earth) and five figths (on sea, on earth and in the sky).

Part III, sings the beauty of the pregnant wife, all her desires fulfilled by a loving husband, and the birth of a son, gifted with a mystical power, just as his father is.

As the newly delivered mother and wife passes away, laments and funerary ceremony are described (stanza 137, p.32) and the Journey to Heaven starts (stanzas 154 to 185, p.37).

Reference to *al-Mi'raj*, "*Liber Scalae*", "The Judgement of the Ladder"(N.Revel 1999), is clearly mentionned (stanza169, p.40). As a matter of facts in many Sama communities , the *Laylat al-Iasra wa al-Mi'raj*, is sung in arabic and commented in Sinama a whole night long (H. Arlo Nimmo, 2001, personal communication).

Part V, (stanzas 186 to 210) sings the apparition of God and the teaching of his redeeming cure. The mystical Voyage of the hero, the quest for his beloved wife, in Hell and Paradise, bring to its end the sung narrative.

The spiritual ascension of the hero is a blue print of the "Ascension", *al-Mi'raj* , of Mohammed on his white wingged horse, *al-Buraq*, during his "miraculous night Journey", *al-Isra*, to Jerusalem, then to Heaven and back to Mecca on the very same night.

Here, the hero makes the Voyage and crosses seven Heavens including Hell, in order to reach the Almighty God then he asks him the permission to bring back to earth his sinless wife.

It is followed by two independent journeys back to earth by the hero and by the heroin, to the "Island of Sole Love", the maternal island.

Then comes the episode of the cure by "sweeping away", invoking the name of God. It is followed by Mussa's awakening and they find married happiness once again.

The *kata-kata* comes to an end with an image of maternity whose luminosity is meant to inspire and guide us in our lives .

A fundamental value taught by this story is that of the family ties and delicate love sentiments to which they are linked:

mother-son; mother-daughter; sister-brother; husband-wife; mother-father-child relationships, and we will see later on how it is expressed in music .

Musicological comments

Music is supporting the narrative and the latest prevails. In other words, music is serving the narrative. The singer of tales relies upon a stock of four melodic cells, as we shall see later on. First, let us consider the scale.

Scale

The determination of the scale is a delicate problem because of the chronical instability of pitches, a progressive and regular ascent of degrees is manifest, mainly in the prelude, *sambahakan*, and after each pause, as the singer resumes his performance, repeating partly the prelude. This could be a distinctive feature of Sama Dilaut music (J. Maceda & A. Martenot , 1980).

Melodically, most of the *kata-kata* unfolds on an almost *recto-tono*.

However more lyrical parts are characterized by an hexatonic scale made of the association of two pygnons separated by an interval of a tone and a half with rising in half tones, usually at the end of verses on long notes, as the following figure shows. (Figure 1).

This can be transcribed in Western musical notation as:

Ex.1

However because of the progressive rising of degrees of the scale, before it stabilizes, one can often perceive a *Si* instead of the low *Do*, and this turns the scale into a pentatonic one.

Ex. 2

Likewise, and probably for the same reasons, one can notice here and there a wider hexatonic scale with a *Sib* in the low register and a *Si* in the high register.

Ex. 3

Organisation of time

The narrative alternates *recto-tono* measured parts in a syllabic delivery, with more melodic parts, unmeasured, having a melismatic quality.

However the measured parts are performed with some kind of a *rubato*, a freedom in execution, and difficult to transcribe in precise rhythmic values.

Performance

Binsu Lakbaw, the singer of tale, has a wider vocal virtuosity in the high register and it is precisely in the melismatic parts that a more dramatic intensity is manifested. His ambitus is of one ninth.

Ex 4.

One distinctive feature of his performance consists of these metallic hushing sounds (u-i-u-i-u-i) on notes with a length.

Are they a distinctive feature of the *kata-kata* or of his personal vocal technique? As of today, we cannot answer this question.

Melodic cells

The whole of the epic rests on a very limited melodic stock, made of four cells with distinctive melodic contours and a meter that is either free or measured.

The two cells on a free meter, have a similar contour as they are made of a rising, then falling curve. Besides their respective rhythm, they are made distinct by the difference in amplitude of their ambitus as the figure shows. These two cells are symbolized by two distinct blues, (See Diagrams and transcriptions).

As for the other two cells, they enter into contrast with the former ones by their syllabic and measured features and at the melodic level by the long *recto-tono* on the finalis note *Si*.

Recto-tono varies in length, according to the verses to be uttered.

The two cells are contrasted by the manner of initiating the *recto-tono*: while one resumes the *recto-tono* with a brief rising curve, the other resumes it by a brief falling curve, as the next figure shows. These two cells are symbolized by two distinct reds, (See Diagrams and transcriptions).

Narrative and Music

Most of the time, Cell 3 of *recto-tono* type, is used to utter the story. From time to time, it varies by the adjunction of Cell 4, also a *recto-tono* of a melismatic type. Both are syllabic, measured and interchangeable.

Cell 1 is a melodic conclusive cell, some kind of a breathing.

Sometimes it is anticipated by Cell 2 and the association of both, generates a special resting effect, some kind of a deep breathing of a more emphatic nature. It opens and closes the whole sung narrative. It is also chosen as the singer of tales resumes the story after a pause.

We have observed that the formula [Cell 2-Cell 1] or the mega formula [Cell 1-Cell 2-Cell 1], this amplitude in the melodic movement - in contrast to the general *recto-tono* of the narrative - is analogous in its contour to the feeling the singer wants to suggest to the listeners, namely that of an exaltation of Love: love of the hero for the Prophet, love for his mother, love for his late wife and love for his newly born son.

This more solemn lamenting tone, is related to the feeling of conjugal love, of filial love on this earth, indissociable in the Sufi context from the loving quest for God and the parallel quest for a late wife in Paradise.

These end breaths correspond to an emphasis, and function as a classical process in liturgy namely, "litany". and we have 29 of them.

An archetypical sequence of melodic cells would be in stanza 007:

Maglaparan suara	Silungan Baltapa
si Silungan Baltapa	stated:
Inaq ia bang kinuddam	Oh mother! The only person
Kinulambuqan	sheilded by a mosquito net
ari bang bujang lanuq	should be a pretty lady
o magpalanuq-palanuq	her beauty thus enhanced
amihaq ----su---ga---si---buq---iq	in search for a partner.
ia alla i---naq----	My dear mother
uy uy uy uy uy -----iq	
aun----duq----- Nabi-----	how sad my Prophet!
uy uy uy uy uy	

Illustration

and in stanza 133:

E-----q	The imams said:
Amung na kaqimaman	Ask the head of the mourning ritual
tilaun konoq tagdapu Hinang	where to inter her
maingga pananoman	Silungan Baltapa
ia lapal bahasa	answered:
si Silungan Baltapa	You bury my dear
tanomon na si rayang	

maboaq panandawan	facing the window
hinang ko na lawanan	so I can take care of her
pinangongkaq ---ngong---kaqanand	also sing for her.
uy uy uy uy -----u-u-u-u-u-----i	
ia alla i-----naq-----	Dear mother
uy uy uy uy uy -----u-u-u-u-u-i	
au-----nduq da-----yang----	How sad dear!
uy_uy uy uy uy -----u-u-u-u-u-i	

Illustration

This blending between verses and melodic cells makes up a moving and elaborated composition as singing *kata-kata*, and particularly this one, with an explicit reference to *al-Mi'raj* and an implicit reference to Sufism - is considered a religious act by the Sama. The performance of such narratives goes beyond entertainment. It is gifted with a deep psychological and mystical power, with healing powers on the psyche of a mourning person, of a suffering soul and body.

"It has a religious aura", as Talib Sangogot was telling me. It conveys and reveals the Love for God and the love for beloved close relatives, as the nuclear family unit is the most fundamental, moral, psychological and sociological clustered unit among the Sama Dilaut in this area.

It is hoped that the two examples we have chosen to analyze for this conference, will contribute to the discussion concerning the complex problematic of folk songs and more particularly folk epics, not only in the Islands of Southeast Asia but also in Continental Southeast Asia, as they are found among "animist" cultures and Islamized cultures.

As a matter of fact, these two types of epics are deeply contrasted in terms of their respective poetical and a musical components, vocal aesthetics and memorization devices, in terms of ideological and religious content, and in terms of social functions.

Beyond their respective specificities, linked to the various historico-cultural, philosophical and religious contexts, they manifest the universality of human experience, the ordeals and hardships of Life and Death, all the emotions and sentiments that flow with them.

They reveal the many facets and manifestations of complex cognitive devices: rigorous processes at work in creativity, a considerable stock of knowledge in long term memory, an amazing retrieval capacities at the very moment of the performance. Probably at that level we are invited to have an insight into constants of human thought, the crosscultural selection of the same numbers, figures and structures. At the level of Thought, the universality of Mankind is displayed.

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