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Malay Music Culture of Urang Pulo: Identity and Dilemma

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"Berlayar Hati Tak Senang Air Mata Sepanjang Laut"

[Sailing an Unhappy Heart in Tears Along the Sea]

From an excerpt of the *sikambang* song poem in the artistic traditions of the coastal and island communities of the West Coast of Sumatra, Indonesia

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

As a scientific publisher, BRIN Publishing holds on high responsibility to provide only the finest quality of publications. It is the epitome of our enduring efforts to participate in educating the life of the nation, as stated in The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

This book aims to investigates the syncretic performing arts of the Urang Pulo in Indonesia's Banyak Archipelago. Through longitudinal analysis of the *sikambang* tradition—including sacred *adok* and hybrid *langser* genres—it examines the construction of maritime identity and addresses the critical conservation dilemmas threatening this unique Sumatran cultural heritage.

We surely hope this book could give new insights and invaluable information for ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, historians, and linguists studying Southeast Asian maritime cultures, offering unique data on the undocumented musical and linguistic heritage of the Urang Pulo. It is equally valuable for cultural heritage professionals and policy makers seeking strategies for preserving endangered intangible arts and revitalizing local traditions in the face of modernization. As a final note, we would like to deliver our heartfelt gratitude to everyone taking part in the publishing process of this book.

FOREWORD

Urang Pulo's story, music, and struggle for cultural survival powerfully reflects of Indonesia's broader endeavour to *memajukan kebudayaan*—to advance culture. As we continue to chart a path towards a future that is both modern and grounded in tradition, works like these remind us that our collective identity is shaped not just by the sweeping forces of history but by the intimate, everyday lives of communities like those in the Banyak Islands.

Ari Palawi's meticulous study of the Malay music-culture of the Urang Pulo offers more than a glimpse into a specific corner of Indonesia. It is an invitation to re-examine the deep-rooted cultural practices that connect us all, no matter how remote or small a community might seem. His work brings to the surface the complex layers of sound, memory, and meaning embedded in the traditions of the Urang Pulo, and in doing so, it reflects the very essence of what it means to *memajukan kebudayaan*: to preserve, protect, and promote our diverse cultural heritage in a way that empowers future generations.

At the heart of this book are the musical traditions that have served as artistic expression and survival mechanisms for the Urang Pulo. Their *sikambang*, *adok*, and *dendang buai* are not just performances; they are manifestations of resilience, identity, and a historical consciousness that refuses to be erased by time. These musical forms have weathered centuries of outside influence, from colonial interventions to modern forces of globalisation, as vital components of Indonesia's cultural tapestry.

In the context of Indonesia's national goals to advance culture, this book underscores the importance of recognising and nurturing the diversity of our nation's intangible cultural heritage. The Urang Pulo's music is a part of that heritage—one that has been largely overlooked, but is now being given the scholarly attention it deserves. *Memajukan kebudayaan* is not merely about archiving or documenting the past. It is about breathing new life into our cultural assets, ensuring they are relevant and accessible in the present while being sustainable for the future.

This work is a critical contribution to the ongoing efforts to support cultural revitalisation across the archipelago. By chronicling the Urang Pulo's musical traditions, Ari Palawi has opened a door to broader discussions about how we, as a nation, can build cultural infrastructure supporting local traditions' vibrancy. His research highlights the urgency of these efforts, particularly as many of Indonesia's indigenous and minority cultures face the pressures of modernization and cultural homogenization.

Repatriating these traditional art forms into the nation's consciousness aligns with Indonesia's broader agenda to empower local cultures. It is a reminder that *memajukan kebudayaan* requires more than policy—it requires a genuine commitment to listening to and uplifting the voices of communities whose cultural expressions form the bedrock of our identity. As we advance economically and technologically, we must ensure we do not lose sight of the rich cultural heritage that defines us.

In the following pages, you will find not only a detailed account of the Urang Pulo's music and dance traditions but also a reflection on their broader cultural significance. These traditions are not static relics but dynamic, evolving expressions of a community's interaction with its environment, history, and spiritual life. They are living arts, whose preservation is vital not just for Urang Pulo, but for all of us as Indonesians.

The book also points to the challenges that lie ahead. Revitalising and promoting these traditions is no easy task, particularly in a world where younger generations are increasingly disconnected from their cultural roots. This is where the role of national policy becomes crucial. We must create pathways for these traditions to thrive, both within their local contexts and on the broader national stage. The work being done in Banyak Archipelago (Kepulauan Banyak) to preserve the Urang Pulo's traditions can serve as a model for similar efforts across the country.

As we reflect on Indonesia's ongoing cultural renaissance, this book is both a record and a roadmap. It documents the musical and cultural legacy of the Urang Pulo, while also pointing towards the future, where we hope to see these traditions not only survive but flourish. It is a vital reminder that advancing culture is not about looking backwards with nostalgia—it is about ensuring that our past's richness continues to shape our national identity's future.

Let this work inspire all of us who are committed to the task of *memajukan kebudayaan*. It reminds us that our strength as a nation lies in our diversity, the multiplicity of voices, and traditions that create the beautiful mosaic of Indonesia.

Hilmar Farid, Ph.D.

Former Director General of Culture
Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology

PREFACE

The province of Aceh has a rich heritage of traditional dances, songs, instrumental music, martial arts, story-telling arts, theatre, myths, and legends. It is well-known for its *seudati* dances, but less well-known for the beautiful *sikambang* dances and songs of Aceh's west coast, including those of its Banyak Archipelago off the coast of Singkil in southwest Aceh.

This book introduces the history and present state of the traditional performing arts of the Acehnese Malays who live in the Banyak Archipelago, especially in the Haloban and Asantola villages on Tuangku Island. It contains the first ever descriptions and analyses of the islands' former royal, religious, and secular dances and music, based on Ari Palawi's extensive fieldwork and recordings in the islands and along the west coast of Sumatra.

The book's contents are wide-ranging. Not only does it introduce the islands, the islanders and their musical arts to the reader, but it also tells their musical history. Part of it focuses on the women's beautiful

lullabies (*dendang buai*) and lament songs with poetic or story-telling lyrics, as well as their secret *dendang sikambang* tradition, which Ari Palawi exposes and captures on film.

Most significantly, it also focuses on the core *Sikambang* legend and song tradition found in the islands and along Sumatra's west coast. In addition, it describes the sacred ritual *adok* dance of the former palace on Haloban island, the Malay-European hybrid *langser* and *balanse madam* dances from the colonial era, the islands' *talibun* story telling, and their devotional Muslim *dikie* artform.

Finally, the book looks into the future. It discusses the identity and conservational dilemma of the fascinating culture of the Banyak Archipelago, and its relation to the Greater-Malay West-Coastal and Offshore Islands Area of Sumatra. Undoubtedly, it deserves to be revitalised and promoted widely in Sumatra and beyond, and this book suggests ways to do this.

I hope that readers of this book will be inspired to find ways to enjoy performances of the Banyak Archipelago and other West Coast Sumatra dances and music. Some of these performances are captured in Ari Palawi's films capture some of these performances, accompanying this book.

Melbourne, Australia

Margaret Kartomi

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This published book would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Professor Margaret Kartomi, Ph.D., AM. FAHA, the main supervisor of my doctoral candidacy. Margaret has always been ready to go far beyond the call of duty in providing academic and other forms of support. She consistently challenged and encouraged me to achieve a higher standard of scholarship.

I sincerely thank Dr. Aline Scott Maxwell for her kindness and advice. Likewise, I am grateful for the guidance from Dr. Kenji Fujimura, Professor John Griffiths, Dr. Karen Kartomi Thomas, Dr. Joel Crotty, Dr. Adrian McNeil, Dr. Jonathan McIntosh, Dr. Paul Watt, Dr. Julian Millie, and the staffs of the Sir Zelman Cowen Music Department, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

Special thanks to the late *Bapak* (*Bp)* Hidris Kartomi and Margaret for permission to use their Sumatra field recordings deposited in the Margaret Kartomi Gallery of Musical Instruments and Artefacts.

Many men and women helped me learn about the music-culture in Banyak Archipelago, especially in my main area of focus: Haloban and Asantola villages on Tuangku Island. Thanks to the former Regent of Aceh Singkil, the late *Bp* Makmur Syahputra; *Bp* Das who worked at the Tourism, Sport and Culture Department in the Aceh Singkil; *Bp* Hasbi, the former Head of the District of Pulau Banyak Barat (West Banyak Island); the late *Bp* Gunawan Sakti Alam who was a descendant of the Tuangku Kingdom; *Bp* Sofyan the Mukim of Pulau Banyak Barat District; *Bp* Tarmizi the Mukim of Pulau Balai, *Bp* Lukman, *Bp* Rudi Faisal, *Bp* Muhammad Studi, *Bp* Rahmadin, and Lukmanul Hakim. I am grateful to the late *Bp* Sutan Haji Muhammad Taufik Thaib, a descendant of the Pagaruyung Kingdom, and the late *Bp* Kemal Syarif, a descendant of the Natal Kingdom.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my main interlocutor, Anhar Sitanggang in Haloban, whose generosity with his time and patience significantly aided my understanding of the intricate aspects of the folklife, *adat,* and culture of the Urang Pulo. I am also deeply indebted to *Pak* Keuchik (Head of Village), Miswadi, Afriasif, *Bapak* Masrizal, *Bu* Keuchik Safriani, *Bapak* Syarif, *Bu* Keuchik Hajjah Walidah, *Pak* Keuchik Aznal, *Bapak* Suarman, *Bapak* Lukman, *Bapak* Aramis, *Bapak* Sakban Hutabarat, as well as the family members of Aleng Moon Guesthouse, *Ibu* Surni and *Bapak* Ruknang, for their hospitality and the extensive knowledge they graciously shared with me.

I wish to acknowledge the other numerous elders, musicians, dancers, and storytellers who informed me so readily about their lives and arts in Pulau Tuangku: the late *Ibu* Rosmiani, the late *Bapak* Misri Caniago, *Bapak* Maslia Hutabarat, and the late *Bapak* Ridwan Sitanggang in Haloban and Asantola, the late *Bapak* Adnan Tanjung, *Ibu* Ramsiah, *Bapak* Abdul Rani 'Kahela', *Ibu* Nur Asima, and Ros Karniani in Suka Makmur; *Bapak* Ama Indah in Ujung Sialit, including The late *Bapak* Armansyah, the late *Bapak* Edwar, *Bapak* Tarmizi and *Ibu* Eriani in Teluk Nibung; *Bapak* Lukman in Pulau Balai, as well as the late *Bapak* Ayub Tanjung and *Bapak* Darmin in Sibolga,

Bapak Khairil in Jago Jago, *Bapak* Radjudin in Pasir Tarandam, the late *Bapak* Irhasan in Sifahando and *Bapak* Syamsuar Sutan Marajo in Saniang Baka.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to *Bapak* Hilmar Farid for his generosity in writing the foreword of this book, as well as to the leaders and staff of the National Research and Innovation Agency and the Directorate of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Their invaluable support has been instrumental in securing widespread recognition for my field research conducted from 2010 to 2023 through both publications and documentary films. I am particularly thankful to *Bapak* Andi Irawan for his unwavering assistance with the mixing and editing processes. Additionally, I sincerely appreciate my colleagues at Yayasan Geunta Seni Jauhari for their essential support in advancing future cultural initiatives.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest gratitude for the unwavering support and love of my wife, Nelly, and our children, Naira Tanzīla Naaz and Akhtar Abdal Khurri, from the beginning of my doctoral studies to the completion of my dissertation and its transformation into films and a book. I also extend heartfelt thanks to my late parents, and I hold in the highest esteem my twelve siblings, parents-in-law, and extended family for their steadfast support throughout this journey.

Banda Aceh, Indonesia
Ari Palawi

ORTHOGRAPHY

One of the challenges in a book that aims to present research on Indonesia is the many spellings of words in regional and Indian/Sanskrit-derived languages and the Indonesianised versions of transliterated Sanskrit and Arabic words, which are often inconsistent. I have unified spellings of most Arabic core terms, such as "Qur'an", throughout the book. However, alternate spellings of some terms, such as *pendendang* in *bahasa* Haloban and *padendang* on Sumatra's west coast for "solo vocalist", appear to represent local practice. Most non-English terms are given in a speech variety of Malay, Acehnese or Latinised Arabic, with an appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. In the Indonesian language, spellings conform to the official system established in 1972. Words and names in use before the new spelling was introduced are given in the old spelling; for example, dj and tj (old spelling) are rendered j and c respectively (new spelling).

MULTIMEDIA CONTENT

This book is accompanied by two documentary films that enhance and expand upon the text:

1) *Jejak Pewaris Sikambang Sumatera* (The Legacy of Sikambang Heirs in Sumatra) https://youtu.be/eZj91xO5h0I
2) *Dendang Buai dalam Tradisi Berkesenian Masyarakat Pesisir dan Kepulauan Pantai Barat Sumatera* (Dendang Buai in the Traditions of Coastal and Island Communities on the West Coast of Sumatra, Indonesia) https://youtu.be/jCZxcoqtiyc

Both films are with English Narrations and Subtitles

Descriptions:

1) *Jejak Pewaris Sikambang Sumatera*: this film explores the traditional Sikambang art form, characterised by its poetic drums and rhymes used in important life ceremonies. It highlights the challenges in preserving this cultural practice as it fades from its traditional form.
2) *Dendang Buai dalam Tradisi Berkesenian Masyarakat Pesisir dan Kepulauan Pantai Barat Sumatera*: this documentary examines the Dendang Buai lullaby tradition, focusing on its role and sustainability in the daily lives of coastal and island communities on Sumatra's west coast.

CHAPTER I

WEAVING IDENTITY IN THE BANYAK ARCHIPELAGO

A. First Encounters and Cultural Landscapes

The books' original contributions to the discipline of ethnomusicology primarily lie in the areas of music-cultural identity, identity and place, vocal quality, culture contact, musical symbols of pre-colonial Malay kingdoms, gender, emotional expression in performance, and music revitalisation theory in recent modernising times. To begin solving the conservation dilemma, the whole west-coastal population of Sumatra needs to be mobilised to advocate for the region's economic development, partly through revitalising their rich *sikambang* heritage. This effort is crucial not only to preserve the arts forms from extinction and introduce them to the world, but also to maintain the local people's sense of identity and self-confidence.

This project began as an ethnomusicological field trip in June 2010 as I accompanied Professor Margaret Kartomi on her journey to the Kepulauan Banyak (Banyak Archipelago) via the capital city

of Singkil in Aceh Province on the mainland of Sumatra.[1] Eventually, I obtained an Indonesian scholarship to conduct my field trips in the islands and write a dissertation on their traditional musical arts and performances—songs, dances, instrumental music, and bardic story-telling, which I viewed in their ceremonial contexts, especially at weddings, circumcisions, and on ordinary occasions in their daily life.

My first impressions from the air in 2010 before landing at Singkil's Syech Hamzah Fanshuri Airport, which only services small nine-seater aircrafts, was that the province had succeeded in creating only a modest level of infrastructure on the mainland and I wondered whether the same would apply in the Kepulauan Banyak. On the 50-minute drive to downtown Singkil, I noted that the villages were underprivileged compared to villages near my hometown, Banda Aceh and other cities and regencies of Aceh Province. The people's houses were separated by grassy meadows and trees with considerable wild undergrowth. On entering the city, I saw more varied quality houses, schools, shops and government offices. However, I felt anxious about the apparent living standards of the majority and the comparative lack of development there.

In Singkil, Margaret and I first met with the *Bupati* (Regent) of the regency, the late Mr Makmur Syahputra. He briefly described the situation in Singkil to us, stressing that it was a newly born regency that lagged behind other regencies in economic growth, human resources, and government networking. He said his regency had become less productive because of the common belief of outsiders that the people in Singkil still practice black magic and are backwards.[2] I had also heard this rumour at times in Banda Aceh. He said he wanted to develop tourism, pointing to the panoramic view of Singkil's

[1] Margaret Kartomi, AM FAHA Dr Phil., Professor Ethnomusicology at Monash University, has pioneered research into Sumatra's music-culture, including Aceh's, since the 1970s. Her field trip was part of the final preparations for her monumental book titled Musical Journeys in Sumatra, published in 2012.

[2] This short meeting with the Aceh Singkil's Regent, *Bp.* Makmur Syahputra was held on June 16 2010, at the regent's office building.

seaside and the offshore islands of Kepulauan Banyak in the Indian Ocean.

After we met the *Bupati*, we embarked on our journey to Pulau Balai, one of the islands in Kepulauan Banyak. It took almost two hours by speedboat. The regular public ferry runs once a week to the island, taking about four hours, while local fishermen's boats take about three and a half hours and are scheduled almost every day to Pulau Balai. In Pulau Balai, there are three *desa* or *gampong/kampung* (village), including Pulau Balai Village, as part of Pulau Banyak District, and two other villages, Teluk Nibung Village and Pulau Baguk Village. It should be noted that Pulau Balai village and Pulau Baguk village are on the same island, Pulau Balai. In contrast, Teluk Nibung village is located on Pulau Ujung Batu, about twenty minutes crossing the sea by a *robin*, a small traditional boat.

Our arrival had been planned to coincide with the first-ever Green Turtle Festival at Pulau Balai village. It was organized by the Yayasan Pulau Banyak (Banyak Island Foundation), a local non-governmental organisation focusing on the sea turtle monitoring program as part of the campaign for the long-term conservation of the green turtle. This endangered species is mainly found in Pulau Bangkaru, one of the 99 registered islands in Kepulauan Banyak.[3] The Festival organisers asked the Kepulauan Banyak people, the Urang Pulo, to enter four competitions belonging to the so-called "local traditions" of arts and sports. Local sports include fishing, kite-flying, cooking, weaving, and *takraw*—a local game using a basket as a ball kicked over a net. There was also paddling traditional canoes, kayaking, swimming, and free diving. The arts included photography, poetry writing, storytelling and music-dance.[4]

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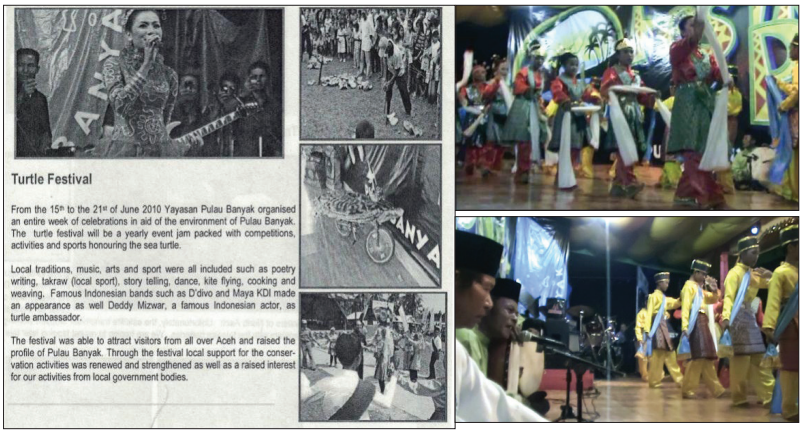
[3] This information was supplied in my interview on June 16, 2010, with Muhammad Studi, a Singkil-born storyteller and member of the organizing committee for the Festival.

[4] The Festival program was advertised in Suara Pulau, the newsletter of the Banyak Archipelago Foundation (Yayasan Pulau Banyak). The publication was available online, but the link is no longer active. Retrieved December 21, 2012.

My first opportunity to record a performance in Kepulauan Banyak was on the Festival stage from 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on June 16, 2010. It exemplified a trend in Indonesia to involve large numbers of performers in "colossal" events. I recorded a significant traditional dance called *adok* performed by more than thirty male and female students from Pulau Balai village's Junior High School (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama* [SMP]), all dressed in elaborate local costumes. Two *gandang* (frame drum) players doubled as *pendendang* (solo vocalists) singers of appropriate verses in local *pantun (*quatrains comprising pairs of rhyming couplets) (see Figure 1.1).



Note: Left: Capture from *Suara Pulau* Newsleter page promoting the Green Trutle Festival in Pulau Balai village, Pulau Banyak District of Kepulauan Banyak. Top Right: The *adok* performance at the festival. Bottom right: The *pendendang* and the *gandang* player are at the back, while the student dancers are at the front of the stage. Recorded on June 16, 2010.

Figure 1.1 Green Turtle Festival Highlights

After this exceptional performance of the *adok* dance, we sailed the next morning in a small canoe to Teluk Nibung, a village in Pulau Ujung Batu (Ujung Batu Island), about half an hour away to the north of Pulau Balai village. The local artists and administrators

were expecting us, having been informed of our coming to record and video their performances. We were taken to see a performance by six couples of adolescent boys and girls enrolled in the final year at Teluk Nibung Primary School. They wore beautiful Malay costumes—with the boys wearing a long-sleeve white shirt, a long yellow triangle head, and a wrap-around gold-threaded sarong (*kain songket*), and the girls wearing a *teluk belanga* (satin trouser suit) with sets of antique jewellery on their hair buns, and a shiny long scarf (*selendang)* across one shoulder. The boys and girls performed the *Pulau Pinang* dance to a backdrop of trees in the schoolyard of the Teluk Nibung Primary School, accompanied by an elderly pair of musicians, they were a *biola* (violin) player who improvised an ornamented melodic line on a *biola*, which is a violin but not played in the European classical violin technique, and a *gandang* (medium-sized frame drum) player. The dance is also known as the *payung* (umbrella) dance because each male dancer shields his female partner with an umbrella, which is a courting symbol (see Figure 1.2). I also recorded a pair of male master dancer-teachers performing the same couples dance and *Bapak* Armansyah, and *Bapak* Tarmizi performing an excerpt of bardic storytelling called *talibun*.

In a nearby family home, a mother named *Ibu* Eriani sang lullabies to her baby in a sling suspended from the ceiling. She called the lullabies *buai*, which means "sway". As she sang, she swayed (*mengayun)* the baby in the sling (*ayunan)* and sang the songs *(babuai)* until the baby was asleep. I recorded two lullabies there (see Figure 1.3).

Note: Left: A *pendendang,* a *gandang* player, and a second *gandang* player accompanied the student dancers. Right: The student of Teluk Nibung Primary School performing the *payung* dance at Teluk Nibung village in Pulau Ujung Batu, Pulau Banyak District. Recorded on June 17, 2010.

Figure 1.2 Performing the *Payung* Dance

Note: *Ibu* Eriani sings a lullaby (*buai*) while swinging her child in the *ayunan*. It was recorded on June 17, 2010.

Figure 1.3 Mother's Lullaby *(Buai)*

Thus, my first impressions of the Urang Pulo were formulated in this, my first field trip. In search of other Urang Pulo performance forms and performers, we then embarked on a two-hour sea journey to Haloban and Asantola villages in the Pulau Banyak Barat district on the largest island in the archipelago, named Pulau Tuangku ("My Lord Island").

On reaching the village of Haloban in the Pulau Banyak Barat district, the *camat* (district head), Mr Hasbi, and his cultural advisers

told us that artists from Haloban and Asantola village on the island would join the *pendendang*, the singer-dancer, living in Haloban that night for song-dance performances from about 9:00 p.m. until 1:00 a.m., and that we could photograph, video, and audio-record them. The event was timed to allow agricultural workers and fisher-folk to return home from the field or the sea as the case may be, and to wash, pray, eat, and momentarily rest before the performance.

The event was remarkable in that members of the whole village, ranging from small children to the elderly, assembled and enjoyed the performances. Then, around twenty female members of a re-established *nasyid*[5] group. The *nasyid group of* Pulau Tuangku, appeared and told us they could present three songs in the *nasyid* genre, i.e.. popular songs with mainly Muslim religious texts and their own group-frame drum accompaniment. However, on this occasion, they chose to present *qasidah* songs, another genre of solo and choral songs with devotional Muslim and secular texts, some in the Indonesian language and others in the local Haloban speech variety.

After the village women's performance, around forty men from three nearby villages performed, with the audience crowding together in front of one of the villagers' family homes. They performed in front of a decorative cloth backdrop at weddings and circumcisions. They performed short versions of seven traditional song-dances, accompanied by a *pendendang*, a *biola* player, and dozens of *gandang* players (see Figure 1.4).

[5] *Nasyid* is an Arabic word for group chanting, either with or without instrumental accompaniment.

Note: Villagers of Asantola an Haloban, performing the sikambang repertoire. Recorded on June 17, 2010

Figure 1.4 Villagers Performing *Sikambang*

Finally, the Head Secretary of the Pulau Banyak Barat District, *Bapak* Rudi Faisal, made a speech. As he had never seen such a performance as this, he urged the villagers to keep the traditional arts alive according to the ancestors' wishes, and to make the young people of the area and outsiders aware of Haloban's magnificent artistic traditions.

Three years later, in 2013, as a Ph.D. student at Monash University, I continued my ethnomusicological fieldwork on the second of my four field trips. Despite changes in the political leadership in the Kepulauan Banyak at all three levels—the district, sub-district and village—I obtained much new data on the communities and their artistic activities, especially on the traditional village cultures of Haloban and Asantola villages on Pulau Tuangku. Most of my recordings were of individual and group interviews and performances. My informants also offered me more stories about the 'origin' of the Urang Pulo (Islanders) and the legend behind their musical arts. They also explained some technical terms relevant to the performances. Fortunately, I was able to make a video of another version of the *buai* lullaby sung by a female elder in Haloban village on Pulau Tuangku, which differed substantially from the one I had recorded in Teluk Nibung village on Pulau Ujung Batu in 2010. I also obtained a set of

DVDs of a five-day circumcision ceremony held in a village in 2007 in Haloban, which I have analysed below.

On my third field trip to Kepulauan Banyak for two months in 2014, I was not only recorded throughout Kepulauan Banyak but also along the west coast of Sumatra. I aimed to obtain information on the history of mainland Sumatra-Islander relationships. I discovered, the historical interactions between the two areas have partly been due to the Islanders' intermarriages over the centuries with brides from families in Nias and Simeulue islands and the mainland towns of Singkil, Barus and Sibolga, and partly due to the Islanders' migrations to and from the west coast of Sumatra and Nias and Simeulue islands.

It was also necessary to seek out data on the history of the Islanders' relationships with communities on the neighbouring islands of Nias and Simeulue. Fortunately, my main interlocutor in Haloban, Bp Anhar Sitanggang, was able to accompany me on this surprising journey. We first stayed for a couple of days in Singkil where we met several *pendendang* and members of the royal family of the former Singkil Kingdom, as well as a descendant of the Tuangku Kingdom of Haloban, and some government officials. Then we met several elders and *pendendang* in the west-coast towns of Barus, Pasir Tarandam, Sibolga and also visited Nias. After returning from Nias to Sibolga, we continued our journey to Padang Panjang and met a descendant of the former royal Pagaruyung kingdom in Bukittinggi. After we visited Pariaman, we continued to Tiku on the northwest coast of West Sumatra. On our way back to Singkil, we visited Natal and Jago Jago, and then Sibolga, after which we met the elders and *pendendang* in Botot and Barus and finally reached Singkil.

This trip enabled me to document and learn about the background and significance of Kepulauan Banyak's musical genres, song texts and styles. I also obtained data to help me reconstruct the history of the Tuangku Kingdom on Tuangku Island, given that its existence is unknown to professional historians. I consulted local oral historians and other cultural leaders in the Islands; in west-coastal Sumatran towns; in Nias, North Sumatra; and in Pagaruyung, West Sumatra.

I could record several versions of these oral histories in the field and audio-record some *pendendang* in several villages in west-coastal Sumatra and Nias Island.

In summary, my third field trip in 2014 helped me give information about:

1) the relationship between the music-cultures in Kepulauan Banyak and to the west coast of Sumatra.
2) the history and unique speech variety of the formal Haloban palace on the island of Pulau Tuangku, where the descendants of Pagaruyung royalty ruled, and with influences from nearby Nias and Simeulue Islands, and
3) the origin, style and spread of the Dutch-influenced song-dance called *langser* in Haloban with *biola* and *gandang* (frame drum) accompaniment.

In March, 2016, I returned to Haloban with my students at Syiah Kuala University in order to learn to perform the *adok* dance. They eventually performed the *adok* at the International Conference and Cultural Event (ICCE) of Aceh at Monash University on 28 September, 2016.

On this my fourth field trip in Kepulauan Banyak, I saw that the improvements in the artistic situation in the Islands that I had hoped for during my trips in 2010, 2013, and 2014 had not occurred, especially in Haloban, indeed that the situation had worsened. Fewer elderly storytellers and artists were operating in the villages and towns I revisited, partly due their failing health or old age. Moreover, fewer young villagers were willing to take up offers to learn to perform the arts, probably due to a lack of young role models. Although a few small performing groups *(sanggar)* were operating in Pulau Balai and Pulau Tuangku, fewer school students were learning to perform the traditional genres than in 2010, and sadly, the promise generated by the Second Green Turtle Festival that had stimulated young people to perform them in 2010 had failed to materialize.

Six years after completing my doctoral program, in 2022 and 2023, I reassessed the current status of the *sikambang* art in the Banyak Islands and the West Coast of Sumatra. This period was devoted to documenting oral testimonies and video recordings of increasingly rare traditional performances and ceremonies, which face the threat of cultural extinction.[6]

This monograph argues that Urang Pulo's musical practices reflect the islanders' unique cultural identity and embody their ongoing negotiation with historical influences and modernity. By exploring music as a tool for social cohesion, spiritual expression, and cultural preservation, this work reveals how music acts as a living testament to the islanders' complex historical and cultural experiences.

B. Present Insight

This book classifies, describes, and analyses the hitherto unresearched musical arts of the Urang Pulo (*bahasa* Jamu Pulo/BJP) Islanders in Kepulauan Banyak (the Banyak Archipelago), which lies off the southwestern shores of the Aceh-Singkil regency in the province of Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia (see Figure 1.5). It aims to discuss the Islanders' current discourse about their music-cultural identity in the west-coastal Sumatran context, the cultural memory of their musical history, and issues relating to the sustainability of their music culture, especially their deeply felt dilemma caused by its recent decline and how best to pass on the knowledge of it to the next generation. To fulfil these aims, I shall draw on the sparse secondary literature on

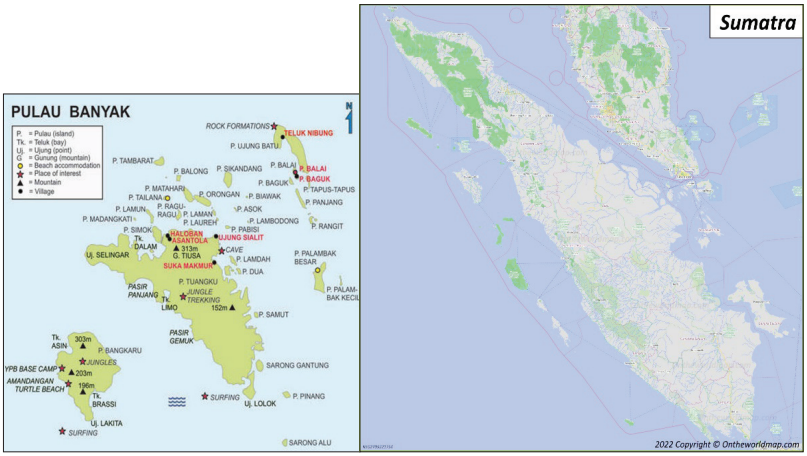
[6] In late December 2022 to mid-January 2023, I travelled across Sumatra with *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang, focusing on recording and interviewing. We visited Singkil, Aceh; Barus, Sorkam, Sibolga, Jago Jago, and Natal in North Sumatra; Pesisir Selatan, Air Haji, Air Bangis, and Pulau Panjang in West Sumatra; Muko Muko and Manna in Bengkulu; and ended in Krui, Pesisir Barat, Lampung. We increasingly struggled to find traces of the *sikambang* culture, complicating comparisons with Margaret Kartomi's previous research and my past fieldwork. This difficulty reflected the ongoing degradation observed in Kepulauan Banyak. Two documentary films are added to this book, summarising the findings from this trip and integrating conclusions from my earlier fieldwork.

the Islanders' culture and the ethnomusicological fieldwork-based knowledge gathered on my four trips in the Islands and west-coastal Sumatra.

Kepulauan Banyak, where the Urang Pulo reside, is a group of archipelagos situated in the Indian Ocean off the shore of west-coastal Sumatra's Aceh Province. However, the formal name of the archipelago, Kepulauan Banyak has often been written inconsistently, becoming Kepulauan Banyak in official publications, Indonesian maps, and tourist brochures, e.g. those published by government departments in Singkil Regency or Aceh Province. This is the reason why today most people within or outside Kepulauan Banyak often refer to it orally as Kepulauan Banyak. In this book, I have chosen to use the form Kepulauan Banyak or its translation: Banyak Islands or Banyak Archipelago.

Kepulauan Banyak is divided into two administrative districts (*kecamatan*): Kecamatan Pulau Banyak and Kecamatan Pulau Banyak Barat. These two districts are now part of Aceh-Singkil Regency, though from the 1950s to 1999, they were part of the much larger South Aceh Regency. Most Urang Pulo say in conversation that there are 99 islands, most of which are unnamed. This figure does not represent an actual statistical count of the number of islands but indicates that there are "*banyak*" or "many islands". However, according to official Indonesian maps, the archipelago contains 33 named islands and many unnamed ones, some of which disappeared into the sea after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, with several small islands having been flooded and submerged at the same time and others rising above sea level. It is also documented in Rosenberg's account, dated 1878, that there were only 51 islands named (Rosenberg, 1878, p. 117), while nowadays only a few islands are frequented by international back-packers, who say they appreciate not only the green turtles and waves that they like to surf but also the islands' exquisite maritime panoramas and natural beauty of the undergrowth.

Kepulauan Banyak has been neglected by ethnomusicologists, anthropologists and historians. As I am the first to study the his-



Note: Map of Kepulauan Banyak showing the names of the seven villages (in red) in Pulau Banyak and Pulau Banyak Barat District, with the former royal center at Asantola Village. It is situated offshore of South Aceh of the Aceh Singkil Regency, Sumatra, Indonesia (right).

Source: BPK RI Perwakilan Provinsi Aceh. (n.d.); Banyak Island Bungalow. (n.d.)

Figure 1.5 Maps of Sumatra, Aceh, and Kepulauan Banyak

tory of the Urang Pulo music-cultures in the Banyak Islands, I have informed myself of suitable research methods by reading works by ethnomusicologists who have similarly embarked on and theorised about virgin-territory music research, including Blum (1991, p. 1–20) and Kartomi (1997a, p. 217–225). I decided to space out my trips to gain a longitudinal view of the music-culture picture of change in the area, that is, over a period of thirteen years between 2010 and 2023.

While in the field, I recorded performances throughout my main area of study, focusing on Haloban and other villages in Kepulauan Banyak, and also in my secondary area, the Jamu-speaking communities in west-coastal Aceh and North Sumatra, and the associated Pagaruyung area in Kabupaten (Regency) Padang Panjang, Solok, Pariaman and Bukittinggi in West Sumatra. There, I hoped to obtain information on the history of the Urang Pulo relationship with the Jamu-speaking west-coastal Sumatran mainlanders as expressed in the

performing arts, and about any mutual or one-way borrowing of the performing arts that resulted in syncretic genres in one or both areas.

Because the Urang Pulo also speak the language of neighbouring southern parts of Nias Island, I needed to seek out data on the history of the Islanders' relationships with communities in Nias. As I discovered, the historical interactions between the two areas have been mainly due to the Islanders' trade and intermarriages over the centuries with brides from families in Nias and the mainland Jamu-speaking towns of Singkil, Barus and Sibolga in west-coastal Sumatra, as well as the Islanders' migrations to and from the west coast of Sumatra and Nias and Simeulue islands. I concluded that only with some knowledge of the history of these relationships could I explain the *kacokan*/syncretic nature of the predominantly Malay music and dance culture in Kepulauan Banyak and its distinctive music-cultural identity compared to that of the Jamu-speaking areas on mainland Sumatra.

I made four field trips: the first in June 2010 during the days leading up to and during Kepulauan Banyak's ten-day Green Turtle Festival when I made my first recordings. The second was from July to December 2013 in Pulau Balai, Pulau Ujung Batu and Pulau Tuangku when I recorded as much of the repertoire as I could, the third in 2014 for a more extended period as I travelled along the Malay-Pasisir west coast of Sumatra, Nias Island and Pagaruyung in West Sumatra Province, and the fourth in mid-2016 when I focussed specifically on the arts practiced in Haloban and Asantola villages.

In order to avoid imposing theoretical constructs on the Urang Pulo music-culture, including methods of practice, teaching and learning, I adopted a semi-grounded approach to my research in my first two field trips, allowing the general subject of Kepulauan Banyak's traditional arts, recent changes, and the topics of artistic conceptualisation, practice, social context, uniqueness, and style to guide my questions and data collection. In the next two trips I modified my method according to my experiences by focusing on a firm theoretical approach which included observations of the arts' *kacokan*

qualities, local concepts of performance structure, the question of the people's and the government's concepts of their music-cultural identity, and the problems the Urang Pulo are encountering in their desire to conserve their artistic genres and develop into the future.

The aforementioned Urang Pulo (lit. Islanders, *Orang Pulau,* BI), whose musical arts and music-cultural identity I am describing and analysing in this book, is the term applied to the Islanders by the residents of Aceh-Singkil regency on the Sumatran mainland. In contrast, the Urang Pulo simply use the term Pulo to refer to themselves.

My data comprises: i) recordings and information gained about the genres performed locally by the Urang Pulo and in the west-coastal towns and villages of Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, Bengkulu and Lampung Provinces; ii) field-based information on the Islanders' cultural memory and genealogies of the former court and artistic practices in Haloban on Pulau Tuangku; iii) the Islanders' artistic links with the nearby islands of Nias and Simeulue and the greater Pasisir-Malay cultural area along Sumatra's west coast; iv) the colonial-era literature, which documents the Islander's peripheral contact with European powers; and v) the evidence of the Islanders' typically Malay *kacokan* ("syncretic")[7] tendency to combine select artistic elements from the cultures with which they have been in sustained contact.

By "music-cultural identity" I mean what the Islanders and the west-coastal Pasisir Malays view as the distinctive (BI., *unik*) qualities of their traditional musical arts, including their *dendang* (songs), instrumental music, rituals, devotional exercises, and bardic arts performed at weddings, circumcisions, other celebrations, and in their daily routines, as well as their growing substitution of commercial popular music in daily life and at some weddings, circumcisions and

[7] One scholar who has recently drawn attention to the term *kacokan* to describe the syncretic tendency of the greater Malay world is Leonard Andaya. His unpublished keynote address, "The World of the Southern Malays," was presented at the Second International Symposium on the Malay Musical Arts of Indonesia's Riau Islands, held January 14–16, 2015, at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, Monash University.

other celebratory ceremonies (*baralek*) in their two multiple-island districts (*kecamatan*): (i) Kecamatan Pulau Banyak (Banyak Island District), especially in its capital, Pulau Balai, and (ii) Kecamatan Pulau Banyak Barat (West Banyak Island District), especially in its capital and cultural centre, Haloban.

As individualism is not encouraged in the Urang Pulo culture, I will not include individual modern artists' constructions of their self-identities in this book. However, I will focus on the collective identities within the social context of the Banyak Islander communities in relation to the Malay west-coast Sumatran culture as a whole. I shall also consider these aspects in relation to the cultural edicts of modern Indonesia, but exclude the popular arts and artists from my book for the simple reason that there is no local popular music tradition–performances by pop musicians in the capital, Balai Island, are rare and are generally imported from other parts of Indonesia. Some traditional bards and musicians develop individual performing style. However, they cannot be "individualistic" or have a different identity from the traditional norm in the Islands, because they depend on and are an integral part of the communal artistic fabric. However, I will need to look at the concept of cultural identity promoted by the local government to satisfy provincial and national demands that the Islanders' cultural identity be defined. Although I shall discuss Urang Pulo culture as part of the greater Malay west-coastal and offshore-island area of Sumatra, I shall not discuss these areas in detail.

C. The Musical Arts

In Kepulauan Banyak as in many other Southeast Asian cultures, the Western concept of "music" is not relevant; indeed, the designation of *musik* (BI.), which is a term derived from the Dutch usually is problematic in Malay and Indonesian cultures, where there is no indigenous word for the Western notion of music as a separate conceptual category from dance, drama and other performing arts. Therefore, I am using the term "musical arts" to include all the performing arts that include sound or "music" in the Western and modern Indonesian

sense, as well as those forms of dance and movement that include musical accompaniment. As discussed in this book, the Urang Pulo musical arts also incorporate the socio-cultural contexts of their performing arts, including the associated ceremonies, festivals and other events.

The local concept of "musical arts" in the Islands also embraces collaborative forms of traditional performances in which music, dance, fine art, and literature (including poetry and drama) or some of these forms are presented as one, just as in the famous *saman* song-dance from the Gayo highlands of Aceh, which is often called *tari saman* (the *saman* dance). It is not, of course, simply a dance, since the *saman* performers are also skilled singers of *pantun* (quatrain)-like texts in dialects of the Gayo language that express religious teachings, political criticism, or emotions such as love or hope, and their *adat* (traditional) social context includes the colours and motifs of the costumes worn and symbolise aspects of Gayo norms and traditions.

Similarly, it is not appropriate to generalise that *adok,* for example, is just an Islander "dance" or that the all-night chanting in *talibun* is just "song" in the Western and modern Indonesian sense. Each traditional performance in the Urang Pulo music culture should be called by its genre name rather than by a generic category to which the term "dance" or "song" is added. However, as the Urang Pulo tend to add *tari* or *lagu* to their traditional performances, I shall use the terms "music", "dance", "poem," "art", and even "theatre" to help explain performances to non-Urang Pulo readers.

Nor will I normally use the term "singers" to refer to the bardic storytellers of *talibun* poetic performances, or "*pantun* singers" in *adok* performances, and the like. The local term for "singer" is *pendendang* or *penampik* (in an *adok* performance), but the art of a *pendendang* or *penampik* does not only involve singing. The *pendendang* is an expert in creating *pantun* spontaneously in the correct chant-like way. He uses his knowledge of how *pantun*-style performers use standard musical pitches and durations and relate text to music. *Pendendang* are usually also dancers who must guide the dancers they accompany.

Because the details of a whole performance are only understood by the *pendendang*, I prefer to use the term *pendendang* for the person who not only presents the vocal part of a traditional performance but is in charge of a performance. It applies in Kepulauan Banyak as well as in other areas of west coastal Sumatra and on the islands of Nias and Simeulue.

D. Languages in Aceh

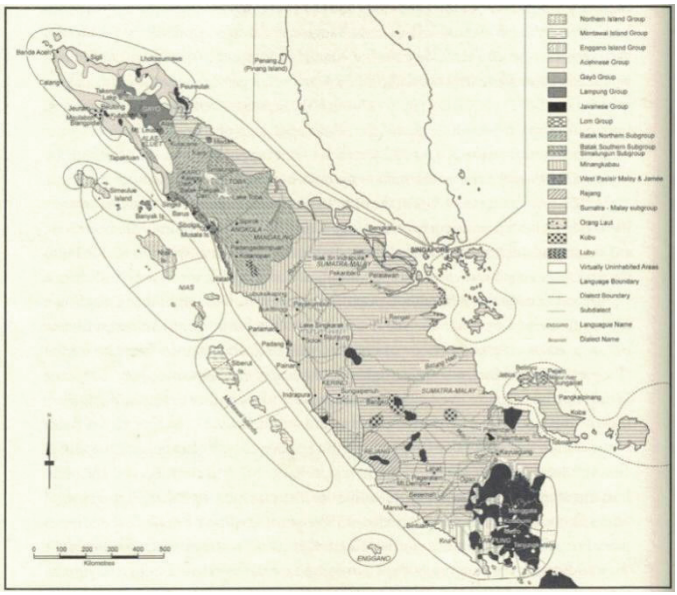
The term "Malay' or "Malayic" refers to a genetic grouping that includes the scores of speech varieties of Malay and Minangkabau in Sumatra (see Kartomi 2012a: 373–374). The term Urang Pulo (lit. Islanders, *Orang Pulau*, BI.) is used to refer to the people living in Kepulauan Banyak by people who live in mainland Aceh-Singkil regency. The Urang Pulo simply to refer to themselves as "Pulo", thereby distinguishing their oral lore, performances, current language (*bahasa* Jamu Pulo) and customs from the so-called "Jamu" people who speak a cluster of west-coastal Sumatran languages called *bahasa* Pasisir ("coastal languages"). Some Urang Pulo also speak *bahasa* Nias (Nias language), but most only understand a limited vocabulary of Acehnese and Simeulue languages. Of course, the younger generation also writes and speaks *bahasa* Indonesia, which they learn in school.

Until the mid-20th century, the Islanders spoke their distinctive ancestral language called *bahasa* Haloban, the ancient name of which is Lingbano (see von Rosenberg, 1854). However, today only the inhabitants of two villages, Haloban and Asantola in Pulau Tuangku, speak their ancestral language. This language may be related to *bahasa* Sigulai, which is spoken in south-coastal Simeulue Island to the north, and to *bahasa* Nias, which is spoken on Nias' south coast (see Marsden [1811] 1966, pp. 478–9) about possible connections between the ancestral Haloban language and Simeulue, also von Rosenberg, Rosenberg, 1878, p. 117). However, as I discovered in my study of the classical lyrics that are intoned to accompany the *adok* dance, their classical language is a mixture of the Old Haloban language called Lingbano and Jamu, a Jamu-Lingbano mix.

The Urang Pulo once lived in a settlement at Kampung Tulalit in the southern part of Tuangku Island, where locals and migrants from Nias and Simeulue intermarried before they moved to present-day Asantola in the middle of the former Tuangku Kingdom, which was subsequently ruled by the royal descendants of a prince whom they requested be appointed by the Sultan of Pagaruyung and sent to live among them (see further Chapter III).[8]

Figure 1.6 below (first published in Kartomi 2012a, p. 4) shows the ethno-lingual groups and subgroups in the whole of Sumatra, including Kepulauan Banyak and west-coastal Sumatran groups, and the location of Kepulauan Banyak (circled in red) in relation to the Sumando/Melayu Jamu Pasisir and Jamée groups and subgroups (see shaded areas) living in west-coastal Aceh and North Sumatra.

[8] This information was gleaned from interviews with *Bp*. Misri Caniago, *Bp*. Anhar Sitanggang and several of their predecessors about the undocumented history of the Tuangku Kingdom on Pulau Tuangku. See Marsden (1966) for possible connections between the Haloban and Simeulue languages (original work published 1811, pp. 478–479).



Note: The shaded area shows the Malay-speaking groups and sub-groups, including the Melayu Jamu Pasisir, Melayu Jamu Pulo, and Jamée sub-groups on Sumatra's west coast.

Source: Kartomi, M. (2012a). Musical journeys in Sumatra

Figure 1.6 Malay-Speaking Groups on Sumatra's West Coast

The Melayu Jamu Pasisir people's marriage rituals, which are in some cases combined with Batak and other inland traditions to facilitate intermarriage, are also known to be governed by the umbrella term: *Adat Sumando Menyumando*,[9] which means *Adat Besan Berbesan* (lit. newly established family ties). The term *Adat Sumando* is also used to identify the mixed *perantau* (immigrants) who settled over the generations along Sumatra's west coast between Singkil and Natal, including the Minangkabau, Batak Mandailing and Batak Toba subgroups, the Bugis, and others. The term *Sumando* can also mean

[9] For "Adat Sumando Menyumando," see Bahri Rangkayo Mulia. (2015, September 9). *Adat Sumando Menyumando*. Indoculture Online. Retrieved September 18, 2009, from https://indoculture.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/499/

"son-in-law" in a Melayu Pasisir Barat family. The traditional customs (*adat)* of the Sumando ethno-lingual group were given formal colonial recognition by the Administrator of the local Dutch Residency in Sibolga (Colonel Conprus) on March 1, 1851 (see Manalu, 2012).

The people who live along the northwest coast of mainland Sumatra call the Kepulauan Banyak people Urang Pulo (lit. "Islanders"); and they designate their culture by the term Jamu Pulo, (where *Jamu* [lit. "guests"] refers to immigrants in the Islands). It includes their oral lore, music, dance, customs and traditional Animist beliefs in the spirits of nature and the ancestors, as well as their distinctive native speech variety, called *bahasa* Jamu Pulo ('Islander language'), *bahasa* Melayu Pulo ("Islander Malay"), or *bahasa* Jamu Pulo ("Jamu Islander language"). On the other hand, *bahasa* Jamu Pasisir (or Melayu Pasisir) refers to a cluster of west-coastal Sumatran speech varieties. Some Islanders also speak a variety of *bahasa* Nias/Ono Niha (the language of Nias), especially in Kampung Sialit on Pulau Tuangku. Meanwhile, others also have limited knowledge of Acehnese. Of course, they also write and speak *bahasa* Indonesia.

However, there is another ancient language that was referred to by Marsden (1811/1966, p. 478–479) and by Rosenberg (see Logan, 1856, p. 13ff).[10] Moreover, it is spoken today by the people in Haloban and the neighbouring village of Asantola on Pulau Tuangku–and not on the other islands. Marsden and Rosenberg/Logan called it *bahasa* Maruwi, and Marsden wrote that it was also spoken in the Nako-nako archipelago to the west of Nias (Marsden, 1811/1966, p. 478–479). It is known today as *bahasa* Haloban or its ancient name of *bahasa* Lingbano, and is still used in the lyrics of Haloban's sacred *adok* song-dance, though mixed with some Jamu Pulo words (see Chapter VII). As intimated above, the Islanders' primal ancestors are believed to be

[10] Rosenberg presented a lengthy linguistic discussion of the Maruwi language, but it only included the phonology and a list of words and did not include the study of sentences.

from Haloban (known initially as Kampung Tulalit, see Chapter III).[11] Moreover, they spoke a unique native language.

In mid-2016, Robert Amery (professor of linguistics at the University of Adelaide) led a research team of linguists to Tuangku and Simeulue Islands to study the language relationships and concluded that *bahasa* Haloban is most closely related to *bahasa* Devayan, which is spoken in the south of Simeulue Island. The team also discovered that both *bahasa* Haloban and the languages of Simeulue Island are much more closely related to *bahasa* Nias than to other languages in Aceh Province. In addition, they found some linguistic evidence to strongly suggest that the main direction of migration has been from Nias Island to Simeulue Island and not the other way around. Haloban may have received a back migration from Simeulue Island. Confirmation of these discoveries will be made in forthcoming publications (pers. comm., Robert Amery).

On the island of Nias, both the Muslim and Christian inhabitants speak not only the local Ono Niha languages but also the Kepulauan Banyak speech variety of Melayu Jamu, which was brought there by immigrants from Kepulauan Banyak, and other speech varieties from Simeulue, Kepulauan Batu, and Sibolga, the capital of the Tapanuli Tengah district of North Sumatra Province. In the port city of Sibolga, which lies between Singkil and Natal and the midpoint of the cross-cultural interface between Nias, Kepulauan Batu, Simeulue, Kepulauan Banyak and Sumatra's west coast, the people speak the following languages: Acehnese, Minangkabau, Bengkulu, Riau-Malay, South Sumatran-Malay, Jambi-Malay and Lampung language, while the west-coast Sumatran's in Sorkam, Barus, Singkil, and Natal sub-districts and regencies also speak their own dialects of *bahasa* Jamu, i.e. *bahasa* Pasisir, *bahasa* Nias, *bahasa* Jamu (known as *bahasa* Aneuk Jamee[12]

[11] This information was gleaned from interviews with *Bapak* Misri Caniago, *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang, and the Mukim during my 2010, 2013, and 2014 field trips. They also shared what they knew about the undocumented history of the Tuangku Kingdom on Pulau Tuangku.

[12] The Acehnese term *Jamée* is an abbreviation of *Aneuk Jamée*, which literally means "children of the guests" (Durie, 1985; Asyik, 1987). This term refers to the

or *bahasa* Pasisir), *baso* Minang (lit. the Minangkabau language) and *Bahasa* Pakpak (one of the six Batak sub-languages).[13] All the Malay ethno-lingual groups along the west-coast of Sumatra, including the Urang Pulo, Urang Pasisir, and the Niasans, speak *bahasa* Indonesia.

E. Existing Resources

Literature on Urang Pulo music-culture is non-existent to date, and publications on the historical, anthropological and ecological aspects of Kepulauan Banyak are minimal. However, the extensive field and published research on Acehnese music by Kartomi is relevant to the Islanders' music and lingual practices, because the Islanders include many Acehnese words in their song texts and everyday speech, and several of the Islanders' musical genres such as *dikie* and *talibun* are also performed along Aceh's west coast. Moreover, many Islanders speak the west Acehnese Jamu language, which is known in west Aceh as Jamee.

General publications on the Islanders' history, languages and religion are brief and few and far between, but they are important for this inquiry. In his classic book *The History of Sumatra* (published from 1771 to 1779), the English writer William Marsden ([1811] 1966, pp. 478–9) noted the existence of the Kepulauan Banyak which he named Pulo Baniak (Baniak Islands), writing that its inhabitants, like those of the nearby Pulo Babi (also called Hog Island, and located at the most western of Pulau Tuangku) of Pulo Baniak, were "Mahometans" (Muslims). He also wrote that the inhabitants spoke a similar language to that of the Maros or Orang Maruwi (Maruwi people), who initially settled on Pulo Nako-Nako to the southwest of Pulo Nias, Pulo Babi, and Simeulue. Although mentioned briefly in his book, the German scholar von Rosenberg (1854) provided no other information on the

many west coast guest workers who settled in the region over the centuries and developed their speech variety called Jamée.

[13] *Bahasa* Pakpak is spoken by Christian Batak Pakpak communities living among Muslim Malay communities on Sumatra's west coast and the highland Bukit Barisan (Dividing Range), which forms a natural boundary with the coastal area of Pasisir Barat.

religious life of the Urang Pulo in the 18th century. Their interconnection with people in neighbouring islands, nor the possible source of the Urang Pulo's ancient *bahasa* Maruwi or of the *bahasa* Haloban, also known as *bahasa* Lingbano. His article was translated into English and published by the English writer Logan (Logan, 1856).

The Australian linguist Mark Durie included the Islanders' spoken language as a speech variety of Malay. However, as he never visited the Islands, he was unaware of the ancient Maruwi language, which is also called Lingbano. According to his linguistic classification of the languages spoken in Aceh, its languages, including Malay speech varieties, belong to the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian (Durie, 1990; Daud, 1997; Thurgood, 2007). The colonial-era ethnologist, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, was also unaware of the Islanders' ancient Lingbano language and its contemporary Jamu variant of Malay; thus, neither is mentioned in his two-volume book titled *The Acehnese* (Snouck-Hurgronje, 1906). In September 2016, the Australian linguist Robert Amery and Acehnese linguist Zulfadli Azis began field research into the languages of the Banyak Islands, and expect that a team of Acehnese researchers will delve more deeply into this neglected linguistic area. They believe that "*bahasa* Haloban is most closely related to *bahasa* Devayan spoken in the south of Simeulue Island, and that the languages of Simeulue and Haloban are much more closely related to *bahasa* Nias than to other languages in the province of Aceh". They also found "some linguistic evidence to strongly suggest that the main direction of migration has been from Nias to Simeulue, and not the other way around; … and that Haloban may have been a back migration from Pulau Simeulue" (pers. comm., Robert Avery, 7 October 2016).

The only other ethnomusicologist beside myself who has carried out field work in the Banyak Islands and along Aceh's Jamee-speaking west coast is Margaret Kartomi, who visited the west coastal area in 2008–2010 and published on the Jamee music-culture in 2010. In her book *Musical Journeys in Sumatra,* Kartomi also writes extensively on the Banyak Islander-related music-culture of Sumatra's west coast,

especially Barus, Sibolga, and coastal West Sumatra, extending south to Bengkulu but excluding the offshore islands such as the Kepulauan Banyak. In her book chapter titled "From Singkil to Natal" (2012a, pp. 221–50), which is based on her fieldwork along Sumatra's west coast between 1971 and 1978, she argues–as I also found in the field–that the *sikambang* tradition is the most complete representation of the local culture, including song-dances and storytelling.

In fact, she writes, the *sikambang* tradition is as pervasive in west-coastal Sumatra's culture as the *wayang* theatre tradition is in Java, where, as is well-known, the *wayang* epitomises the music, dance, drama, dramatic plots and philosophy of the Javanese. She adds that the importance of *sikambang* and *wayang* in west-coastal Sumatran and Javanese cultures resembles that of Shakespeare's plays in English culture since the 18th century.

In her 2012 book, Kartomi also writes about the lengthy legend of *Sikambang*—a group of stories about a mermaid-queen—that is told by bards and sung by vocalists along Sumatra's west coast, as illustrated by Kartomi's field recordings, photographs and music transcriptions. These so-called *sikambang* songs with *biola* and drum accompaniment—called *kapri* song in the Barus area—are often sung at life event ceremonies such as baby thanksgivings and weddings, and are performed with dances accompanied (minimally) by *biola* and frame drums. The *sikambang*-linked genres are performed in slightly different styles, repertoires and dialects in different parts of the coast (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 221–250).

F. The Recent Decline in the Practice of the Performing Arts

Few Islanders have television sets and listen to the radio, except in the capital, Pulau Balai, which houses the government communication networks, and in most villages, including at Haloban, the people generate their electricity for a certain number of hours during the day and night. Thus, until very recently, the people could only practice their traditional musical arts, uninfluenced by the national media, at their

baralek. However, there has been a decline in the number of younger villagers who can perform the traditional music and dances; moreover, opportunities to perform for government and private business functions are still relatively rare. As I shall explain below, I have found that the main reasons for the continuing decline in the practice and maintenance of the Kepulauan Banyak Islanders' traditional musical arts are the growing economic poverty of the people, partly due to ocean trawlers limiting the people's fish catches, and the lack of interest shown by most government officials and businesses in sponsoring performances. The result has been that most people can no longer afford to celebrate their weddings and other ceremonies for several days and nights as in the past. Therefore, they sponsor only limited traditional performances at their shortened celebrations, sometimes resorting to playing recorded music on cassette players. In the process, the population's performative knowledge and understanding of the traditional arts are diminishing. I, too, discovered on my field trips over the past thirteen years that some of the traditional musical genres that I recorded on my early trips to Kepulauan Banyak are now rarely performed. Not surprisingly, some artistic leaders, in Haloban especially, are very concerned about this lack of continuity in the Urang Pulo traditions.

Despite the general decline, however, some beautiful traditional lullabies are still sung every day by parents to their babies as they swing them to sleep on their hips or in baby hammocks (see Chapter VI). Unlike much other vocal music apart from the *dendang sikambang* repertoire, many lullaby texts are in the local Haloban language mixed with the Melayu Jamu Pulo ("Islander Malay") speech variety or dialect, which differs in some respects from the Melayu Jamu Pasisir ("west-coast Sumatran Malay") speech variety. Moreover, their melodies are still sung with elaborate melodic ornamentation. These lullabies are important in preserving the musical and idiomatic textual traditions of the Urang Pulo. The lullabies have managed to survive the radical changes caused by the forces of modernisation. Presumably, this is because people cannot help but remember the

lullabies that constituted their first experience of their musical culture, which subsequently affects their whole musical lives.

G. Music-Analytical Approach

The unique vocal quality observed in Urang Pulo's *dhikr* performances can be traced back to Sufi traditions introduced during the colonial era. However, it has evolved through local adaptation, which are evident in the melodic patterns and rhythms analyzed in the current repertoire.

1. Rendering and Interpretation of Melody

As no form of music notation is used by the Islanders, and I need to communicate an overall impression of the music to readers of my book, I found I needed to transcribe select musical examples as a basis for my ethnomusicological readers' understanding of my analyses. My transcriptions are presented in an adapted form of Western staff notation, with tones pitched above or below the tempered pitches that are notated by a plus or minus sign above or below the note, as the case may be. Kepulauan Banyak *pendendang* and audiences are tolerant of pitch variability and do not adhere to a concept of "in-tuneness" or fixed pitches as classical Western musicians tend to. However, I have presented the approximate tonal palette used in most transcribed excerpts in ascending "scale-wise" succession above each transcription. My use of ascending tonal palettes is Western-derived, for the Islanders do not have tonal ascent or descent concepts. Yet, they can sing songs using scale-wise solfa syllables rather than song texts.

As an Acehnese, I am, of course, an outsider to Kepulauan Banyak's music culture. However, there are similarities between the uses and functions of its traditional performances, such as the *dikie*, and other Muslim aspects of the Islanders' culture, with those of Aceh. I have attempted to view the Islanders' music culture both from an outsider's and an insider's perspective, rejecting the notion that "there is only one local view of things … fully discoverable by the all-knowing ethnographer" (Berger, 2008, p. 70). Both approaches to fieldwork

have increasingly been seen as simplistic in a globalizing world (Wong, 2008). However, as Schutz proposed, researchers can indeed find a partially shared experience with their research collaborators, which can mitigate the exaggeration of cultural distance (Berger, 2008, p. 70).

When possible, I have always aimed to use terms and descriptions favoured by my interlocutors in my musical analyses, classifications, and categories. However, as no local music notational method is used in the area, I chose to use Western notation in my transcriptions rather than solfa or other notation systems to engage mostof my future readers. As the Urang Pulo music culture was initially unfamiliar to me, I adopted a phenomenological method of analysis based on the idea that listeners of unfamiliar music typically acquire their tonal bearings in a new song or piece by noting—usually unconsciously—the highest and lowest tones and the initial and final tones (Batstone, 1969, p. 94). Therefore, with each transcription analyzed, I have noted the pitch of the Initial Tone (IT), the Final Tone (FT), the Highest Tone (HT), and the Lowest Tone (LT).

Melodies of songs (*dendang*) and *biola* parts are usually rendered with a high degree of melisma (defined as "more than one note sung to a syllable of text") and changes in melodic direction. Singers use terms such as "higher" and "lower" to designate higher and lower frequency notes, similar to Western musicians. However, some singers exhibit fewer changes in melodic direction than others, and intoners of stories, such as *talibun*, are almost syllabic and use many adjacent repeated tones. To be more precise, I have measured and calculated each melodic rendition's percentage of melodic direction change and each rendition's percentage of adjacent tonal repetition. These calculations use formulae developed by Kartomi (1974a, p. 181): 100(x/y) percent, where "x" is the number of melodic direction changes and "y" is the total number of tones in the song or excerpt, and 100(z/y) percent, where "z" is the number of repeated tones.

In order to confirm the musicians' designations of the hierarchy of tones performed, including the primary and secondary main tones (*nada pokok* and *nada pokok kedua*, I prepared (i) a hierarchical series

of tones performed in a melody or excerpt and (ii) its *melos*, meaning the main tones of a melody, excluding any tonal repetition and incidental ornament (*bungaran*), for example, three phrases from the *dendang sikambang adok* melody in Chapter VI: 1. The hierarchical series of tones in Figure 1.7, where the main tone (*nada pokok)* is shown as a breve and the secondary main tone (*nada pokok kedua*) as a minim, the less important tones as stemless white notes, and what I call the "neighbour tones" (i.e. a half tone below the *nada pokok* or the *nada pokok kedua*) as stemless black notes.

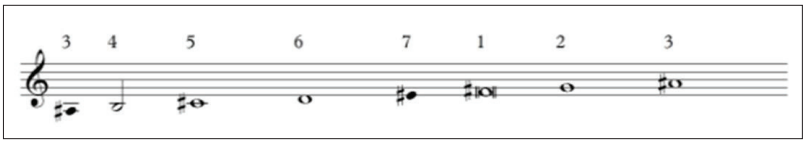


Figure 1.7 *Nada Pokok*

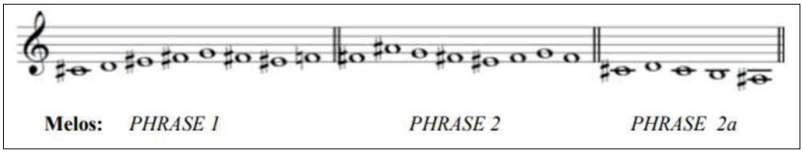


Figure 1.8 *Melos*

The hierarchy of tones/Tonal Hierarchy in this transcribed performance arranged in scale-wise fashion above (in Figure 1.8) includes: the central tone, which for easy recognition I have notated as a semibreve; the second most important tone which I have notated as a minim; and the note immediately below those two main tones, which I have called the "leading note" and notated as a black note. The tones are notated in Western staff notation and the sol-fa-like number script, which local musicians can read.

Thus, this vocal excerpt, based on a *melos* which is rendered in a highly ornamental style, revolves around four important tones (Figure 1.9).

Example:

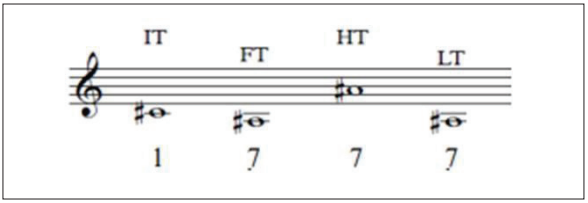
Initial Tone: A, tone 7

Final Tone: E#, tone 4 (raised)

Highest Tone: F#, tone 5

Lowest Tone: E#, tone 4 (raised)

Using these tones, I then calculated the amount of tonal repetition, the amount of melodic direction change, and the level shift.



Note: Initial Tone: notated C#, tone 5 (solfa); Final Tone: A#, tone 3; Highest Tone, A#, tone 3; Lowest Tone, A#, tone 3 (lower octave); Range: 12 semitones

Figure 1.9 Melodic Direction Change

2. Rhythm, Metre, Tempo and Dynamics

Sometimes musicians say that they "freely improvise" the melodic, rhythmic and ornamental elements (*bungaran*, "ornament) that they incorporate in a performance. The term "improvisation" is of course hotly contested in the musicological literature. However, when an expert *pendendang* says that his performance "is sung or played with improvisation" (BI., *dinyanyikan atau dimainkan dengan improvisasi*), we know that he means he is performing with a degree of freedom of choice on the spur of the moment and the basis of his deep knowledge of the relevant stylistic norms of melody, rhythm, metre, form, ornamentation and word-music relationships, and his memory of typical melodic and rhythmic motives which he creatively applies and invents new ones when he thinks it is appropriate.

Most of the traditional vocal music is indeed performed in *irama bebas* (free rhythm and metre), with irregular stresses that are partly determined by the relationships between the musical line and the unwritten lyric, or in some of the Muslim *dikie/zikir* intoning, with the written text. I have depicted this in the transcriptions with tentative dotted barlines before each slightly stressed note. Where a musician performs in regular tempo (as in the violin and frame drum accompaniments to the dance songs), I have noted this with a metronome measurement. Cyclic drum rhythms, rhythmic motives, and other regular metred musical lines are usually notated with a time signature. All ceremonial Urang Pulo singing must be performed at a high degree of dynamic intensity to be heard throughout the village. Because it rarely varies in intensity, I have generally not notated it in the transcriptions.

The frame drum (*gandang*) players refer to the standard and freely improvised rhythmic motives that they play by uttering onomatopoeic syllables to represent the sounds for each rhythm they want to depict orally, and they also use the syllables when teaching a pupil to play. I have, therefore, written these syllables for the main left- and right-hand drum rhythms at the start of each transcription. Two sounds are so designated by an onomatopoeic syllable: a deep, resonant, undamped sound produced by beating above the drum's mid-point with the right hand, which is called *dung*, notated "d" in my transcription and a sharp relatively high-pitched, damped or undamped left-hand stroke on or near the rim called *pak*, notated "p".

H. Existing Recordings

Other research sources used in this book include Kartomi's unpublished 2010 field notes and recordings from the Kepulauan Banyak as well as the résumés of her and Hidris Kartomi's fieldwork in the Aceh Selatan and Subussalam regencies of Aceh in the 1990s and early 2000s, as well as the field recordings and notes from their trips along Sumatra's west coast between Aceh and Lampung in the 1970s–1990s. It should be noted that all her annotated recordings and other

Sumatra-related data are deposited in the Margaret Kartomi Gallery of Musical Instruments and Artefacts (which she established in 1975 and contains the recordings and other data gathered on her annual field trips throughout Sumatra till the time of writing). Kartomi's field notes and book (2012) on west-coastal Pasisir Malayu communities in North Sumatran regencies, especially in Natal, Mandailing, Sibolga, and Tapanuli Tengah, have been referenced in my book in relation to my field recordings. In particular, my chapters on the Urang Pulo of *dendang sikambang, talibun, buai,* and *langser* repertoires in this book are based on Kartomi's recordings, transcriptions and publications from the 1970s as well as my fieldwork on the Kepulauan Banyak and Sumatra's west-coastal arts that I recorded in Singkil, Barus, Sorkam, Sibolga, Jago Jago, Natal, Padang Panjang and in Saniang Baka village in Solok of West Sumatra, and Sifahando village in North Nias Regency of Nias Island.

In the next chapter, I shall discuss the various musico-lingual groups of the Urang Pulo, focusing on the people in the former court centre of Haloban and the perantau/immigrants from along Sumatra's west coast and the neighbouring islands of Nias and Simeulue.

I. Classification of the Islanders' Musical Arts and Muslim Devotional

I shall now discuss my classification of the Kepulauan Banyak musical arts and Muslim devotional exercises (which the *ulama* say are not to be called "music") that are sung in the various speech varieties discussed above, especially Melayu Jamu Pulo (islander Malay) and, in Haloban and Asantola, the classical Haloban language or a combination of the Melayu Jamu Pulo and Haloban speech varieties.

The musical arts and intoned Muslim devotional exercises in the Islands may be divided into the (i) male and female solo singing genres, (ii) singing genres with instrumental accompaniment, (iii) dances with instrumental accompaniment, (iv) song-dances that combine singing with dance movement, and (v) song-dances with instrumental accompaniment.

The chart in Figure 1.10 summarises the whole music-culture, including the special case of the former court centre at Haloban, which includes the song-dances *adok* and *langser* that are not performed elsewhere. The term *sikambang* on the left of the chart refers to all songs and dances that include male or female singing in the traditional, loudly-carrying, melismatic *sikambang* singing style, but not, of course, to the intoned Muslim arts such as *dikie* and *qasidah,* which may involve singing texts influenced by Arabic culture.

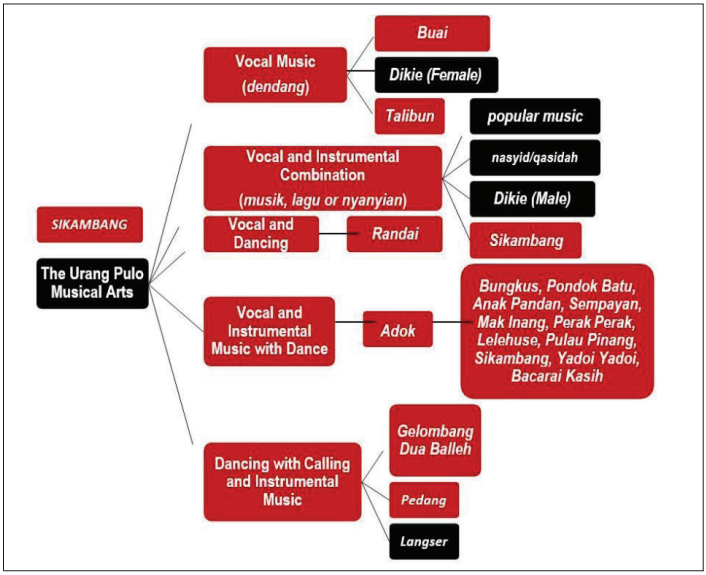


Figure 1.10 Classification of the Musical Arts of the Urang Pulo

As the chart indicates, the Urang Pulo musical arts, which are called by the umbrella term *sikambang,* comprise five categories: They are (i) the vocal music/*dendang*, comprising the *buai* (lullaby), *talibun* (bardic intoning) and *dikie perempuan* (women's Muslim *dikie* singing, (ii) the vocal and instrumental music comprising *sikambang* singing with *biola* and *gandang* playing, *dikie laki* (men's *zikir* singing with *gandang* playing), *nasyid/main rebana* (women's singing of mainly religious texts with frame drum playing) and popular music (with

pop band playing) (iii) the vocal music with dancing, including the *randai* dances in *baralek* processions with *gandang* playing) (iv) the vocal and instrumental music with dance, including the sacred *Adok* and the couples dances: *Bungkus, Pondok Batu, Anak Pandan, Sampayan, Mak Inang, Perak-Perak, Lelehusen, Pulau Pinang, Siantung, Sikambang, Yadoi-Yadoi* and *Bacarai Kasih (*B.M.: *Bercerai Kasih)*, and (v) instrumental music and dancing with a caller, including the *Gelombang dua baleh* ("twelve waves"), *Padang* ("sword") and *Langser* dances with *biola* and *gandang* accompaniment.

Apart from the dances of Minangkabau origin listed above, namely: *Randai, Gelombang Duobaleh,* and *Padang*, the following chapters will explain and discuss all these genres in detail. As noted previously, the Islanders' popular music will be dealt with in a future publication and will be excluded here.

CHAPTER II

THE ISLANDS, THE ISLANDERS, A CLASSIFICATION OF THEIR MUSICAL ARTS, AND MUSIC IN DAILY LIFE

A. Physical, Economic and Human Geography

The Banyak Archipelago encompassing approximately 319 square kilometres, lies about 29 kilometres off the shores of Sumatra's Aceh Province, situated in the Indian Ocean between the larger islands of Simeulue to the north and Nias to the south. The archipelago is administratively divided into two districts (*kecamatan)*: (i) Pulau Banyak (Banyak Islands), with its capital at Pulau Balai on Balai Island; and (ii) Pulau Banyak Barat (West Banyak Islands), with its capital at Haloban on the largest island, Pulau Tuangku (lit. meaning "My Lord Island", the location of the former kingdom of Tuangku at Haloban). These districts currently fall under the jurisdiction of Aceh Singkil Regency, having formerly been part of South Aceh Regency in the 1950s to 1999.

Government surveys have identified approximately 71 islands in the archipelago, of which 33 are officially named, alongside various mangrove systems in the surrounding shallow marine zone.[14] In contrast, local inhabitants consistently claim the number of islands to be 99—a figure with symbolic and cultural significance, often referenced in regional folklore. Both estimates differ from the number of 51 islands observed in the 1850s and listed in the Banyak Island group in a report by H. von Rosenberg (1878, p. 117)[15] and commented on by J.R. Logan in English. I will summarise this in comparison with my observations from 2010–2016. Rosenberg's 1878 article is titled *Geografische en Ethnografische Beschrijving van het district Singkel, de landen liggende langs de Simpang-Kanan en de Banjak-eilanden, benevens eenige korte aanteekeningen nopens de Simpang-Kiri* ("Geographic and Ethnographic Descriptions of the Singkel District, the lands lying along the Simpang-Kanan (river) and the Banyak Islands, and a short report on the Simpang-Kiri"). Although Logan's 1856 article is based entirely on Rosenberg's Dutch language report of 1854, I shall only quote from his article, titled "The Maruwi of the Baniak Islands: Ethnology of the Indo-Pacific Islands, Comparative Vocabularies etc.", because it is in English.

Taking his cues from Rosenberg, Logan described the geography of the islands as follows (Logan, 1856, p. 18).

> The Baniak group consists of numerous islets and rocks scattered irregularly over an area of about 20 miles from E to W… and 27 miles from N. to S….in its broadest and longest portions…. 52 of the islands have received names, and there are about 30 others nameless. The nearest islands [to Sumatra] are: Pulo Tuwanku, Bangkeru, Ujong Batu, Arungan, Balambak Gadang, Panjang, Bagu, Sikandang, Tebu-tebu, Timbarat, Mataari, Salambau, Lamun, Penghulu, Balambak Kichil, Simoh, Bahlong, Rangit Gadang, Baleh and Laraga, Asap, Samut, Sorong alu, laurat, Pinang, Sirong Gantong, Lania, Babisi, Tailana, Tabala, Rangit

[14] See *Badan Pusat Statistik Aceh*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 4, 2011, from https://aceh.bps.go.id

[15] In 1878, Rosenberg also published: *Die Inselkette westlich von Sumatra*. In *Land und Leute, Malayische Archipel* (pp. 11–218). Leipzig: Verlag von Gustav Weigel.

> Kichil, Sagu-Sagub, Lawodu, Busuh Kasih, Gosong Suwang-suwang, Gosong Samidin, Polo Mandan Kati, Gosong Sijanjei, Pulo Mariabu, Pulau Tabala, Raga-raga, Meytee, Panjang, Gosong Pasir, Gosong Kataping, Pulo Batu, Ula-ula, Gosong Sitongka, and Pulo Melela.

Of this list, the islands of Bagu, Tebu-Tebu, Timbarat, Salambau, Penghulu, Simoh, Laraga, Asap, Samut, Sorong Alu, Pinang, Sirong Gantong, Tailana, Sagu-sagu, Lawodu, Busuh Kasih, Gosong Suwang-suwang, Gosong Samudin, Mandan, Gosong Sijanjei, Meytee, Panjang, Gosong Pasir, Gosong Kataping, Batu, Ula-Ula, Gosong Sitongka and Melela either no longer exist or have been renamed.

Rosenberg/Logan wrote that of the scores of islands, two were most conspicuous: (i) Tuwanku (modern spelling Tuangku), with its several low hill ranges sloping gently down to the flat lands and the coast, but with some parts sinking abruptly into the sea; and (ii) Bangkaru, the latter being almost entirely mountainous. Further, Tuwanku's highest hill, called "Gunong Trasa" or "Tuwanku," rises in the north and east of Tuangku Bay and its surrounding hills are covered with tall forest trees; the people do not dare to climb up the hill for fear of death caused by an evil spirit in a grave. The Urang Pulo visit 'Bangkaru very seldom and hold it in superstitious dread, believing that it is haunted by bad spirits, who convey it to the souls of the dead—a remnant of the old Malayu-Polynesian creed" …. A heavy surf prevails on the banks—so violent along the southwest and south coast of Tuwanku that land cannot be approached, also in Bangkaru (Logan, 1856, p. 4).

According to traditional animist beliefs, the description of Tuangku's highest hill and Bangkaru Island as sites associated with dread and malevolent spirits align closely with the Islanders' origin legend, which is further elaborated in Chapter III.

Interviews with residents of Haloban reaffirm that navigation between the islands remain hazardous even for small vessels, due to the presence of extensive coral reefs, sandbanks, and strong tidal currents. We also experienced very shallow seas, coral reefs, and sand banks in some of our sampans. Thus, Rosenberg/Logan comments

are still true today: "The coral banks are enlarging and mangroves spreading…. The coral banks lying in stripes are frequently so close to the surface that, even in a sampan, it is necessary to step out to drag it over them, often a hundred yards from the nearest land (Logan, 1856, p.4).

Logan and Rosenberg wrote that streams (*ayer,* B.M. *air)* are found only on the two largest islands—Tuangku and Bangkaru—and that they are only rivulets. These included Ayer Sentole, Ayer Sirohi, Ayer Luan-wano, Ayer Sesagu, and Ayer Tatalo (the largest of which is "7 yards wide and 3 feet deep at the mouth"), all flowing into Tuangku Bay. While these streams were once vital freshwater sources, local account suggest they have largely dried up in recent decades, including one near the former palace on Tuangku .

Climatic observations from the 19th century also remain applicable. Logan and Rosenberg also wrote about the climate, commenting that the islands experience a slightly cooler climate than west-coast mainland Sumatra's, with more frequent winds and intense north-western storms accompanied by thunder and lightning.

Regarding soil fertility, produce grown, and wild animals, historical descriptions continue to hold relevance. The soil of the higher islands is generally fertile, supporting diverse vegetation, while areas comprised of coral tract are comparatively less fertile. Agricultural output includes coconuts, sago, *durian, nangka (*jackfruit), *pinang (*betel nut), *nipah (*palm fruit), bamboo, rattan, and timber from forest trees, *ubi* (edible roots, sweetcorn)*, kaladi* (taro)*, glaga* (wild sugar cane or grasses), rice from the paddy fields, as well as several varieties of fish and shellfish. Faunal diversity, as described by Logan, includes both wild and domesticated species. Wild animals include crocodiles and snakes, and domestic animals include dogs, cats, goats, rats, monkeys, bats, squirrels, a few wild buffalo, and wild hogs, the latter of which ravage their crops if they are not fenced in (Logan, 1856, p. 12).

According to oral accounts from the elders I interviewed, the Banyak Islands have experienced the effects of several tsunamis over

time, including the catastrophic earthquake and subsequent tsunami that struck Sumatra's western and northern coastlines on 26th December, 2004. As commonly occurs following such seismic events, some small new islands emerged while others disappeared (see Figure 2.1). This phenomenon was also described by our boatsman during a sea crossing to Haloban on Tuangku Island in June 2010, during which he pointed out several newly formed islands, as yet unnamed islets.

Figure 2.1 One of the Island Views in the Kepulauan Banyak

While the impact of the 2004 tsunami on the Banyak Islands was relatively minor in comparison to the widespread devastation experienced along Aceh's northern coastline, the geophysical effects were nonetheless significant. Due to the fault line situated between Bangkaru and Tuangku islands, the former experienced uplift while the latter subsided. The earthquake's epicentre was located just east of Bangkaru Island, making it the closest point of seismic rupture in the region. However, after the metre-high surge hit the villages on Tuangku, the tsunami waves flowed 100–200 metres into the dense forest. This incursion not only contaminated local freshwater wells with saltwater but also aleft visible traces—sand deposits reaching up to one metre above ground level on the seaward side of tree trunks. Unfortunately, the Islanders' limited harbour infrastructure sustained

heavy damage due to the tsunami, thereby disrupting local fishing and trading activities.[16]

B. The Population

In the mid-nineteenth century, the population of the Banyak Islands was recorded no more than 354 people residing in four villages (Tuangju, Talalu, Strohi, and Rautan) and owned four *ladangs* (dry rice-fields), with between 5 and 15 houses each (Logan, 1856, p. 14). While the demographic lists provided by Rosenberg and Logan offer valuable historical insight, they are no longer reflective of the present population structure. According to the 2010 national census, the Islands' total population is only 6,570 people. Only Tuangku and the small islands of Balai and Baguk, both situated northeast of Tuangku, have significant populations. Two other major islands located on either side of Tuangku, Bangkaru and Ujung Batu, have been identified for their ecotourism potential, particularly international surfing activities and green turtle conservation. Despite being earmarked for development, concrete tourism infrastructure and services have yet to materialise in these areas.

The majority of the population resides on the three main islands: Pulau Balai, Pulau Ujung Batu, and Pulau Tuangku; the latter being the largest (see Table 2.1). The only town of any size is Pulau Balai (population 1,608), the capital of Kecamatan Pulau Banyak. More recently, Haloban has been designated as the administrative centre of the newly established Kecamatan Pulau Banyak Barat. This status has contributed to the village's growth, including the construction of new government offices and residential buildings. Aside from these two main centres, only five other population centres—Pulau Baguk, Teluk Nibung, Asantola, Ujung Sialit and Suka Makmur—have village-level populations. The seven centres are listed below, along with their *adat*

[16] Asia News. (2005, March 30). *Hundreds of quake victims on Banyak Islands*. U.S. Geological Survey. (2005, April 29). *USGS scientists in Sumatra studying recent tsunamis*.

territory or *kemukiman* (M., I.) names used in the former Tuangku kingdom, and their contemporary district names.

Table 2.1 Population Centres and Administrative Names in Kepulauan Banyak

No.	Village	Island	Former *Adat* Territories (Kemukiman)	District
1	Pulau Balai	Pulau Balai	Pulau Salapan	Pulau Banyak
2	Pulau Baguk	Pulau Baguk		
3	Teluk Nibung	Pulau Ujung Batu		
4	Haloban	Pulau Tuangku	Haloban	Pulau Banyak Barat
5	Asantola			
6	Ujung Sialit			
7	Suka Makmur			

Note: Table 2.1 shows the seven population centres in Kepulauan Banyak, including their island locations, former Adat *(kemukiman)* names, and current district (*kecamatan*) names.

The small settlement at Pulau Baguk has a population of 1,358, while Teluk Nibung (Nibung Bay) has 950. Of the four population centres in Kecamatan Pulau Banyak Barat, Haloban has 803 inhabitants, Asantola has 582, Ujung Sialit ("Point Sialit") has 1,093, and Suka Makmur has 169.

Note: Photos showing women and men selling their produce in the marketplace in Asantola. Taken in October 2014.

Figure 2.2 Marketplace Views in Asantola

In 1811, Marsden observed that "the inhabitants of these islands… are now Mahometans" (Marsden, 1811 (1966): 4790). Logan also wrote that according to William Marsden and Rosenberg, "the Baniak Islands.…Maruwi people…were of Niasan-Polynesian heritage, and like other "maritime tribes" in the archipelago "have adopted the dress and religion of the Malays" and were "all Mahomedans" except for one (Christian) priest (Logan, 1856, p. 14). At present, the Islanders are still predominantly Muslim. However, the approximately 1,200 inhabitants of the village of Ujung Sialit on Pulau Tuangku are Christian, originally having migrated from a Protestant area of the island of Nias to the south.

As Rosenberg (1884) documented, during the nineteenth century, the Islanders cultivated and harvested a wide variety of agricultural and forest products, including coconuts, sago, *durian, nangka*, *pinang (*betel nut), *nipah* palm fruit, bamboo, rattan, timber from forest trees, corn/*ubi* (edible roots, sweet potato)*, kaladi, glaga* (wild sugar cane or grasses), rice from the paddy fields. They also exploited marine resources, collecting several varieties of fish and shellfish. While many of these foods are still produced, rice is now frequently imported to supplement local consumption.

The majority of adult men in the Islands engage in small-scale fishing using individual boats, although some operate multi-hulled *perahu.* However, limited harbour facilities, combined with tsunami damage, still hinder the development of trading activities. A smaller proportion of the male population is engaged in farming, although agricultural production remains insufficient to supply their needs, and a significant quantity of fresh food has to be brought in from Singkil. Others are small-scale traders or government officials in Pulau Balai and Haloban. Meanwhile, women primarily manage domestic responsibilities, but also participate in market activities by selling farm produce and working in the education sectors as teachers.

Local entrepreneurship remains severely constrained by a lack of essential infrastructure, including harbour development, basic constructed roads linking population centres, and a reliable power

supply. Until such infrastructure is adequately developed, sustained economic advancement across the Banyak Islands will remain limited.

Figure 2.3 Mosque and Houses in Pulau Ujung Batu and Pulau Tuangku

C. Music in Daily Life among the People of Haloban—an Anecdote

Figure 2.4 presents a selection of musical activities commonly observed during my fieldwork in Haloban. They include (i) groups of primary school children singing children's songs, (ii) fisherman engaged in sewing his traditional fishing net while listening to *lagu Melayu* on the radio, and (iii) a group of *gandang* players rehearsing for their performance at an upcoming wedding in Haloban.

Note: Left: Children. **Middle**: A fisherman sewing his fishing net; Right: *Gandang* players rehearsing in Haloban village, Pulau Banyak Barat District, Pulau Tuangku, 2014.

Figure 2.4 Daily Life Among *Bahasa* Jamu Pulo-Speaking Urang Pulo

Although radios are relatively common, Haloban remains largely without a stable electricity supply, and few households possess functioning television sets or devices capable of playing recorded music. As a result, live and spontaneous music-making still plays a vital role in the community's soundscape. When women and children sell food and drink in the streets, they sing street songs.

A particularly compelling instance of music integrated into daily life occurred during my third field trip, when I observed a group of *sekolah dasar (*primary school) boys and girls, dressed in school uniforms, walking around the village of Haloban from 5:00 to 7:30 a.m. As they walked, they sang a short, repetitive ditty while selling dozens of cakes for 1.000 rupiah each. The girls carried the cakes on their heads. They sang:

Martabak… saribu sabuah
Martabak… a thousand for each

Inukut… saribu sabuah
Inukut… a thousand for each

Keik loput… seribu sabuah
Keik loput… a thousand for each

Note: A schoolgirl sings a street song while selling cakes from a basket on her head in Haloban village.

Figure 2.5 Schoolgirl Selling Cakes in Haloban Village

The same activity resumed later in the day—from 1:00 to 5:30 p.m.—when the children sold ice cups and instant noodles for 500 Rupiah each, again singing the phrases to the same melody.

Es cangkir… lima ratus sabuah	Ice jelly… five hundred for each
Bakwan…lima ratus sabuah	*Bakwan* (noodles)… five hundred for each

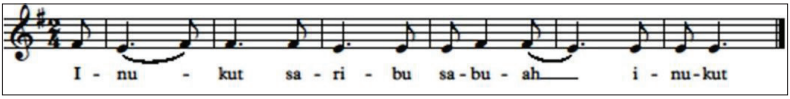


Figure 2.6 Ditty Sung by Children and Women Selling Goods in Kepulauan Banyak

On that same day, I also noticed that children in Pulau Balai were also singing the identical two-tone melody. Adult women also engaged in similar musical street vending practices, singing the same melodic pattern while walking around selling vegetables in baskets carried on their heads.

D. The Natural Habitat and Tourism

Since the early 2000s, attempts to develop sustainable tourism in the Banyak Islands have been initiated by both government authorities and a community-based foundation, Yayasan Pulau Banyak (YPB).[17] YPB has focused its environmental conservation program on the region's rich biodiversity, notably its population of green turtles, extensive offshore coral reefs, excellent surfing conditions, vibrant traditional music and dance performances, and a good supply of seafood by local fisherfolk. However, conservation efforts have faced challenges: local communities have traditionally harvested turtle eggs for consumption, and poaching—particularly by individuals from Sibolga—has continued to pose a threat to turtle populations, driven by a lucrative export market for turtle meat. Meanwhile, other species under threat due to over-exploitation include the giant clams and the sea turtles.

[17] Yayasan Pulau Banyak's environmental program is centered in Banda Aceh.

As the Yayasan Pulau Banyak have pointed out, the region encompasses a variety of critical marine and coastal habitats, including coral reefs and mangroves. These areas fall under Indonesia's designated marine protected areas, specifically classified as a Recreation Park/ Multiple Use Management Area status (*Taman Wisata Alam*)[18]. In 1997, YPB launched an environmental programme to support ecological research, conservation, and community awareness of the region's anthropological and biological diversity (Steeman, 1997). One of its main roles is monitoring the green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) at Pulau Bangkaru, where green turtles nest in large numbers, especially at Amandangan beach, which extends approximately 1.3 kilometres along the exposed western coast of Pulau Bangkaru and is the main nesting site in the archipelago.

Sporadic nesting also occurs on other smaller beaches in the archipelago.[19] Green, hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) turtles nest there and are protected under Governmental Decrees (Siswomartono, 1997). Although sea turtles nesting occurs across Sumatra, recent comprehensive data on these activities remain scarce (YPB website).

In addition to the overexploitation of marine fauna, the region faces other environmental threats,[20] including illegal offshore trawling, blast fishing, and geological disturbances. These pressures have significantly impacted marine ecosystems and undermined local

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[18] The information in these paragraphs derives from the YPB Foundation's website: *http://www.seaturtle.org/mtn/archives/mtn90/mtn90p6.shtmla*

[19] Green turtles nest year-round on Amandangan Beach, with peak nesting coinciding with the dry eastern monsoon from November to May. Between February 16 and March 6, 1999 (dry eastern monsoon), nightly emergence averaged 7 and 8. During this period, a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 8 clutches were laid each night, with an overall nesting success of 58%. In 1997, data collected during the eastern and western monsoons showed a range of 3 to 13 nests per night (Steeman, 1997).

[20] van Hoff, N. (2005, July 5). *A preliminary assessment of damage, losses, needs, dangers, opportunities, and local aspirations: Pulau Banyak (Banyak Islands)*.

livelihoods. Over the years that I have conducted fieldwork in the Island, living standards in the villages have shown little improvement.

In June 2010, the ambitious Green Turtle Festival, sponsored by the Foundation and the government, was launched in the hope of raising awareness and attracting tourism investment. While the event featured performances by local traditional artists alongside pop and TV stars from Jakarta, it drew only a modest number of tourists. A follow-up cultural/festival and ecotourism promotion, scheduled for December 2017, aimed to generate wider interest and potentially catalyse a more sustainable tourism economy (see Chapter IX).

As subsequent chapters will illustrate, the physical, economic, and human geography of the Islands—particularly in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami—have significantly affected the extent to which communities can uphold their sacred arts and rituals, and the respects they believe must be paid to the ancestors since the early 2000s. The above classification of their arts into many ritual and entertainment genres shows how complex their musical lives once were, and how the dilemmas they face today as they try grapple with the challenge of preserving essential vestiges of the traditional practices and respect for the ancestral arts can be resolved.

CHAPTER III

THE ISLANDERS' MUSICAL HISTORY

A. The Islanders' Music-Culture in its Sumatran Context

The cultural history of the Banyak Islands remains largely undocumented and is best understood within the broader socio-historical and cultural framework of Sumatra's west coast. For over a millennium, the ports of Barus and Singkil, located on Sumatra's northwest coast, served as vital nodes in regional and international maritime trade networks. Merchants from Arabia, China, India, Portugal, Britain, and the Netherlands, frequented these ports, drawn by the region's prized commodities—camphor, herbs and spices (Andaya, 2008, pp. 146–172). Their informal interactions with the local people gradually shaped the local culture and arts.

The visiting ships included the Portuguese during the century of their Southeast Asian empire, from 1511 to 1641. It is likely that they introduced European renaissance-era string instruments such as violas and violins to the region. Over time, the violin (*biola)* became

an integral feature of musical life not only in Kepulauan Banyak but also other areas of Sumatra and beyond. The Urang Pulo and the Jamu Pasisir Malays are also related to the so-called Jamée subgroup who speak a Malay-Acehnese patois and occupy Aceh's west coastal areas from Singkil north to Calang (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 2–6; 217–18).[21] In some ways, the Islanders' and some of the traditional dances on Kepulauan Banyak are quite unique. The Islanders also perform musical and dance genres from Simeulue and Nias and sing in those local languages.

Above all, the Islanders say, they have close family and trade links with the people in Barus, because the seasonal sea currents and winds naturally take their *prahus* there. Indeed, except for their unique *adok* dance, their performing arts tend to resemble those of Barus and other nearby west-coastal Sumatran towns, though their styles of performance and ritual contexts differ. The Islanders also believe their ancestors were connected to the two mixed Malay-Batak courts at Barus until their demise in the late 19th century (see Drakard ([1988] 2003).[22] While the spoken Malay-Batak patois of Barus differs somewhat from the Jamu dialects used in the Banyak Islands, both communities share strikingly similar repertoires of ceremonial vocal music, particularly *sikambang asli* and *buai* genres. These include both solo and accompanied forms, and are often performed with ensemble arrangements featuring gandang (drums) and *biola* Both traditions also include Malay-style couples' dances with *joget*-style movements, rhythms, and tempo (see Chapter VII). In addition, they both enjoy *gandang* and *biola* ensemble music, the latter instrument apparently having been introduced to the region by the Portuguese from Melaka during their colony in 1511–1641 (see Kartomi, 2012, pp. 221–250). And both peoples' Muslim leaders also taught and promoted devotional

[21] The terms Jamu and *Jamée* both literally mean "guests", "newcomers."

[22] The royal life events at Barus were celebrated with a mix of Batak, Malay, Arab, Hindu, and Islamic traditions. The translation of the royal *Asal Barus Chronicle* in Drakard ([1988] 2003, p. 161) illustrates Barus' cosmopolitan character in colonial times.

Muslim singing of *dikie* devotions and *qasidah/kasidah* singing and Qur'an reading.

The Islanders also have an emotional, ancestral link with the former court of Pagaruyung in the highlands (*darek)* of West Sumatra, which was dissolved in the early nineteenth century. Pagaruyung's legendary queen, Bundo Kanduang, and heroic figure, Cindue Mato, are venerated across Minangkabau and coastal communities alike. Their names are invoked in the sacred *adok* dance song of the Islanders. Moreover, the Islanders perform localised versions of Pagaruyung's martial *randai* and *gelombang duo baleh* dances in their processions around the village at weddings and other celebrations. According to Islander oral tradition, the first *raja* of Haloban—appointed by the Sultan of Pagaruyung—may have been responsible for introducing these dance forms to the Islands. However, it is equally plausible that west coastal *perantau* (migrants) carried these traditions with them during resettlement.

Thus, the population of the Kepulauan Banyak comprises a heterogeneous mix of Sumatran Malays of Batak and Minangkabau descent who migrated from the west Pasisir Malayu coast between Singkil and Natal, while some are from Simeulue and surrounding islands to the north and from Nias to the south. Their music culture reflects the mixed/*kacokan* nature of their population, as the colonial-era sources briefly mention.

B. Colonial-Era Sources

The earliest known reference to the Banyak Islands in Western literature appears in *The History of Sumatra* by the English writer William Marsden, first published in 1811 (Marsden 1811/1986, pp. 478–479). However, this book contains only two brief paragraphs on the Islands and makes no mention of their artistic or cultural life. Marsden identifies the inhabitants as "the Maros or Orang Maruwi" of "Pulo Baniak" (Baniak Islands), noting that they mainly produce "sea-slugs and the edible birds' nest". He further remarks that their language was regarded by the natives of these parts as "distinct and

peculiar" (Marsden 1811, pp. 478–479). He also commented on a few surrounding islands including the Nako-Nako island cluster, about which he wrote:

> The islands are governed by a single *raja,* who monopolises the produce, his subjects dealing only with him, and he with the praus or country vessels, who are regularly furnished with cargoes in the order of their arrival, and never dispatched out of turn (Marsden 1811/1986, p. 478).

According to my interlocutors at Haloban, Marsden's comment appear consistent with the governance structure of the Tuangku kingdom—centered in Haloban—during the period in which he was writing, although Marsden himself provides no direct account of this polity.

A Dutch surveyor of the Kepulauan Banyak in the 1850s, H. van Rosenberg, wrote a long article about the "Baniak Islands" including a little about the *raja* of the Islanders' Tuangku kingdom, whom he referred to as the Tuangku (lit. "My lord"). In 1856, the English geographer, J. R. Logan also wrote an article titled "The Maruwi of the Pulo Baniak: Ethnology of the Indo-Pacific Islands, Comparative Vocabularies etc." (Logan, 1856, pp. 1–42), but it is based almost entirely on his translation of Rosenberg's article of 1854.[23] Logan affirms that Rosenberg's article was the only known "account of the Pulo Baniak and their islets" to date, and that otherwise, our knowledge of "the most northerly of the West Sumatran insular tribes, the principal group of whom was the Maruwi on *Si Malu* or *Pulau Babi* islets", would be "scanty".

Among other matters he wrote that the Tuangku claimed to be a descendant of the sultan of Pagaruyung's family and that he ruled through the *datuk* (elders) in the villages:

> [The Baniak Islanders'] …Chief Authority was the Tuwanku of Great Baniak who resides in Kampong Tuwanku. Under him are Datus of

[23] Logan, J. R. (1856). The Maruwi of the Baniak Islands: Ethnology of the Indo-Pacific Islands, comparative vocabularies, etc. *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia.*

> whom there are in some cases 5 or 6 in the same kampong…the present Tuwanku, who is a very old man, holds himself to be a descendant of the earlier royal family of Menangkabau, his grandfather having come from Pagar-rugong (sic) and married a woman of Nias (Logan, 1986, p. 13).

These little-known facts about the Islanders' succession of kings at Haloban basically tally with the kingdom's origin legend, as will be explained below. The mention of intermarriage with Niasan women is corroborated by present-day demographics, as seen in the village of Sialit near Haloban, which is home to many residents of Niasan descent.

Rosenberg also wrote that the Islanders—and presumably their *raja*—fell under Dutch control after the capture of Singkil during the long Aceh war (1883–1910). He wrote (as quoted by Logan), "With Singkel, the Baniak Islands fell under the dominion of the Dutch". Despite being brought into the colonial fold, the population of the Islands remained small and self-sustaining. Residents engaged in subsistence agriculture, raising rice and vegetables, livestock rearing, and marine-based livelihoods such as fishing and the collection of sea produce. Haloban, in particular, was a regular stop for boats travelling between key west-coast Sumatran ports, such as Singkil, Barus and Sibolga and the neighbouring islands of Nias to the south and Simeulue to the north.

Rosenberg wrote many pages about the phonology and vocabulary of the Urang Pulo's ancient "Maruwi"—actually Lingbano[24]—language and added that as the "Pulo Baniak" people spoke the language of Nias in addition to Maruwi, there must have been much inter-mixture of Maruwi, Niasans, west-coastal Sumatrans (who are now known as Jamu) and other ethnic groups in the Islands. I shall leave Rosenberg's linguistic discussion in Logan's article to the linguists, noting only that it did not include the study of sentences

[24] The Haloban elders say that their unique ancient language (*bahasa kuno*) is Lingbano, though today they refer to their current speech variety as being a combination of *bahasa* Lingbano and *bahasa* Melayu Jamu Pulo.

but only the phonology, and proposed that he thought the language derived from Niasan-Polynesian.

Beyond language, Rosenberg's study included remarks on the Islands' geography, socio-economic practices, religious life, and the broader ethnographic context. Noting the absence of prior studies, he asserted that the ancient history of the "Pulo Baniak" people must be reconstructed primarily through ethnological evidence (Rosenberg, 1854, p. 14). He concluded that as the "Pulo Baniak" people spoke the language of Nias in addition to the ancient Maruwi language, there must have been considerable intermixing of Maruwi, Niasan, and west-coastal Sumatrans and other ethnic groups, a conclusion that is clearly borne out in the music-culture of the Banyak Islands to this day.

Despite the value of these colonial-era texts, neither Marsden, Rosenberg, nor Logan made any reference to the music, dance, or performance traditions of the Islands. However, my data suggests that the specific musical, dance, martial art and bardic art genres that developed in the villages and court at Haloban were unique in the Banyak Islands. Stylistic divergences between Haloban and other settlements such as Teluk Nibung (on Pulau Ujung Batu) and Pulau Balai town (on Pulau Balai) suggest locally specific trajectories of cultural development, which are discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

Why is it that scholars, including historians and anthropologists, of Sumatra are unaware of the former Haloban court's existence? Some other Sumatran courts are known through their local belletristic literature, local historians' writings, and the reports of colonial-era *kontroleurs* (administrative officers). This is presumably because the Dutch *kontroleurs* (administrative officers) stationed in Singkil had a strained relationship with the Haloban from the 1860s onward. By the 1870s, the Dutch were increasingly focused on military preparations for the Aceh War, limiting their ability to send officials or researchers, such as Rosenberg, to peripheral locales like the Banyak Islands. Moreover, the geographic remoteness of the Islands—still requiring a

four-hour speedboat journey from the mainland—has long hindered scholarly access.

The following section will discuss oral histories and cultural memory surrounding the origins of Haloban's royal centre and its associated artistic traditions. These accounts, drawn from local sources, provide crucial context and narrative depth to complement and expand upon the fragmentary observations of early Western writers.

C. Origin Legend and Oral History

Approximately two and a half centuries ago,[25] as detailed in oral literature and indirectly referenced in Logan's/Rosenberg's colonial report of 1888, the council of elders (*datuk)* on Tuangku Island resolved to invite a royal prince (sultan) from Pagaruyung to establish a court and rule in Haloban (also called Aloban).[26] One *datuk* reportedly travelled to Pagaruyung in the central mountains at West Sumatra mountains and accompanied the prince back to Haloban where he and his various generations of descendants ruled until the mid-20th century (pers. comm., royal Haloban descendant, Mr Masri Caniago in Haloban, 2013).

Between the 14th and 19th centuries, Sumatra's west-coastal Malay-speaking communities, along with the Bataks and the Nias descendants in the present-day provinces of Aceh, North Sumatra, Bengkulu and beyond held the king of Pagaruyung in high esteem (see Andaya, 2008). The Pagaruyung sultanate was heavily involved in trade with the many visiting merchant ships from China, India, and the Middle East. Sumatra's west coast palaces, especially the ports of Barus and Sibolga, flourished through trade in valuable commodities such as camphor (*kapur Barus)*, cloves and other spices, timber, and rice.

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[25] The royal family trees (*silsilah*) name a succession of eight *rajas* of Haloban, and if we calculate an average of thirty years for each generation, we must conclude that the incumbency of the first *raja* dates from the second half of the eighteenth century.

[26] *Aloban* is the name of a species of timber that was used to build the homes in the first settlement on Tuangku Island.

Interactions between the locals and foreign traders, who often stayed in the ports for months awaiting favourable winds, often resulted in intercultural contact, including intermarriage with local ethno-linguistic groups such as the Bataks and Malays. From the 16th century onward, these interactions also extended to Portuguese, English, and expanding Dutch colonial agents, laying the groundwork for layered cultural and political entanglements.

Each *raja* or sultan-led community in the courts located along West Sumatra's west coast had their own origin stories, which contributed to the local sense of identity and authority, and the kingdom on Tuangku Island was no exception. The legend—preserved in oral tradition and in records by the royal descendants, including those recognised by the Indonesian government from the 1950s onward— is told as follows.

D. The Legend of the Origin of Haloban and Kepulauan Banyak[27]

The primal ancestor of the Kepulauan Banyak was a man known as Tutuwoun (also called Tutaaon). At first, he settled with his family at Teluk Nibung on Ujung Batu Island. However, upon exploring the surrounding archipelago, he found a more favourable site for his family home at Tulale on the largest island with the largest amount of arable land, the island which would eventually be called Tuangku (lit. "My Lord Island").

A few years later, a man named Lawowek, or Labuek,[28] arrived on a different part of the island from Sinabang on Simeulue Island and at the same time a man named Lasengak from Padang

[27] The account of the legend and royal successions is based on two sources: an interview with *Bapak* Gunawan Sakti Alam in Singkil in 2014, where he, the son of Sutan Jainun Alam, showed me family heirlooms including photos of the *terombo* of Kerajaan Tuangku, which are now with his nephew in Jakarta (see Figure 1).

[28] The names of the key players in the legend are different in different versions of the legend. The first alternate names and spellings given are according to *Bpk*. Misri Caniago and the second alternatives by Ayu Agusni.

Sidempuan also settled on Tuangku. Both laid claim to being the island's first settler, resulting in a quarrell that culminated in duel. Lawowek won, and Lasengak was forced to escape on his boat out to sea.

After observing the incident, Tutuwoun invited the two men to visit his home at Tulale. His wife served them boiled sweetcorn (*ubi rebus*) and he proudly displayed his well-established garden. The two men realised that Tutuwoun was in fact the first settler on the island, given the considerable amount of time it takes to grow a garden of vegetables. So, they stopped quarrelling and accepted Tutuwoun's invitation to build their homes near his at Tulale, thus forming the first village/*pemukiman* on the island.

Several months later, the three men were sailing around the island and saw some smoke in the distance. On investigation, they saw a man on a bank of the Air Dingin ("Cold River") boiling water on an open fire, asked his name and learned that it was Hutabarat. He was from Samosir Island in the middle of Lake Toba on mainland Sumatra. Later, they invited him to build and settle in their *pemukiman* at Tulale and become its fourth member.

Sailing further around the island, they met another man on Aisakhu Island. Upon learning that his name was Malikul Berayak and that he came from North Tapanuli, they invited him to join their village at Tulale as its fifth member. Notably, he was also recognised as a skilled practitioner of the martial arts.

In response to the increasing complexity of their social and economic circumstances, the five men held a meeting (*musyawarah*) and collectively decided to establish a council of elders (*datuk*), assigning each member a different set of responsibilities. Tutuwoun was in charge of agriculture, Lawowek of harbour activities and fishing, Lasengak of social affairs, Malikul Berayak with security of land and sea, and Hutabarat with matters pertaining to *adat* and the ceremonial lives of the people.

Despite the division of responsibilities, the growing intricacies of governance and community life soon made it apparent that a more

centralised form of leadership was necessary. At another meeting, the council of elders decided that a king/*raja* should be appointed to provide administrative and symbolic leadership. As none of the five men wished to assume the royal role, they designated Malikul Berayak to undertake a diplomatic mission to West Sumatra. He was tasked with sailing across to the coast and traveling inland to the highlands to seek the endorsement of the most esteemed sovereign in the region—the Sultan of Pagaruyung—to appoint a future royal *raja* of the Tuangku kingdom.

Malikul Berayak subsequently embarked on a long and arduous journey to the highlands of West Sumatra, where he succeeded in securing an audience with the sultan. After humbly putting his request to the sultan, he was delighted with the royal decision to assign the task of establishing the kingdom to his youngest son, Sutan Malingkar Alam. The sultan presented his son with the treasured emblems of sovereignty (*pusaka)*—sacred heirlooms symbolizing royal authority. These regalia conferred upon him the legitimacy to rule as king. The Sultan also appointed members of the royal entourage: Malikul Kudus as the Imam Garang (prayer leader), while Malikul Berayak as military commander (*panglima*), charged with overseeing the security matters, and commanded the party to travel to the Banyak Islands.

Upon their arrival, Sultan Malingkar Alam was ceremonially installed as *raja.* He decided to expand the existing council of elders to include Malikul Kudus as the Imam Garang (prayer leader in charge of religious affairs), while Malikul Berayak as the *khatib*/administrative head. The five originial *datuk* were also assigned formal titles reflecting their roles: Tutuwoun (the pioneer) as the *datuk besar* ("great elder"), Lawowek as the *maha raja* ("great king"), Lasengak as the *datuk mudo* ("junior elder"), and Hutabarat as the *datuk pamuncak* ("senior or supreme elder).

Following the death of Sultan Malingkar Alam, he was succeeded by his son, who assumed the same title. He was followed in turn by his son Sutan Mahmud, and then by the three further generations of *rajas*: Sutan Marahamat, Sutan Setangkap Alam, and Sutan Alam—the

latter reigning as the sixth *sutan,* ruling from ca. 1930 till the Japanese invasion in 1942–1945. In the late 1940s, Sutan Alam moved the centre of government from Haloban to Luan Bano Selatan, still on Tuangku Island, before deciding to return to Haloban (as recorded in a local blog source).

Upon Sutan Alam's death, succession became contested. Although his son, Jainun Alam, was next in line, Sutan Alam's nephew—Sutan Umar, the son of the king's sister—asserted his own claim to leadership. With the elders' support, Sutan Umar assumed power, arguing that Jainun Alam was too young to rule. He retained several of the royal *pusaka* within his own family and continued to govern as *datuk* until his death in 1950. Some Haloban elders today refer to Sutan Umar as "the pretender Sutan", highlighting ongoing disputes over dynastic legitimacy. By 1945, the colonial era and World War II were over, and in 1949, the Dutch finally handed over sovereign power to the Indonesian government, which did not recognise local royalty, thus the dynasty came to an end.

The precise chronology of the events described in the oral legend remains uncertain. However, if, as the local narrators assert, there were six successive generations of *rajas* and followed by a seventh "pretender *raja*" in Haloban until 1950, and if each new generation of *rajas* was appointed on average every 40 years, it is plausible to suggest that the Sultan of Pagaruyung may have appointed his youngest son as the first *raja* in the Islands around 1730. This would place the initial appointment well before the demise of Pagaruyung in 1833. Based on this estimation, subsequent appointments would have occurred as follows: the second *sutan* in 1770, the third in 1810, the fourth in 1850, the fifth in 1890, the sixth *sutan*—Setangkai Alam—from 1930 till the Japanese Occupation in 1942. The final figure, considered a "pretender", was Sutan Umar, who held the position until his death in 1950.

This oral historical reconstruction finds partial support in a personal interview conducted on October 1, 2014, in Bukittinggi with the present-day descendant of the Pagaruyung royal lineage, My interview

Note: Left: The *trombo* (family tree) red seal of the Tuangku *rajas*, descending from the first *raja*. Top right: Drawings by the late *Bapak* Gunawan Sakti Alam based on the *trombo* of the Haloban *rajas*, illustrating their family tree. Right: Pusaka (heirlooms) gifted to the *rajas* of Haloban. Middle right: a Malay-style *pedang* (sword), an Acehnese *rencong* (dagger), and (bottom) a Pagaruyung-style *rencong* (dagger). Bottom right: Haloban-style carvings on the hilt of a *keris* (dagger). Photograped in Singkil on October 24, 2014.

Figure 3.1 Documentation of Tuangku and Haloban *Rajas*

in Bukittinggi on October 1, 2014 with the current descendant of the Sultan of Pagaruyung, Daulat yang Dipertuan Raja Alam Pagaruyung (Figure 3.2). According to this source, the *trombo* (B.H.) or *tambo* (B.M.) of Pagaruyung contains accounts of approaches being made to the sultan of Pagaruyung to send his sons or other relatives to become king in various parts of Sumatra and Malaysia/Negeri Sembilan. They included Palembang, Jambi, Merak Giri, Sungei Padu, Aceh Singkil, and Negeri Sembilan.[29] Thus, as he told me, it is quite likely that the

[29] For example, the Sutan said in his reply to my question about the content of the *trombo* that the Sultan of Pagaruyung sent one prince to Aceh via Meulaboh and

Sultan of Pagaruyung was requested to send his son to become the first *raja* of Tuangku in the past.

In what follows, I shall outline the Urang Pulo's musical history, dividing it into key periods that correspond to major political changes in the former kingdom and the colonial and post-colonial governments. These political changes significantly influenced the level and quality of traditional music and dance performance among the people.

Note: The Daulat yang Dipertuan Raja Alam Pagaruyung (second from the left) with the first author (second from the right) and two of the Daulat's personnel. The full title of the Daulat is Sutan Haji Muhamad Taufiq Thaib Tuangku Mudo Mahkota Alam.

Figure 3.2 The Daulat yang Dipertuan Raja Alam Pagaruyung

E. The Musical History of Urang Pulo

Based on extensive ethnographic conversations with the elders, community members, and artists in Haloban, Asantola, Sialit, Natal, Singkil, Barus, Jago-jago, Sibolga, Padang, Saniang Baka and

another to the court at Asahan on North Sumatra's east coast: "... *Salah satu Sultan dikirim ke Aceh melimpah ke Meulaboh dan sebahagian berpindah ke Batu Bara di Asahan*."

Pagaruyung, I have divided the history of the Urung Pulo's music-culture into seven periods.

The First Period dates approximately from the early 18th century, when, according to oral tradition, the five *datuk* on Tuangku Island are believed to have sent a delegate to the highly esteemed sultan of Pagaruyung to request the appointment of a prince to rule the Urang Pulo and establish a local court. The sultan's youngest son was dispatched with his entourage, bringing with him elements of Pagaruyung's music and dance forms, and the Bundo Kanduang origin myth. On this cultural foundation, Haloban's artists created the unique and sacred *adok* dance for the *adat*-based celebrations of local weddings and circumcisions, incorporating song lyrics referencing Bundo Kanduang legend. Artists also initiated their own baby thanksgiving rituals with *dendang sikambang*-style lullabies and dances to celebrate the birth of a baby.

Meanwhile, the Urang Pulo continued to engage in the sailing and trading activities, maintaining close ties with the people at the twin courts at Barus with whom they had close affinity, partly through two-way *merantau* activity and intermarriage.[30] The Urang Pulo developed their own versions of Barus' (and perhaps other centres') couples dances with *joget* steps and hops. These dances were typically accompanied by vocal performance of either (i) slow, romantic *dendang sikambang* or (ii) fast, lively songs. When desired, musical accompaniment included the *biola* and *gandang (*frame drums).

The Second Period dates from ca. 1883 until 1942, when the Japanese invasion marked the end of Dutch colonial. The Dutch military gradually secured control over Aceh and its offshore islands from ca. the 1870s and fought the Dutch-Aceh war from 1833 to 1910. Haloban,

[30] Barus was a significant international port known for exporting camphor. The Portuguese trader Tome Pires, in 1512–1515, described it as the "very rich kingdom of Baros, which [was] also called Panchur or Pansur... [it was] bounded by Tico on one side and on the other side by the kingdom of Singkel" (Pires, [1944] 1976, p. 161–162). Additionally, its dual courts held considerable power (Drakard, 1982, p. 78).

the capital of the islands, was administratively part of the Singkel regency of the Netherlands East Indies. Despite colonial taxation, this period is remembered locally as one of relative prosperity. Some Islanders sailed to Barus, Sibolga, and even as far as Penang Island off the coast of Malaya to sell their goods and return with new clothes, salt and other luxuries. This era is captured in the *pantuns* of the Pulau Pinang song that accompanies the umbrella dance/*payung,* which is still so popular when danced by mixed primary school children in the Islands. The extensive local repertoire of ritual and entertainment songs and dances together with the martial arts and the *talibun* bardic tradition continued to be performed at ceremonies until the war.

The *Third Period* (1942–1949) included the Second World War and continuation of the Indonesian War of Independence. Although Japanese forces never set foot in the Islands, their control of the land and the sea lanes effectively severed trade with Sumatra's coast and Penang. Islanders were forced into self-sufficiency, and economic hardship resulted in the postponement or cancellation of life-cycle celebrations. As a consequence, musical and dance practices significantly declined during this time.

The *Fourth Period* (1949–1966) began after Indonesia's independence and continues into the early years of postcolonial republic. Although poverty persisted, traditional culture practices were revived. Community members supported each other in organising ceremonies, such as weddings, circumcisions and other life events through *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation). The elders presided at communal rituals and made sure the ancestral *adat* rules were kept, bards intoned the *nandong* and *sikambang* legends. Women continued to sing intricate lullabies, and artists trained young people to perform the traditional *adok* dance and other dances with *biola and gendang* accompaniment.

In 1951, the Kepulauan Banyak was designated as a district (*wilaya*h) within the residency of South Aceh in the province of North Sumatra. The local government in Haloban was led by the Assistant *Wedana*, *Bpk.* Ali Basa in Haloban, who was later succeeded by *Bpk.* Kasem Idris**.** A significant turning point occurred in 1965–66 when

country's first president, Soekarno, was overthrown by Suharto, who inaugurated the New Order regime, which began with the massacre of perhaps half a million suspected members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), including many inhabitants of Haloban which was a PKI stronghold. In Haloban five of the people's most competent and popular leaders disappeared, and their *camat, Bpk.* Kasem Idris, was replaced by *Bpk.* Abdul Foat who moved the Islands' administrative capital from Haloban to Pulau Balai. The inhabitants of Tuangku Island experienced a significant rise in unemployment and a general sense of demoralisation, as their economic activities became limited primarily to subsistence-level occupations, such as fishing, sailing, and small-scale gardening.

The *Fifth Period* (1965–1989) coincided with Suharto's New Order era. The people continued their lives as small farmers and fisherfolk. Cultural performances were largely limited to life events that occurred infrequently due to financial constraints. Suharto's *pembangunan*/development-policy government resulted in the creation of roads and other infrastructure in favoured parts of Indonesia, but almost totally excluded the Islands, which were a small part of the very large *kabupaten* of Aceh Selatan in North Sumatra province. So, the poverty of the people in Haloban and other population centres in the Islands persisted.

The *Sixth Period* (1989–2010) included the Reformasi Era, the 2004 tsunami, and the end of Aceh's separatist conflict in 2005. Despite broader political transformation, these events had minimal impact on the practice of the arts. Indonesia's Reformasi Era from 1989 on ushered in new democratic processes in a more decentralised government and gave more power to the *bupati* (local regents), who could carry out their business in a relatively independent way. In 1999, the *bupati* in Aceh-Singkil regency established the *kecamatan*/district of Pulau Banyak with its capital in Paula Balai. In 2001, he appointed Sutan Umar's (the "pretender *raja's*") grandson, *Bpk.* M Hasbi S.H., as *camat* of Haloban. The area was then divided into two *kecamatan:* Kecamatan Pulau Banyak and Pulau Banyak Barat, with the latter's

capital restored to Haloban. While modest infrastructure (e.g., roads and a health center) was developed in Pulau Balai, Haloban and other villages received limited investment.

The great tsunami of 26 December 2004 altered the Island's topography, but overall had a limited effect on the Islanders lives and the practice of the arts.[31] While the 2005 peace accord between the separatist Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and the Indonesian government brought political stability, GAM had minimal presence or influence in the Islands (pers. comm., elders in Haloban and Pulau Balai, in 2013).

The *Seventh* (2010–present) marks the increasing public visibility of the Island's cultural and ecological assets, particularly following the inaugural *Festival Penyu Hijau* (Green Turtle Festival) in 2010. However, its limited tourist draw meant subsequent festivals were postponed. Meanwhile, *Camat* M. Hasbi instituted new regulations that relaxed the *adat* requirements for local weddings and circumcisions and upset the elders. Only affluent families could afford full *adat* ceremonies including the sacred *adok* dance; others held reduced, legally sanctioned (*hukum*-based) ceremonies as in the circumcision ceremony described in Chapter V.

The election of Indonesia's new President, Joko Widodo ("Jokowi"), in August 2014 ushered in new signs of economic hope for the marginalised coastal communities, including the majority fisherfolk population in the Banyak island.[32] Indonesia's Minister for Maritime and Fisheries, *Ibu* Susi Pudjiastuti, signaled a commitment to strengthening the livelihoods of fisherfolk in maritime areas such as the Banyak islands. Minister Pudjiastuti implemented policies

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[31] Some islands were submerged and new ones appeared as a result of the tsunami, and the wells became salinated with sea water in some areas, as explained in Chapter II.

[32] Setiawan, K. (2016). *Old guard continues to constrain human rights reform in Indonesia*. Asian Currents. Retrieved December 10, 2016, from http://asaa.asn.au/old-guard-continues-constrain-human-rights-reform-indonesia/#sthash.z3jcLpP5.dpuf

aimed at improving access to modern fishing vessels and launched a high-profile crackdown on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by foreign fleets operating in Indonesian waters.[33] However, the material impacts of these maritime policy reforms in remote areas such as the Banyak Islands remained limited. Owing to their geographic isolation and marginal position outside major maritime trade corridors like the Strait of Melaka, the Banyak Islands did not benefit significantly from national infrastructure investments or capacity-building initiatives. Indeed, the economic optimism sparked by the Jokowi presidency did not, in the end, translate into substantive improvements in infrastructure or state support for the traditional livelihoods and popular musical arts (pers. comm., the elders in Haloban and Pulau Balai, 2014 and 2016).

There are only peripheral written references in the colonial and post-colonial literature to the petty princedom of Haloban, which for centuries functioned as a local cultural and administrative centre of Kepulauan Banyak. Though loosely affiliated with the more prominent inland polities of Pagaruyung and Barus, Haloban's historical prominence remain under-documented in written sources. Nonetheless, its memory continues to occupy a central place in the collective imagination of the Islanders, serving as a symbolic anchor for local identity and oral tradition.

The history of the Urung Pulo's music-culture may be analytically divided into seven distinct periods. However, from the Islanders' perspective, this history is experienced as a seamless continuum—richly interwoven with the remembered grandeur of Haloban's former kingdom and the elaborate *adat-istiadat* (customary norms and institutions) that evolved along with its artistic and ritual expressions.

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[33] As reported in the newspapers, President Jokowi stated that overfishing by foreigners causes Indonesia to suffer annual losses of over $20 billion (see "Explaining Indonesia's 'Sink the Vessels' Policy Under Jokowi," 2015, at http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/explaining-indonesias-sink-the-vessels-policy-under-jokowi/).

Haloban's inhabitants trace their former kingdom to a pre-Islamic era, predating the legendary episode in which a prince from Pagaruyung court was said to have been dispatched to rule over Haloban. This princely figure is believed to have replaced the islands' five original settlers who comprised the council of *datuk*/elders. Until the mid-twentieth century, the Islander's ceremonial arts continued to flourish in the royal Haloban court and other villages on the Tuangku, Baguk, and Ujung Batu islands. These artistic expressions were integral to the Urang Pulo's ceremonial lives, *adat* and ancestral belief system.

Importantly, the arts must be situated within a broader historical and cultural framework encompassing the western coast of Sumatra, a region whose, documented history extend back many centuries. These shared historical and cultural trajectories help explain observable continuities in ritual songs, dances, and *adat istiadat* between the Banyak Islands, Barus, and other west-coast towns and their hinterlands, as well as the Minangkabau *darek* (Mi., uplands) and *pasisieh* (coastal areas). Nevertheless, while cultural affinities exist, the expressive culture of Kepulauan Banyak remain distinctive, with numerous elements being entirely unique.

Haloban's royal history and links with prominent courts such as Pagaruyung and Barus are immortalised in the lyrics, particularly through performance of sacred *adok* dance. These dances, which continue to be performed at weddings and circumcisions ceremonies, feature lyrics referencing legendary figure such as Pagaruyung queen Bundo Kanduang and the hero Cindue Mato. Similarly, longstanding maritime and mercantile ties with Penang Island are memorialised in the lyric of the *dendang Pulau Pinang* and its associated *payung*/ "umbrella dance") (see chapters VI and VIII).

Likewise, the people's fishing, trading, shipping, and agricultural activities and links with the large neighbouring islands of Simeulue and Nias are referred to in various song texts, lullaby lyrics, and stories told by the *tukang talibun* (oral storytellers), as examined in Chapter VI and IX. The songs and stories document the historical links between Haloban and Sumatra's west-coastal ports and royal

courts, drawing attention to the lucrative international benzoin and camphor trade in the area over the centuries, which spanned from the early Christian era to the nineteenth century.

The legacy of colonial encounters—particularly with Portuguese, English and Dutch colonisers along Sumatra's west coast—is similarly encoded in the Islanders' performance traditions. This is most evident in the *langser,* also known as the *langser madam* dance, and its culturally affiliated counterpart of Nias descent, the *balanse madam* dance. Both forms, along with the accompanying *orkes gamat* musical ensemble, are still performed in two Nias-descendants villages in Padang, and will be discussed further in the chapters below.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGINAL STYLE OF THE LULLABIES (*BUAI*) IN DAILY AND CEREMONIAL USE

This chapter discusses the Islanders' once strong tradition of lullaby (*dendang buai)*[34] singing, known locally as *dendang/nyanyian menidurkan anak* ("child-sleeping song") singing. This genre encompasses poetic lyrics, vocal styles, and significant social functions, both within the intimate sphere of parents-child relationship and the broader cultural context. The lullabies are at once a most intimate expression of parental affection and care for young children. At the same time, they are vestiges of a baby-thanksgiving ritual which still exists on the Sumatran mainland but has nearly vanished from the Islands.

As its unaccompanied melismatic vocal style based on melodic formulae somewhat resembles that of the Sumatran west-coast mainland, the tradition was transplanted initially to the islands by migration, intermarriage, and trade contact. Over time, however, it has developed distinctive features, particularly in its linguistic hybridity. The integration of Jamu Pulo Malay and Haloban language elements influences both its music-lyric relationships and ornamental style.

[34] *Buai* is the Malay, including the Jamu-Pasisir spelling. The Islanders call it *bue*.

Although effort to revitalise this lullaby tradition in Kepulauan Banyak have begun, these remain in the earliest stages.

As on Sumatra's west coast, the Islanders' lullaby melodies sung to children daily divide into two categories: (i) a more traditional stratum, characterised by free rhythmic melodic style, elaborately ornamentation, the use of tonal materials and instrumental tunings; and (ii) a more recent style, shaped by diatonic tonal materials and implicit harmonic structures, drawn from *sikambang kapri* repertoire tuning—melodies associated with *buai*-based song-dance melodies that was historically accompanied by a *biola* and drums (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 222–241).[35] Below I shall discuss an examplIn the analysis that follows, I present and compare two lullaby performances. The first, representative of the traditional stratum, was recorded in Haloban on Tuangku Island in 2013, and sung by *Ibu* Rosmiani, a 60-year-old grandmother. The second, which belongs to the European-influenced category, was recorded in 2010 in Teluk Nibung on Pulau Ujung Batu and performed by Eriani, a 35-year-old mother. Both lyrics are in a mix of Haloban and Jamu Pulo speech varieties. *Ibu* Rosmiani's lyric has a higher proportion of Haloban words, with less overlap with Standard Malay, while *Ibu* Eriani's, lyric incorporate a higher proportion of Jamu-Malay words.

After analysing and comparing the two women's performances, I shall briefly compare the most traditional style with samples of European-influenced ceremonial lullaby singing and its context of baby-thanksgiving ceremonies in Sibolga on Sumatra's west coast which Kartomi recorded in 1972 (see Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 226–30).[36]

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[35] This tradition belongs to the Malay-Portuguese patois of music and dance that developed over the centuries after musician-servants of the Portuguese colonial power (in 1511–1641) settled in many parts of the Malay world, including Tugu (the birthplace of *kroncong* music), and courts in Sumatra, the Riau Islands and beyond. This hypothesis was developed by Kartomi (2012a, pp. 241–248).

[36] I also recorded lullabies sung by Islander immigrants from Nias who lived before in Kampung Teluk Nibung of Pulau Ujung Batu and now live in Suka Makmur of Pulau Tuangku), but as their verses were sung in the languages of Nias to different tonal materials and with different text-music relationships, I have not included them in this book.

On a daily basis, mothers—and occasionally fathers—continue to sing lullabies to their babies and small children, such as the two to be discussed below. The songs are actually remnants of a former baby ceremonial tradition.

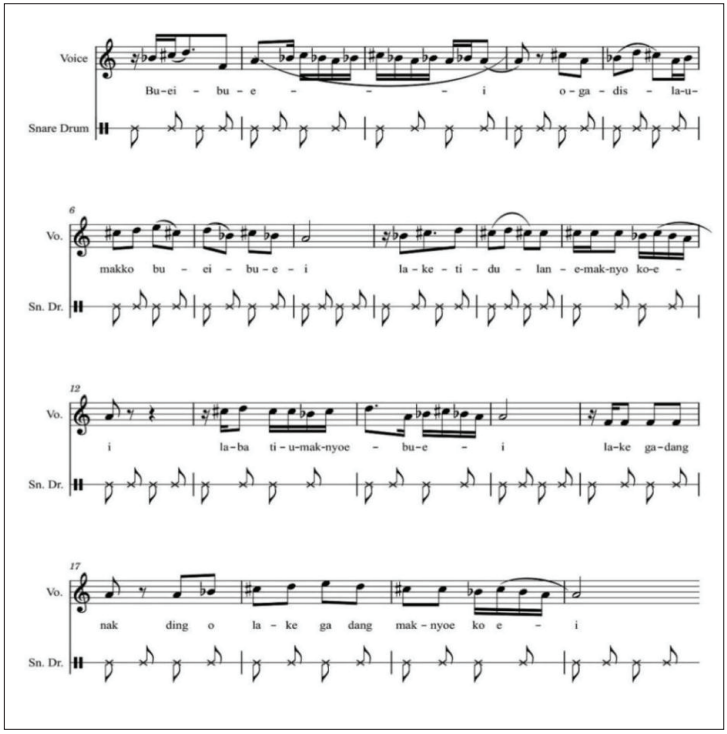
A. Lullaby sung by *Ibu* Rosmiani in Haloban

This elaborately ornamented melody, which is sung in free rhythmic melodic style using typically local tonal materials (tones 6 1 2 3 4 5/F A Bb C# D E) and melodic formulae (4 3 2 1/D C# Bb A and 1 2 3 4/A Bb C# D), is a *dendang/nyanyian menidurkan anak* ("child-sleeping song") in *sikambang asli* ("authentic *sikambang)* style. The absence of harmonic implications, modal structure, or Muslim musical elements—such as those found in *dikie* or other devotional genres—confirms its rootedness in pre-Islamic, local performance practice.

In this 2014 performance, *Ibu* Rosmiani took a deep breath and sang it in the strong, relatively high-pitched vocal style with melisma and other vocal ornamentation (*bungaran)* as she swayed a baby to sleep in a hammock swung from nails in the ceiling of her home in Haloban. As she was free to improvise within the flexible structure of the style, she ululated around the central tone based on typical melodic formulae in tones, halftones, and microtones with little tonal repetition, a high degree of melodic direction change, and an overall descending melodic direction/negative level shift. Her long melodically ornamented phrases were followed by rests as she breathed deeply before initiating the next long phrase (see Figure 4.1).

The first verse, addressed to the baby girl in mixed Haloban and Jamu Pulo speech varieties, was sung gently as she swayed her in the sling.

Buei buei	Sway, sway,
o gadis lau makko bue bue *Lake tidu lan e maknyo koei* girl *Laba tidu maknyoe bue* sway *Lake gadang nak ding o*	Oh your mother dearest girl, sway, sway Quickly, fall to sleep, you are my dearest Fall to sleep your mother dearest girl, Grow up soon, my dear
ake gadang mak nyoe koei	Grow up soon girl, you mother hopes my dear



Note: the notes with a quaver downward stem represent the sound and rhythm of the sling swaying to the right, while the notes with a quaver upward stem represent swaying to the right. There are two swings per measure in regular duple metre. The original recording was transcribed at the original pitch by Ari Palawi in Asantola village on October 10, 2013. Tempo: free (each beat is performed at approximately MM a quaver = 160–168).

Figure 4.1 *Buai* by Ibu Rosmiani (60 Years) in a Mix of Jamu and Haloban Languages

B. Lullaby and Variation sung by *Ibu* Eriani in Teluk Nibung

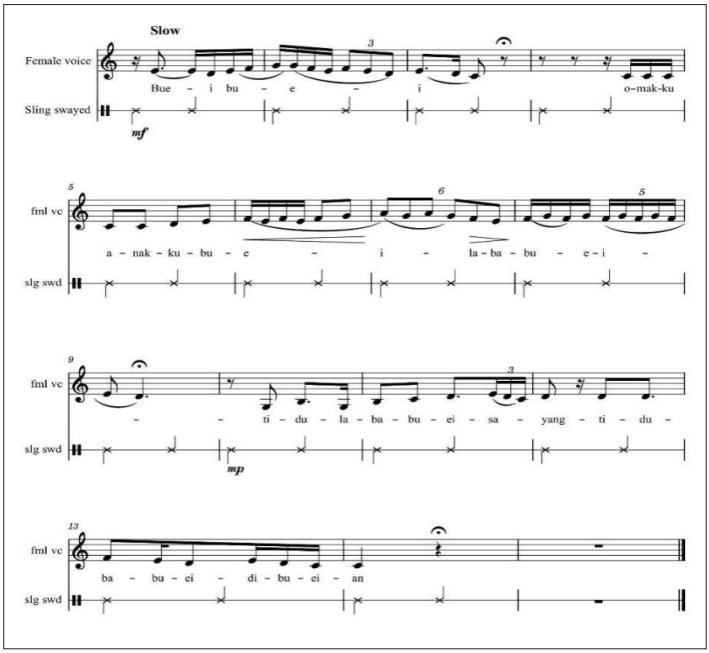
This *dendang buai* in the Jamu Pulo speech variety is sung to lyrics in *pantun* quatrains. Each line of text is paired with a melodic line followed by a brief pause. While the traditional pantun form is characterised by an 'abab' rhyme scheme across its two couplets, this convention is not consistently followed in *Ibu* Eriani's rendition, which is largely improvised. The full performance consists of 13 pantun verses as follows.

Buei… Buei	Sway ... sway,
Omakku anakku buai buaila babuai	My dear son, fall to sleep
Tidu nak babuai saying	Fall to sleep, my sweetheart
Tidu babuai di buaian	Sleep as you sway
Lake ma la gadang nak eiy	I hope you will soon grow up, my son
Kegadang nak lake mala nyo tenggi	Grow up soon and be tall
La bila la sikola nak,	Obtain knowledge soon,
Tuli-sikola nak jo mangaji	Study at school and learn to recite the Qur'an
Buai li nak ayun,	Swing, sway
Ayun buai la nak lanak saying	My dear son swing as you are swayed
Gadang malaisuk nak eiy,	When you grow up my child
Гadang is babalei guno	You can be useful to others
Kalau la tau nak,	If we know, child,
Kalau tau la nak eiy lah bakain panjang	If we know when we shall die in this universe
Saraso bakain eiy	Then we shall know truly
Saraso bakain malalo jaoh…	That life is short
Kalau la nak tau di rantau nak,	If you go to live elsewhere, child,
Tau di rantau nak bak mande mala	Find someone to look after you
Tompang saraso la bak mande nak eiy	As if she were your mother
Saraso bak mande nak kandong juo	Someone like your own mother

As shown in Figure 4.1, the singer freely ornaments a known diatonic melody, her local pacing and phrasing responding organically to the gentle swaying of the baby in a sling suspended from the ceiling.

Unlike *Ibu* Rosmiani's lullaby, which draws on local tonal systems and tuning, Eriani's melody is in a diatonic major scale, like the *dendang sikambang* melodies that are accompanied by a *biola* and frame drums (e.g. *Lagu Pulau Pinang*) as discussed in Chapter V. She uses melodic formulae (tones 4 3 2 1, 1 2 3 4, 5 4 3 2, 5 3 2 1, 4 3 2 1). However, they do not govern her melodic invention as in *Ibu* Rosmiani's melodies. Her melodic invention is based on a diatonic major scale, the tones she recognises in conversation as: *do re mi fa sol la si do,* or tones 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 in sol-fa-based number script. The central tone is tone 1 (C), the second most important tone is tone 5 (G) and the third most important tone is tone 4 (F). Tone 2 (D) is treated as an unstable tone that acts as a pivot note and can therefore sing implied harmonies in her melodic line, seeming to move from C major to F major.

In phrase 1, the singer establishes an implied C major feel in phrase 1, while by the end of phrase 2, tone 2 has emerged, enabling her to move to an implied G major for 2 bars. Phrase 3 remains in implied G major to the end of bar 9, then tone 2 appears again in phrase 4 to allow her to move back to the tonal centre and to end in C major (see Figure 4.2).



Note: Original recording and transcribed at original pitch by Ari Palawi in Teluk Nibung village, Pulau Ujung Batu, 17 June 2010. Tempo: Free (each beat is performed at approximately MM=50).

Figure 4.2 *Buai* by *Ibu* Eriani (38 Years) in Jamu Language

The melodic line of each verse couplet is usually repeated in all 13 *pantun* verses. However, in this particular recording, the singer introduces a notable variation in the sixth verse (see Figure 4.3). In this variation, the singer attempts to keep the melody in a high pitch range, starting from tone 3 (E), and ascends to the highest note 7 (B) from bars 1 to 6. In the second half of the phrase (bars 7 to 10), she returns to the original melodic line. Typically, the melisma comprises passages of three, five, or six semiquavers. In her subsequent variation of the melody below, she incorporates triplet rhythms and introduces a chromatic inflection—lowered tone 7 (Bb) in line 1—for added tonal colour. This modification, however, does not alter the implied harmonies. The melodic style is similar to her performance of verse 1.

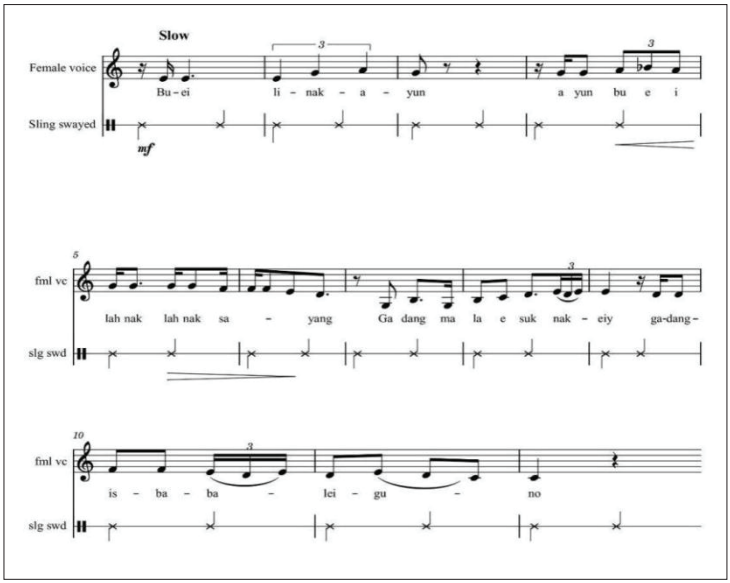


Figure 4.3 Variation of *Buai* Sung by *Ibu* Eriani in Teluk Nibung

C. The Singers and Their Listeners

The singer of the first *buai*, *Ibu* Rosmiani, resides in Haloban with her extended familiy and regularly sings *buai* to soothe her granddaughter to sleep. Within her community, she is widely respected as a proficient singer of other local oral traditions. For example, she is an excellent singer of *dikie* (*zikir),* and she used to teach others this form of intoning Sufi-Muslim lyrics, many of which emphasise remembrance (*zikir)* and praise God and the Prophet Muhammad.

The second *buai* singer, *Ibu* Eriani of Teluk Nibung, could only sing in the Jamu language. As explained previously, Jamu has more concordances with Malay than the *bue* sung by *Ibu* Rosmiani from Haloban. When *Ibu* Eriani sang a story about a young *perantau* (a person who has migrated or travelled abroad), she advised him to find a substitute for his mother, as his mother feared she might no longer be alive to care for him upon his return.

During this performance, one of *Ibu* Eriani's close friend—who was listening—suddenly burst into tears, unable to hold her emotions at the mention of the *rantau*. She later explained that the songreminded her own mother's death, which had occurred while her brother was away in the *rantau* and unable to return in time for her mother's funeral due to his involvement in a political movement in mainland Aceh. Although the story she sang was not directly related to her mother's death, she was significantly affected emotionally by the performance. Lullabies not only function to lull a child to sleep, but may also move listeners to tears.

D. The Comparison of The Islander's and West-Coast Sumatran Lullabies

This section compares two primary categories of lullabies found in Kepulauan Banyak, referring to some samples of ceremonial lullaby singing recorded by Kartomi in 1972 in the context of baby-thanksgiving ceremonies on the west coast of Sumatra (see Kartomi 2012a: music example 10.1, p. 227). Then I shall compare them.

As observed in *Ibu* Rosmiani's performance (Figure 4.1), the ceremonial lullaby (*dendang/nyanyian menidurkan anak)* sung by *Ibu* Roswani Anwar and transcribed below is an authentic *buai sikambang asli* ("original *sikambang*-style lullaby") without any implied harmonic facets or Arabic tonal or modal characteristics. *Ibu* Roswani Anwar sang it in a strong, relatively high-pitched, ornate style replete with melisma and *bungaran* of west-coast lullaby singing as she swayed a child to sleep at a baby-thanksgiving ceremony attended by a house full of people in Sibolga in 1972.

Similar to *Ibu* Rosmiani, she breathed deeply before beginning a line and released her voice gradually across a long melodic line until she ran out of breath. Her performance moved in tones, halftones, and microtones around the main tone [tone 1/E] at slow tempo and in free rhythm. Particulary notable is her use of melodic formulae, with phrases 1 and 2 followed by an embellished statement of melodic formula 1 7 6 5/E D# C B in phrase 3. However, she inserted different

embellishments in the repeat that followed, after which the melody expanded to a range of six semitones. "The heartfelt intensity of her singing moved her attentive audience, who kept exclaiming *O lamak benar! (*"Oh, very nice!"), or *Aduh suara!* ("What a voice!"). The passion in her voice "made her voice moan" (*mendayukan suara)* or weep with feeling (Kartomi, 2012a, p. 228).

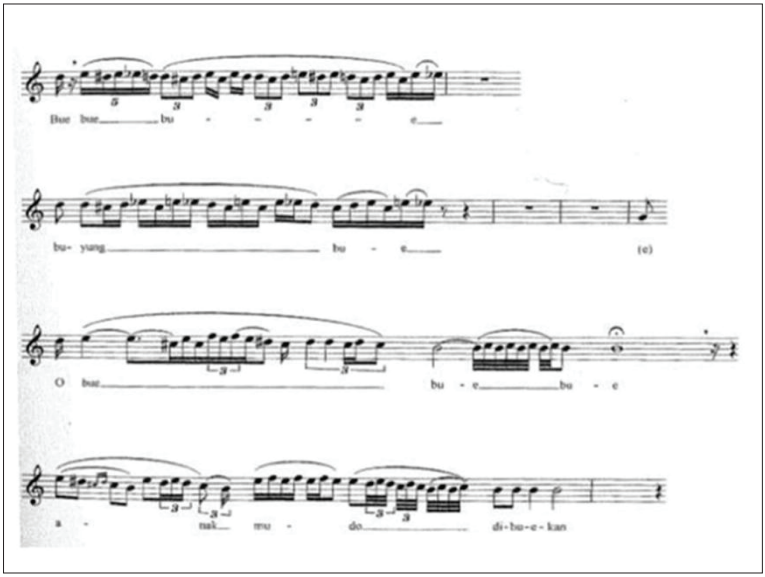
The lyric was partly improvised in 'abab' rhyming couplets (mainly) as follows:

Bue buyung bue o bue	Sway, little boy, sway
Anak mudo dibuekan	Young child is being swayed
Tanjak-tanjak Palembang dari jao	Palembang is seen protruding from afar
Ayun anak buekan bue	Sway, child sway
Anak mudo dibuekan salamo ado	Young child in the sling, some day
Banyak-banyak batanam ubi tanah taleh keladi,	You will plant a great deal of cassava and taro

The primary difference between *Ibu* Roswani Anwar's ceremonial performance in Sibolga and *Ibu* Rosmiani's more intimate singing in Haloban lies in the ritual context and vocal elaboration. *Ibu* Rosmiani's singing formed part of a now-rare extended baby-welcoming ritual attended by family and community members. In contrast, *Ibu* Eriani sang informally to a baby in her home. Nonetheless, both singers share stylistic features, especially when they take a deep breath before singing each line and they pause at the end of a line in silence. The structure and content of the partly improvised verses sung, the slow tempo, and the use of free metre and rhythm are also similar.

The ceremonial lullabies recorded in 1972 also differed structurally and ritually. Delivered by a female shaman, they functioned not only to soothe the child but to invoke ancestral presence and convey blessing for the baby's future. In the next part of the days-long ceremony, the shaman, prayer leader (*imam*), elders, parents, and other relatives formally snipped off a piece of the baby's hair as they welcomed it into their daily lives. The singer commented on the baby's

possible path to adulthood and other matters in the song. Later, the guests sprinkled the baby with yellow rice grains *(beras kunyit)*. After *magrib* prayers in the early evening, the ceremony transitioned to a more performative phase, featuring *sikambang kapri* songs—comprising *pantun* or *syair* quatrains, a violinist, a pair of *gandang* players, and dancing by male couples. The accompanying repertoire included songs such as *Pulau Pinang,* which continue to be performed in the Island during secular *sikambang* dancing events (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 225–227).



Note: Original Recording by Hidris and Margaret Kartomi in Sibolga, January 1972. Original transcribed by Margaret Kartomi. Tempo: MM= 160–168

Figure 4.4 *Buai* in Sibolga, North Sumatra Province

E. Some Lyrics and a List of Jamu-Pulo Words in Lullabies

This section offers a brief comparative analysis of the lyrical and musical setting of the lullaby lyrics from Kepulauan Banyak with those

transcribed from a mainland performance recorded by Kartomi in 1972 in Sibolga, located on Sumatra's west coast (see Transcriptions in Kartomi, 2012a, p. 227). This chapter concludes with a few poetic lyrics from Kepulauan Banyak lullabies and a list of Jamu Pulo words sung in the lullabies (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2), accompanied by their Malay and English glosses, and comments on the lexical correspondences between Jamu Pulo and Malay words in the lyrics.[37]

The partly improvised lyrics of the Islander lullaby performances in Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3 are very similar to those of the mainland lullaby in Figure 4.4. They all focus on local words that translate approximately as "sleep, sway, young child" and contain terms or metaphors of endearment. Yet the melodic settings of Figures 4.2 and 4.3 on the one hand and 4.4 on the other are poles apart. The lullaby recorded by Kartomi in Sibolga (Figure 4.4) on mainland Sumatra in 1972 represents an older, intensely melismatic style of melisma comprising small intervals [half tones, full tones, and intervals of three or four half tones] and no western harmonic implications whatever. The singer's delivery is characterised by highly variable rhythms performed in free metre, interrupted only when the singer pauses for breath. This results in a flowing and asymmetrical melodic line which closely resembles the 'tumbling strain' melodic style melody [to use Curt Sachs' term], in reference to Aboriginal Australian cultures [Sachs, 1962, p. 44].

The other two singers, whose performances were recorded in the Islands (Haloban and Teluk Betung) in 2013 and 2010, respectively, use very little melisma, preferring mainly syllabic settings and using both large and small intervals. The two Islander singers are influenced by international diatonic melodies with harmonic implications that they hear on the media. Thus, they represent a later tradition of lullaby singing rather than the "tumbling strain" variety. In Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.4, the singers pause at the end of a stream of melody. However, the melismatic content of the Haloban singer's delivery is

[37] I am grateful to linguist *Bapak* Kismullah of Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh for advice on these words and their glosses.

considerably more restrained than that of the Sibolga performance. Meanwhile, the singer in Figure 4.3 (Teluk Nibung) employs an almost entirely syllabic setting throughout her performance.

The following Table 4.1 presents a set of Jamu Pulo lexical items found in the lullabies discussed (in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2), along with their corresponding Malay and English glosses.

Table 4.1 Jamu Pulo–Malay Lexical Correspondences in the Lullabies from Haloban and Teluk Nibung

Jamu	Malay	English gloss
[anak mudo]	[anak muda]	young child
[ayun]	[ayun]	swing
[bak]	[bak]	(be) like
[bila]	[waktu]	time
[buai]	[buai]	sway
[gadang]	[dengan cepat]	soon
[gadi]	[gadis]	girl
[guno]	[guna]	use/means/meaning
[jo]	[juga]	too
[kalaula]	[kalaulah]	if (softened with particle la = lah in Malay)
[ko]	[kau]	you
[lake]	[lekas]	quickly
[mangaji]	[mengaji]	recite the Qur'an
[nak, anak]	[anak]	child
[nak]	[nak]	want to/going to
[saraso]	[serasa]	as though
[sayang]	[sayang]	dear
[sikola]	[sekolah]	school
[tau]	[tahu]	know
[tenggi]	[tinggi]	rall
[tidu]	[tidur]	slee
[tompang]	[topang]	support
[tuli]	[belajar]	learn

F. Two Styles and Several Functions of Lullaby Singing

As outlined throughout this chapter, two musical categories of lullaby singing continue to hold an important place in the Islanders' lives. Both styles are unaccompanied and sung in relatively free rhythm, metre and tempo to lengthy lyrics in pantun form. The first category, presumed to be the older of the two—is characterised by elaborately ornamented melodies constructed on standard four-tone melodic formulae. These feature primarily small intervals with occasional melodic leaps. The second type, by contrast, employs diatonically structured melodies that exhibit harmonic implications in their melisma. Both sets of lyrics are in a mix of Haloban and Jamu Pulo speech varieties. However, *Ibu* Rosmiani's *buai* reflects a higher proportion of Haloban lexicals items and show a fewer points of correspondence with standar Malay, while *Ibu* Eriani's performance—delivered in Jamu Pulo—contain a greater proportion of Jamu-Malay words.

As is also the case on Sumatra's west coast, the most immediate and practical function of the lullabies in the Islands is to calm and soothe infants to sleep. Through daily repetition, these lullabies expose the baby with the sounds and the musical and textual idioms of his/her own culture. They also constitute the baby's first sustained opportunity to hear the beautiful lullaby repertoire. Thus, the lullabies become the basis of the baby's subsequent musical experiences, and they influence the baby's knowledge of the music-culture into which s/he is born for life, allowing the child to grow up with a deep knowledge of the culture's classical vocal style and repertoire.

The lullabies also serve at least three functions for parents and grandparents. Lullabies evoke memories of their own childhood and past familial experiences, while also providing a medium through which they can process and express a range of emotions, including longing, grief, frustration, and hope. Moreover, singing lullabies allows parents to express their hopes and prayers for the child.

At a broader communal level, lullabies (*buai*) play a vital role in the preservation and transmission of linguistic, spiritual, and historical knowledge. They reinforce the community's connection to its ancestral heritage and express collective values such as maternal devotion, religious faith, and emotional burden or migration. In this way, lullabies also serve as repositories of social memory, preserving narratives of displacement and separation—such as the recurring motif of parents and children separated by *rantau* (migration). Thus, when a *buai* is sung repeatedly, it can preserve communal experiences and stories from the past and become a historical record.

Nevertheless, this tradition is increasingly under threat, particularly in Pulau Balai—the most cosmopolitan town—where many young people have lost interest in their traditional music culture due to their exposure to international pop music in the media. Few youth in such areas are able to sing traditional lullabies. In response to this decline, recent efforst have been initiated to promote and revitalise interest in this important and distinctive part of the Islanders' musical repertoire. These include sending a lullaby singer to perform overseas. However, these initiatives are still in their nascent stages and it remains to be seen whether they generate sustained community engagement or not.

CHAPTER V

SIKAMBANG, THE ISLANDERS' CORE MUSICAL ARTS TRADITION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SUMATRA'S WEST COAST

Sikambang refers both to a cycle of legends and to a broader category encompassing the solo and responsorial vocal repertoire—known locally as performed by the men and the women of Kepulauan Banyak. This reportoire includes the lullabies, solo songs, song-dances accompanied by violin and frame drum, and *talibun* narrative poems recited in *dendang sikambang* style by bardiac singers.

This chapter provides a contextual and analytical account of male ceremonial singing and song-dances with instrumental accompaniment performed in the *dendang sikambang* style. It also touches on the lesser-known, clandestine female practice of composing and performing *dendang sikambang* while gathering firewood with their female friends in the forest. It focuses mainly on the current practices in the villages of Haloban and Asantola on Tuangku Island, where the traditions are strongest. These are compared with both Kartomi's earlier accounts (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 220–226) and my own field experiences along the west coast of Sumatra.

The main sources for this chapter are the *dendang sikambang* field recordings that I collected in Kepulauan Banyak, Nias, and several villages on the west coast of North Sumatra and West Sumatra in 2010, 2013 and 2014. Additional materials include a DVD documenting a "complete" wedding ceremony in Singkil in 2004 and a DVD of a traditional *adat*-based circumcision ceremony in Haloban in 2007. To delineate Haloban's *dendang sikambang* style from other *dendang* styles on Sumatra's Malay-west coast, I have also compared my recordings of the Islanders' *dendang sikambang* with some of Kartomi's unpublished field recordings in many villages on Sumatra's west coast in 1972, 1981, 1982 and 1986 (see Kartomi Collection in the Margaret Kartomi Gallery of Musical Instruments and Artefacts).

As noted, s*ikambang* serves as a comprehensive term for both solo and responsorial singing and song-dances with violin and frame drum accompaniment in the Islands. While this tradition shares certain stylistic and structural affinities with the *sikambang* genres of the Sumatran west coast—particularly the region between Singkil and Sibolga—it also features notable divergences. Accordingly, before examining the *sikambang* tradition in the Banyak Islands, I outline and compare Kartomi's findings on west-coastal *sikambang* practices with own.[38] The *sikambang* tradition on the west coast divides into two large categories: (i) unaccompanied *sikambang pasisir asli* ("original coastal *sikambang*") and (ii) *sikambang kapri* (*kapri*-style *sikambang* which is accompanied by *biola* and *gandang (*Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 221–224). The former includes solo and group responsorial *dendang sikambang* singing in *pantun* or *syair* poetry, while the latter includes a repertoire of around 16 song-dances with *biola* and *gandang* accompaniment (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 221–226). However, my field research in 2012 and 2014 indicates that the unaccompanied *sikambang pasisir asli* and accompanied *sikambang kapri* are not differentiated in Kepulauan

[38] Kartomi (2012a, p. 218) argues that *sikambang* is a key term in the Pasisir Sumando performing arts. Pasisir Sumando is actually a Minangkabau term for the Malay west coast Sumatra. It was probably used because the people were descendants of migrants from West Sumatra province. *Sumando* can mean 'guest' (I., *orang datang*/*tamu*) or migrants (*perantau*) from Minangkabau.

Banyak, that although the two genres are practiced in the Islands, those two terms are not used at all. Thus, all the solo and group responsorial singing in the Islands as well as the song-dances with violin and frame drum accompaniment are included under this term. Moreover, versions of the *sikambang* legend are told differently by bards in Kepulauan Banyak and Nias.

Within this cultural context, the term *pendendang* denotes a skilled *dendan*g performer. The following sections of the chapter will examine key stylistic features of Islander *pendendang* performance, including aspects of musical metre, rhythm, formulaic melodic construction and ornamentation.

A. The *Sikambang* Legend and its Sung Poetic Lyrics

In her book, *Musical Journeys in Sumatra*, Kartomi recounted two versions of the local legend of *sikambang* in several districts and regencies between Sorkam and Natal in North Sumatra province (2012a, pp. 228, 404). The first version centers on a mermaid named Si Kambang (with *Si* functioning as a feminine prefix/she), who sings a melancholic *dendang* after failing to retrieve a golden comb belonging to her mortal mistress, Queen Maharani Putri Runduk. The queen had accidentally dropped the comb into the sea. The mermaid's lament was overheard by a passing fisherman, who is so captivated by her ethereal voice that he memorizes the melody and lyrics. As he continues to sing it wherever he goes, the song spreads, eventually giving rise to a new genre of sorrowful music.

The second version relates to the death of Si Kambang's mistress, the Queen, who, in her desperate attempt to avoid an arranged marriage to *Raja* Jonggi, throw herself into the sea. She then ascends to heavens. In both versions, Si Kambang is portrayed as a female singer whose lament became the prototype for an entire genre of solo and responsorial vocal music, as well as song-dances with instrumental accompaniment—now recognized collectively as *sikambang*. However, my research in Haloban and some Sumatran towns between Sorkam

and Singkil in 2013 found that the legendary character Si Kambang who is believed to be the source of the *dendang sikambang* genre is presented as a male character and that the legend is told in several other different ways.

According to a version, recorded in Bukit Batupangan village in the Barus district of the Central Tapanuli Regency of North Sumatra, the *dendang* prototype was first sung by a fisherman who sailed from the mouth of the river near Sibolga across the bay to Mursala Island. Anxious about his inability to catch fish to feed his family, he expressed his despair through a sorrowful *dendang.* Other fishermen, moved by the melody, adopted and spread the song. The following *pantun* verse, still sung today by communities between Sorkam and Singkil, is believed to be the earliest example of the *dendang sikambang*:

Payakumbuh kotanya ngampek	There are four towns in the Payakumbuh district (koto)
Basimpang jalan ka limbanang	Limbanang village lies in the centre
Jalo lusuh ikan ndak dapek	The net has broken and fish cannot be caught
Badanlah dingin dek baranang	I would swim (and catch them) but the water is too cold

As is typical of Malay *pantun*, the first couplet contains an indirect allusion, while the second conveys the emotional or narrative content. This particular verse, often performed at high pitch and volume, expresses the fisherman's despair, who knows he cannot feed his family that day. In subsequent verses, moral advice is offered —encouraging diligence in youth to ensure well-being in old age (pers. comm. *Bpk.* Rajidun Tanjung, Batu Pangan Village, Barus, 26 October, 2014). The fisherman who first sang this lament was later remembered as *Si Kambang,* the originator of what became known as *dendang sikambang* style.

In Kepulauan Banyak, especially in Pulau Tuangku, at least three further variants of the legend circulate, all of which present the first *pendendang sikambang* as male. One version tells a prince named Aule in Pagaruyung who fell in love with and impregnated his royal aide,

Kambang. Upon learning of the affair, the king ordered their execution in the forest. However, the guards, unable to carry out the king's orders, abandoned the couple in separate parts of the jungle—one to the east and the other to the west. In one variant, the lovers eventually find each other again after calling out each other's names. In two other versions, Kambang dies,—either at the hands of Prince Aule or during childbirth. In both versions, Aule sings a lament to calm their crying baby. A bird flying overhead hears the *dendang,* remembers it, and continues to sing it. Over time, the melody spreads throughout the region. This lament, passed down through generations, is said to have inspired the creation of a lullaby (*dendang buai*, or *dendang membuaikan anak*), sung while gently rocking infants in Pulau Tuanku, Kepulauan Banyak (pers. comm. from *Bpk.* Misri Caniago in Haloban, Pulau Tuangku, 9 October 2013).

Despite the variety of local narratives, communities in Kepulauan Banyak and along the west coast of Sumatra consistently agree that the term *sikambang* encompasses both the oral legend and the complete musical tradition associated with it. This includes the full vocal repertoire—both solo and responsorial—as well as the 16 established *sikambang* song-dances with instrumental accompaniment; and particular performances of these genres.

B. The *Sikambang* Repertoire and Associated Performance Rules

As previously noted, the full repertoire of *sikambang* songs and song-dances is performed exclusively during the most complete and traditional of *adat* (customary) ceremonies, known as *baralek adat.* These ceremonies include weddings, circumcisions and—though now extremely rare in the Banyak Islands—baby thanksgivings rituals, which were more commonly observed along Sumatra's west coast until the 1980s (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 220–222). It is likely that such ceremonies were once regularly performed in the Islands as well.

The complete repertoire in Kepulauan Banyak consists of the following sixteen *sikambang* song-dances with instrumental accom-

paniment: *adok* (lit. meaning "traditional customs"/*adat*), *Bungkus* ("a package"), *pondok batu* ("stone corner"), *anak Padang* ("someone born in Padang"), *sampayan* (J. "You"), *mak inang* ("wetnurse"), *perak-perak* ("silver objects or coins"), *lelehusen* ("a *pecel* vegetable dish"), *pulau Pinang* ("Penang Island") *alias payung* ("umbrella"), *siantung* ("a hanging object"), *sinandong* (a song in the slow, sad Malay category) alias *sikambang lawi* ("sea *sikambang*"), *sikambang Uci* (Uci is a girl's nickname), *sikambang asli* ("original *sikambang"), sikambang kepri* (*sikambang* with *kapri*-style violin and frame drum accompaniment)[39] and *Sikambang Boton* (Boton is a place name). Their Malay *joget*-like dance movements were presumably once performed by mixed couples, but from at least three generations ago the female role in each couple has been played by a male dancer, who sometimes wears a scarf/*slendang* (M.) over his shoulders to symbolically represent the feminine role. During my field research, I also observed partial performances of this same *sikambang* repertoire among migrants from Kepulauan Banyak residing in mainland Sumatra and on the eastern coast of Nias.

From the above list, the songs *Sikambang Lawi, Sikambang Guci* and *Sikambang Boton* are no longer remembered by most artists in Haloban. *Sikambang Asli* and *Sikambang Kepri* are primarily performed in selected villages in west-coastal Sumatra (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 235–244), but even there complete *sikambang* performances are now rare and limited to only in a few locations. Currently, eleven of the sixteen pieces are still performed in Haloban, with the last five having fallen out of use. At a *baralek*/ceremony, two of them (*Siantung* and *Lelehusen)* are only performed during the daytime—between the end of the *baralek* procession and the wedding or circumcision ceremony. In contrast, pieces such as *Sinandong* or *Sikambang Lawi, Sikambang Guci, Pulau Pinang, Perak Perak, Mak Inang, Sampeyan* may be performed either during the day or at night.

[39] *Kapri* probably refers to the Kepri area in the Mediterranean where the European violin influence in the Malay world originated (Kartomi, 2012a, p. 235–240).

I shall now introduce the *baralek* rules and procedures in Haloban and Asantola (a village of former Haloban inhabitants), and then describe a circumcision ceremony held in Asantola in 2014.

C. Baralek Ceremonies in Haloban: The Male *Sikambang* Ceremonial Tradition and its Music and Dance

In the villages of Haloban and Asantola, ceremonial practices—particularly those involving music and dance—are governed by a council of senior male elders known as the *ninik mamak*. This term, originally from Minangkabau cultural tradition, refers to the hereditary male leaders within matrilineal kinship structures. As Sanday (2002, p. 258) explains, *ninik mamak* denotes "senior males in a matriarchal Minangkabau family." The concept was long ago transplanted to the Islands from Minangkabau communities and west-coastal Malay Sumatran villages, along with the term *baralek* ("traditional ceremony") and the names for the *galombang duobale* and *randai* dances performed in Islander *baralek* processions.

According to local belief, the term *ninik mamak* was first introduced to Haloban and the former Kingdom of Tuangku by the prince who, under the authority of the Sultan of Pagaruyung, established the Tuangku kingdom in the 18th century (see Chapter III). Not surprisingly, however, in the transmission *ninik mamak* and other terms from Pagaruyung lost all of their Minangkabau matriarchal connotations. The Islanders' *ninik mamak* and associated *adat istiadat* practices are quite different from those of their counterparts in West Sumatra today.

Until approximately the 1980s, the *baralek* ceremonies—particularly those associated with weddings and circumcisions—lasted a week or more. During this time, the *ninik mamak* mandated the sacrifice of a buffalo or four goats to feed the large number of guests. The *baralek* included daily shamanic rituals, which have significantly declined in recent decades due to rising tensions between Islamic orthodoxy and traditional animist practices, as well as the formal prohibition

of practices considered to constitute *ilmu sihir* (black magic)[40]. Few villagers today have the resources—time as well as money—to hold a *baralek* for longer than one day and night, despite the customary mutual help offered by a host's neighbours, and even if they can combine the ceremonies of two or more families to save costs.

In response to these changing circumstances, the *ninik mamak* instituted a bifurcation of ceremonial categories: *baralek adat* (customary/traditional ceremonies) and *baralek hukum* (legally sanctioned or simplified ceremonies). To obtain permission to hold *baralek adat*, the host must sacrifice a buffalo (or equivalent supply of meat) for the ritual feast. Such a ceremony permits the full array of rituals—both shamanic and Islamic—the installation of an elaborately adorned *pelaminan* (throne for the bridegroom or circumcision boy), symbolic ceiling hangings within the host's residence, and the performance of the complete repertoire of song-dances over at least three days and nights. In contrast, a *baralek hukum* may be held with more modest offerings, such as a goat or chicken. It involves fewer ritual activities, simpler decorations, and a restricted set of performances confined to a single day and night.

Ultimately, the elders base their decision to approve a *baralek adat* or its simplified counterpart primarily on the host's financial capacity. In fact, the elders' decision to allow a prospective host to hold a "complete" *adat*-based *baralek* as opposed to a limited *hukum*-based ceremony depends on the proposer's financial feasibility. The crucial difference between the two categories from the performers' point of view is that the sacred *adok* (lit. *adat*) dance described below can only be performed at an *adat*-based ceremony.[41]

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[40] *Bpk*. Miswadi, the Kepala Kampung (village Head) in Teluk Nibung told me that his village is feared by some would-be visitors because of the skills of its *dukun* for "black magic", despite it being a criminal offence. Rumour has it that the *dukun* can punish a singer of *dendang* whom he wishes to punish by willing him to lose his voice.

[41] This paragraph and subsequent paragraphs are based on interviews with the *ninik mamak* in Haloban, especially *Bpk*. Anhar Sitanggang and his brothers, in Haloban in 2012, 2014, and 2016.

Several years ago, Haloban's *Camat* (government district head) was able to afford to hold an *adat*-based ceremony in Haloban, but that was a rare occurrence, and it was resented by the rest of Haloban's population. Many perceived the ceremony as an extension of the *Camat*'s family's contested claim to royal lineage and lands—seen by some as a modern-day revival of the "pretender sultan's" ambitions. Consequently, the ceremony was widely believed to have been financed through ill-gotten resources.

Lengthy preparations precede the holding of a *baralek adat* or a *baralek hukum* at Haloban and other villages on Tuangku Island. Given the infrequency of full *baralek adat* ceremonies, my ethnographic observations focus on a *baralek hukum*. However, first I shall describe the preparations for a ceremony.

D. Preparations for an *Adat*- or *Hukum*-based Ceremony on Pulau Tuangku

Following the host's request to hold a circumcision ceremony, the *ninik mamak (*elders) hold several meetings to evaluate both the proposed ceremonial budget and the procedural alignment with customary (*adat*) law. The essential aspect of a "complete" *adat*-based *baralek* is the host's ability to fund daily feasts for a substantial number of guests over a period of at least three days. This typically entails the ritual slaughter of a buffalo or, alternatively, a minimum of four goats. When such material and symbolic obligations are met, the ceremony will be classified as *adat*-based, thereby permitting the performance of the sacred *adok* dance—a ritual invitation for ancestral spirits to descend—alongside the full range of *sikambang* songs, dance-songs, and ceremonial embellishments.[42]

[42] The sacred *adok* dance is rarely performed today, partly because few men remember how to perform it. Fortunately, we at Monash University were able to record the *adok* song-dance when *Bpk*. Anhar Sitanggang visited us with four other dancers and performed it at a concert on the campus on 28 September, 2016.

In instances where the host cannot meet the financial and ritual requirements stipulated for an *adat*-based ceremony, the elders determine that the event must instead be conducted under (Islamic legal) guidelines. During their final preparatory meeting—typically held on the eve of the ceremony—the elders attend a performance to select *dendang sikambang* pieces and publicly announce their formal classification of the ceremony. This announcement confirms whether the event is a wedding or a circumcision, and whether it is to be conducted in accordance with or *hukum*.

The description of the ceremony below is based on interviews conducted with local elders, women and artists, and a video recording of a *hukum*-based circumcision ceremony (*baralek sunat)* in Asantola village, near Haloban, on 20 October, 2014.

E. Description of a *Hukum*-Style Circumcision Ceremony in Asantola

On the eve of the ceremony, the *ninik mamak* convened to enjoy a brief performance of *dendang sikambang,* after which they formally announced that the following day's *baralek* would be a law-based circumcision ceremony. Two goats were to be sacrificed for the communal feast, and during the day there would be a hair-cutting and *berdandan* (dressing ritual) ceremony with women singing *dikie* choruses (M., alias *zikir:* Ar., songs of praise of Allah and the Prophet Muhammed), a morning procession, an afternoon singing session, a late afternoon procession around the village, and male dancing of the *sikambang* repertoire of song-dances all night.

As expected for the *hukum*-based circumcision ceremony, the event lasted only one day and one night, and it lacked the sacred *adok* dance and formerly shaman-led ritual invocations which differentiated each day's proceedings in *adat*-based ceremonies in the past. Indeed, knowledge of these matters, it is claimed, is now lost, for Haloban ostensibly no longer has a practicing *dukun*. It also lacked the full symbolically meaningful decorations on the *pelaminan* and hangings from the ceiling, though some were hung. However, the

ninik mamak did allow the traditional processions with performances around the streets to be held in the morning and late afternoon, with performances of the *randai* and *gelombang duo baleh* martial arts-based dances in front of the host's home at the end of the procession. They allowed the male host and male guests to enjoy an afternoon session of *dendang sikambang* performances, and to perform some of the sixteen *sikambang* song-dances that night from aprproximately 9:00 p.m. until around 8:00 a.m. the next morning.

Early in the morning on the day of the *baralek*, the boy's hair was ceremonially trimmed (M. *menggunting*) ceremony and he was ceremonially dressed by his attendants in formal attire to the accompaniment of women singing *dikie* in the front room of the home. Friends and relatives, including many children, gathered outside the host's home to start the *mengarak* ("processing") around the village. A *pendendang* prepared to sing *(badendang)* a series of *pantun*, accompanied by a dozen or so men who were ready to play a repetitive rhythm on the *gandang* that they held in both hands. A portable loudspeaker system powered by a wet-cell battery was wheeled alongside the procession to amplify the singer's voice and announcements.

Note: Left: A boy having his hair ceremonially trimmed at his circumcision ceremony in Asantola in 2014. Center and right: *Gandang* players and a *biola* player sitting cross-legged on the host's verandah as they accompany a *pendendang* singing.

Figure 5.1 Circumcision Ceremony and Music Accompaniment

After loudly exclaiming the words *'a-re----to---'* at high pitch, the lead *pendendang* sang the following *pantun* verses in a loud, high-pitched voice:

Ambik pandan anyam katika	Take the pandan leaves and weaving mat
kambangkanlalu dialaman	(When finished) lay it on the ground of the yard
Tasuo isuk kato	If we have a misunderstanding in the near
batingka	future
Baok bagurau kahalaman	Please don't have hard feelings while we sit on the mat
Pulau asok pulau kiramat	Pulau Asok is a sacred island
singgahan urang sipangai	Where wise people stop by
Pintakkan doa baksalamat	Pray for blessings
nantingga jangan batangisi	Those of you who stay, please don't cry

The immediate response to the *pendendang's* first sung phrase by one of the villagers was a short yell on the nonsense syllable *"te…"*, which members of the procession knew was a command to begin the procession. The group of *gandang* players near the front of the procession began to play a slow, cyclic rhythmic motive on the deeply resonant, low-pitched sound *dum* (beaten a third of the way toward the centre of the drum head) and the sharp, high-pitched sound *ba* (beaten on the edge of the frame drum head), which I have notated as follows:

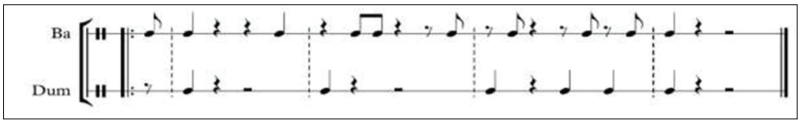


Figure 5.2 The cyclic *dum-ba* rhythm played on the *gandang* frame drums in the procession around the village.

In the next half hour, three other *pendendang* sang several *pantun* verses each in *dendang sikambang* style. (My analysis below is based on my recording of the *dendang* at the end of the procession,

which differed from the *dendang sikambang* at the beginning of the procession only in that it was not preceded by a loud yell). As the last *pantun* verse was sung to the same *gandang* rhythmic motive as notated above, the musicians increased the tempo of their playing to very fast, then came to a sudden stop. The procession ended with a performance by a group of young men, wearing colourful Malay trouser-suits (*teluk belanga*), of the circular *randai* and *gelombang duo baleh* ("twelve waves") dances with *gandang* accompaniment in front of the host's home yard. The *randai* dance contains many martial art (M. *silat)*-style movements performed in a circular formation, and the *galombang duabale* contains twelve such movements performed in a square formation.[43]

Figure 5.3 The *mengarak* procession around Asantola during a circumcision ceremony in 2014.

After the *mengarak* ("processing") crowd had returned to the host's house, the boy walked onto the verandah to pay his respects to his parents and/or male relatives. Because he felt very close to one of his returned *perantau* uncles from whom he had been separated for some years but had just returned to his former home for the ceremony, he first paid his respects to his uncle by kneeling and lowering his

[43] Variants of these Islander adaptations of the traditional west-coastal Sumatran *randai* and *gelombang dua baleh* dances, with their many *silat* (martial art-based) movements and frame drum accompaniment, are also performed in Barus, Sibolga and other west coastal Sumatran towns. The two dances are of probable Minangkabau origin.

forehead to touch his knees, and then he knelled in front of his parents and repeated the same respectful movements. He then stood up and sat in state on the *pelaminan* (decorated throne) that his family had prepared for him, staying there for the next few hours, including during the meals served to him.

The boy then mounted the host's verandah, paid respects to his parents and/or close relatives as the case may be, and sat in state in the decorated throne-like canopy called the *palaminan* (M., H.) in the host's home, where the people treated him as *raja sehari* (M., "king for a day"). After the women provided and served a midday feast to all the men present, a session of male *dendang sikambang* singing accompanied by *biola* and *gandang* (frame drums) was held. In the afternoon the *dendang sikambang* and other musicians performed *dendang sikambang* for about two hours, then the men processed around the village again, with the lead vocalist singing *dendang sikambang* verses to the responses of other male singers accompanied by a number of male *gandang* players, as in the procession that morning.

In the evening the women again provided the boy and all the men present with a feast, after which some solo vocalists sang ornamented *sikambang* melodies to lyrics in free metre for the male guests who joined in the *gandang* playing, and the men performed *sikambang* song- dances to the accompaniment of a *pendendang, biola* violinist and *gandang* players from around 9:00 p.m. until around 8:00 a.m.,[44] The main observers were the children and a few women who also served drinks, as most of the men joined in the song-dancing, though the women left around 10:00 p.m. to go home and look after the small children.

[44] Unfortunately, I was unable to videotape the vocal-dance-instrumental items in Asantola on my 2014 field trip. However, I have many recordings of them from my 2010 and 2013 field trips, including the set of DVDs from circumcision ceremonies in Haloban (2007), and also a DVD of an *adat*-based wedding held in Singkil in 2006.

F. The "Incompleteness" of the Ceremony

As previously noted, this *baralek* was considered incomplete when compared to fully *adat*-based ceremonies that as described by local elders and tradition bearers. If, say, the event had been planned for three days and nights, the *baralek adat* would have continued with a similar daily order of events for the next 64 hours. In the past, when *dukun* (shamans) were still active in Haloban, they would have led a daily rituals involving the recitation of mantra and the casting of spells. However, the present-day generation reports that no practicing *dukun* remain in the village. Moreover, any practices involving supernatural elements, particularly those associated with "black magic" *(ilmu sihir),* now deemed illicit under national law and are said to no longer occur openly.

According to customary expectations, the *ninik mamak* should have convened on multiple occasions in the two months preceding the event to plan the ceremonial proceedings. However, due to financial limitations, the host was unable to provide the customary meals at these preparatory meetings. More crucially, he could not afford to host the large number of guests—including government officials—expected at a full adat-based circumcision celebration. As a result, *ninik mamak* met only once, and decided that the host's proposal did not accord with the criteria for an *adat*-based ceremony. Besides, the host's house was considered to be too small and humble for an *adat*-based ceremony. Additionally, the planned decorations for the *pelaminan* and ceremonial cloths, ornaments and ribbon hangings from the ceiling were considered incomplete. Thus, the ceremony was to last only one day and had to be of the *hukum*-based variety, which meant that the sacred, symbolically important *adok* dance described in Chapter VI was not allowed to be performed.

The *ninik mamak* would not have approved of the fact that they performed the *lelehusen* and some other song-dances that are only supposed to be played by day, nor that they did not perform the *siantung* item that is normally reserved for a daytime *baralek* procession, nor that they missed performing the *sikambang lawi, sikambang*

guci, sinandong, pulau pinang, perak-perak, mak inang, and *sampeyan* song-dances, which are allowed to be performed by night or day. Another incomplete aspect of the ceremony was the costumes worn: both the *pendendang* and the other male participants wore casual dress, unlike the ceremonial *teluk belanga* (trouser suit with a shiny *kain songket* wrapped around the buttocks at the waist) that they would have worn at an *adat*-based ceremony.

In the following section, I will provide a detailed examination of the *dendang sikambang* performance style, along with analytical insights into selected recorded performances.

G. Vocal Style in *Dendang Sikambang* Performances

The *pendendang* and their respondents generally sing *(mendendang-kan)* either well-known *pantun* quatrains or compose new verses spontaneously, often drawing on personal experience or emotional insight. These verses need not necessarily adhere to strict rhyme schemes, but they conventionally maintain a structural pattern: the first couplet typically offers an allusion, while the second conveys the core meaning. As *pendendang Bpk.* Adnan explained, there are four kinds of poetic content in the songs: *puji* (praise) for a significant figure in one's personal life; *kasih* or *sanjung* (love and admiration) for a respected or beloved person; *untung* (luck) while in the *rantau* (abroad); and *hina* (wisdom) gained from life experience. The poetic language divides into the *halus* (refined, gentle) and *kasar* (rough, coarse). It is customary that if a *pendendang* sings a *pantun* in the *halus* language of Haloban, the respondent must reply in *halus* Haloban language as well, and the same applies to *pendendang* who sing lyrics in *kasar* Melayu Pulo which is spoken by some people in Teluk Nibung and some other villages.

Each *pendendang* begins by taking a deep breath and launching into a long, high-pitched melodic phrase, typically introduced with a vocable such as 'e', a', or other word such as *aule* or *maule*, the latter being associated with the legendary prince in the Haloban version of

the *Sikambang* narrative (pers. comm., *Bpk.* Adnan). Then he performs the first line of the pantun followed by a line of vocables, then the second line of the pantun, the third line, a variant of the third line, ending with an incomplete line four.

Each *pendendang* cultivates a distinctive vocal style, including variations in tone, pitch range, ornamentation, and phrasing. Occasionally, a frame drum (*gandang*) player may be inspired to interject with a responsive verse before the lead completes the final line, adding spontaneity and dynamism to the performance. In instances where multiple singers attempt to respond simultaneously, the singer who sustains the highest pitch for the longest duration typically earns the right to sing the next full verse.

According to Kartomi's informants in west-coastal Sumatra, the highly regarded *pendendang* always sing with strong loud voices at high pitch. The main characteristics of *sikambang* song performances are their improvisatory style. Their complex ornamentation (*kembangan)* and variants of *aluk lauk* (ornamentation around a central note) are important. The singer may either be accompanied by *biola, bangsi, singkadu,* and *gandang* or be unaccompanied. The singer and the *biola* (or *bansi,* or *singkadu*) player anticipate and/or follow each other's' melodic line, but mostly they coincide at cadential points that occur at the end of melodic lines or sections (Kartomi, 2012a*.)*. While this style was documented by Kartomi during her fieldwork along Sumatra's west coast several decades ago, it continues to be practiced today by highly skilled performers.

According to the *pendendang Bpk.* Anhar and other elders in Haloban, a *pendendang sikambang* is highly esteemed if they demonstrate proficiency in at least three criteria: (i) vocal strength and breath control, enabling the delivery of extended, melismatic phrases; (ii) the capacity to recall a wide repertoire of *pantun* and compose new ones extemporaneously; and (iii) the ability to perform with emotive expression, capable of eliciting an emotional response from the audience.

In an interview, *pendendang* (*Bpk.* Misri Caniago) described techniques for enhancing vocal endurance. For example, he reported that placing one's thumb on the roof of his mouth for several minutes daily during the week preceding a performance helps excel phlegm. Alternatively, consuming a mixture of pounded medicinal leaf and coconut milk was said to achieve the same effect. He also recounted an esoteric technique believed to enhance spontaneous verbal response, involving the recitation of "black magic" (H., *salimbaek)* incantation—though he acknowledged the practice's illegality today. The verse, delivered in rhymed couplets, contains metaphorical references to earrings, mountains, and the unlocking of doors:

> *Eitu anting-anting sibaranting di Gunung Asam, tujuh pintu terkunci, waroku lalu terbuka,*

which translates as:

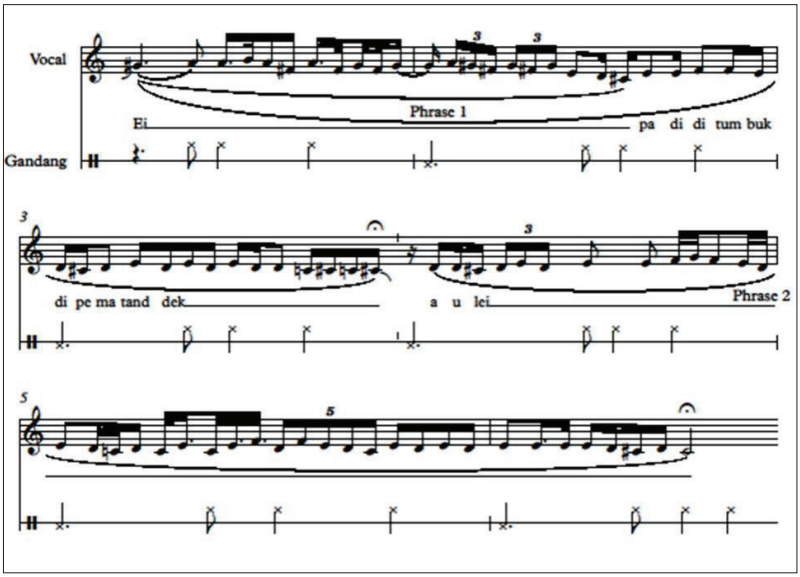
> *"Those dangling earrings on Mount Asam Seven locked doors were wide open,"*

Following the incantation, the practitioner performs a ritual gesture *(jantik),* tapping both sides of his neck three times. This, according to Misri, enabled a singer easily to think of phrases with which to respond to another's *pantun*, assuring me (knowing that black magic is a crime) that "this was the way earlier generations of singers behaved."

In the next section, I present an excerpt of a typical *dendang sikambang* performance by a male singer, which will serve as the basis for a detailed analytical discussion.

H. Musical Analysis of a Male *Dendang Sikambang* Performance

This section presents an analysis of *sikambang* performance that I recorded during the circumcision ceremony held in Haloban on October 19, 2014, and then compare it with a "secret" woman's performance. The performance by *pendendang Bpk.* Maslia is transcribed as follows:



Note: Original Recording by Ari Palawi in Haloban village, Pulau Tuangku, 19 October 2014. Tempo: free (each beat is performed at approximately MM= 40). Transcribed at orginal pitch by: Helen Catanchin and Ari Palawi

Figure 5.4 A *sikambang* performed by *Bpk.* Maslia Hutabarat (56 Years)

This performance begins with a long melismatic phrase featuring complex *bungaran (*ornamentation) on the vocable *e.* This is followed by a more syllabic setting to the words *padi ditumbuk di pematang dek* ("the paddy is growing and ripening"), and another bout of *bungaran* set to the word: *Au-le*, which probably refers to the name of a prince. The melodic range of the performance spans 11 semitones. It is marked by a high degree of melisma, with 79 distinct pitch events occurring across only 13 syllables of text. The level of adjacent repeated tones is notably low (8.86%), while the percentage of changes in melodic direction is relatively high (±58.2%). The overall melodic contour shows a moderate level shift, calculated at approximately 63.6 degrees,

based on the tonal material of the excerpt, including the playful pitch variation of tones 1 and 4, as follows:

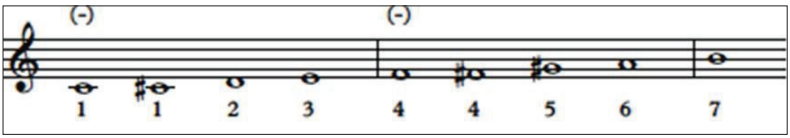


Figure 5.5 Basic Tones Material

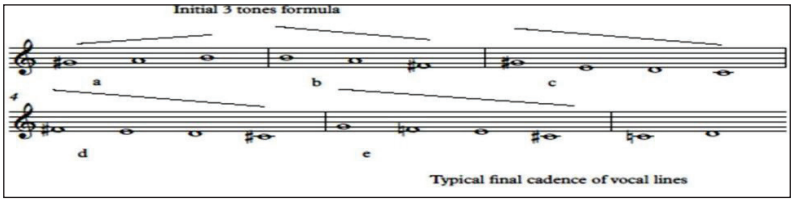
And the:

Initial Tone (IT) = tone 5 (G#) Final Tone (FT) = tone 1 (C#) Highest Tone (HT) = tone 7 (B) Lowest Tone (LT) = tone 1 (C#)

The vocalist improvises his melismatic vocal line on the basis of two 3-tone and three 4-tone melodic formulae that are typical of the *sikambang* tradition in Haloban, which he has aurally imbibed from childhood on, having listened to many expert singers at ceremonial functions in his lifetime (Figure 5.5).

The basic tonal material of this excerpt, including the playful pitch variation of tones 1 and 4, is as follows:

The vocalist improvises his melismatic vocal line on the basis of two 3-tone and three 4-tone melodic formulae that are typical of the *sikambang* tradition in Haloban, which he has aurally imbibed from childhood on, having listened to many expert singers at ceremonial functions in his lifetime (Figure 5.6).



Note: a–e and an extended final cadence used by the vocalist in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.6 Melodic Formulae

I. Gender Relations and The Women's Secret *Dendang Sikambang* Tradition

As previously noted, women in the Banyak Islands are traditionally prohibited from singing in public. It was therefore a significant ethnographic discovery during my final field trip to learn that young women have historically engaged in the performance of *dendang sikambang* in secret. Some continue to do so as a means of expressing their emotional lives in a cultural context that affords them few formal outlets for creative self-expression.

Before introducing a female performance of a *dendang sikambang,* it is necessary to contextualise discussion with a broader analysis of gender relations in the region. Cultural norms in the Banyak Islands are deeply patriarchal. Prior to adolescence, girls and boys are allowed to dance together during *baralek* dances, including the well-known *payung* ("umbrella dance") to the accompaniment of a *pendendang* singing the *dendang sikambang* titled *Pulau Pinang* ("Penang Island song") with the *biola* and *gandang.* This practice was documented by Margaret Kartomi and myself in a 2010 video recording made at a junior high school in Teluk Nibung.

However, upon marriage—typically occurring at a young age—women are is excluded from public performances at ceremonies, religious events, and national celebrations. Even though most of the Malay-style dances (namely, what the Barus west-coast dwellers call *sikambang kepri)* were clearly designed for mixed couples. the

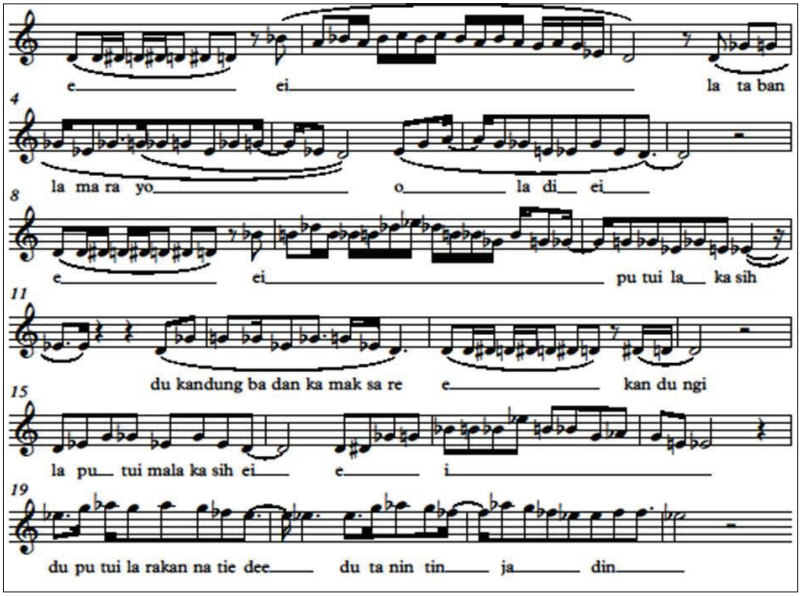
men play both the female and the male roles. Married women are expected to return home to cook and care for children once festivities begin. Social norms render it inappropriate for married women or unmarried older women to perform in public, as such behavior may be interpreted as immodest or as an attempt to display their bodies.

A few women choose to join choruses to sing *qasidah* to Arabic and Indonesian texts, but this tradition is not indigenous. Apart from lullaby singing in the domestic sphere, women have traditionally been denied artistic expression within the local performance culture. It was only through fieldwork that I learned of an exception: the covert practice of singing *dendang sikambang* among women.

In an interview conducted at her home in Asantola, *Ibu* Rosmiani recounted that she and her female friends would compose and sing responsorial songs in private during their youth. They were careful to ensure that no one overheard them. She explained that during solitary trips to collect firewood in the forest, she would sing songs articulating her anguish over her arranged marriage—one that forced her to reject the man she truly loved. These emotionally charged compositions, she explained, were ("songs of fate").

At my request, *Ibu* Rosmiani agreed to perform one such. She began singing in a soft voice and at a low pitch, reflecting a subdued emotional state as she recounted her past. As she continued, her voice grew stronger and clearer, eventually rising to a high-pitched, resonant delivery characteristic of the melismatic style (see Figure 5.7). Her performance evoked strong emotions in her companion, who began to weep midway through, overwhelmed by the memories the song stirred. Rosmiani later explained that she and her friends would secretly sing such to cope with emotionally difficult life events, such as the death of a loved one, a child's departure, or maternal estrangement. Now in old age, *Ibu* Rosmiani no longer ventures into the forest and, as a result, no longer sings *dendang sikambang* in private. This suggests the absence of any remaining culturally sanctioned emotional outlet for her experiences of grief and loss.

I shall now discuss Figure 5.7 of the above *dendang sikambang* which I recorded in *Ibu* Rosmiani's home in Asantola with her female friend in June 2016, after which I shall present an analysis of her vocal style compared to *Bpk.* Maslia's performance in Figure 5.4.



Note: Performer(s): *Ibu* Rosmiani (61 Years). Original Recording by Ari Palawi in Asantola village, Pulau Tuangku, 16 Oktober 2014.Tempo: free, and slow (each beat is paced at approximately MM=40). Transcribed at original pitch by: Ari Palawi

Figure 5.7 A Woman's Secret *Sikambang*

Ibu Rosmiani sang this *dendang sikambang* excerpt in mixed Jamu-Pulo and Haloban speech varieties[45] featuring free rhythm and

[45] She began singing an emotional diphthong ("Ei", meaning "Oh", she said) as is usual with *dendang sikambang,* and kept repeating the diphthong between phrases, as in bars 8-9 and 16-17 above. Twice she used the word *kasih* ("love") in the excerpt as she recounted her pain at being unable to marry the man she loved. However, not surprisingly, given her emotional state, she was unable to translate her lyric into Indonesian, and I was therefore forced to produce a

metre at a slow tempo with a large amount of *bungaran*, a high degree of melisma, and an overall rising level shift. After her low-pitched beginning in phrases 1–8 (bars 1–14), she began to sing loudly and clearly from phrase 6 (bar 9) as she gradually rose in pitch and dynamic level until she reached her characteristic high-pitched range and loudly carrying dynamic level in the last two phrases of the transcription (bars 19–22). Between her initial tone /tonal centre 1 (D) and her highest tone (high Ab) in the last phrase (bars 19–21) of the transcription, she rose nearly one and a half octaves (19 half-tones) in pitch.

Ibu Rosmiani sang this *dendang sikambang* excerpt in free rhythm and metre at a slow tempo with a large amount of *bungaran*, a high degree of melisma, and an overall rising level shift. After an initial low-pitched section (phrases 1–8, bars 1–14), her vocal delivery intensifies in both pitch and volume, culminating in a final high-pitched passage (bars 19–22) that spans nearly an octave and a half (19 semitones), from the tonal center 1 (D) to a high Ab. In her first four phrases (bars 1–7), her opening undulating phrase on the central tone 1 (D) and its half tone above was followed in phrase 2 by a leap to tone 6 and an undulating line with its upper and lower half-tones, ending with a descending formula on tones 5 4 2 1 (Bb G Eb D), while phrases 3 and 4 undulated around the ascending and descending forms of that formula, that is tones 1 2 4 5 and 5 4 2 1.

I shall now analyse my transcriptions of the above-mentioned male *dendang sikambang* performance that I recorded in Haloban and briefly compare it with the secret female *dendang sikambang* performance that I recorded in Haloban, and compare both with Kartomi's transcription of *Dendang Sikambang Tarian Anak* for voice, *biola* and *gandang*, recorded in Sibolga in 1972 (Kartomi, 2012a, p. 235–236). My conclusions will also be informed by other recordings I made of *dendang sikambang* in other villages, and with Kartomi's unpublished *sikambang* recordings that she made on the West Pasisir Malay coast

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phonetic transcription of her lyric in Figure 5.7.

between Singkil and Natal in 1972, 1981, 1982 and 1986, held in the Margaret Kartomi Gallery of Musical Instruments and Artefacts.

I also compared *Bpk.* Maslia's and *Ibu* Rosmiani's unaccompanied singing styles in Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.7 with *Bpk.* Hamid's style in Kartomi's Trasncription 10.9 of *Dendang Sikambang Anak* with *biola* and *gandang* accompaniment, recorded in Sibolga in 1972 (Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 236–237). I found that the only differences between the Haloban and Sibolga singers' styles were the harmonic implications of Hamid's melodic line which he interwove with the diatonically-tuned *biola* accompaniment, and the lack of any harmonic implications in the Haloban performances. However, the latter observation does not amount to an essential stylistic difference between them as both singers also sang ascending and descending melodies on other occasions, as did *Bpk.* Hamid. Whether in the Islands or on Sumatra's west coast, a *dendang sikambang* singer accompanied by a violin part always adapts to it by including appropriate implied harmonies in his melodic line.

Thus, I found that *Bpk.* Maslia's and *Ibu* Rosmiani's styles resembled each other as well as *Bpk.* Hamid's style. All three vocalists tended to sing loudly at high pitch when warmed up, with extremely florid melodic ornamentation, slow free tempo, and metre and rhythm, even when there is an accompanying frame drum part, and the melodic-textual relationships in all three vocalists' singing are mostly exceedingly melismatic on each syllable, often with 20 or more tones sung to a syllable of text. All three singers improvise on the basis of fixed 4- or occasionally 3-tone melodic formulae that normally begin or end on the central tone, and they alternate between ascending and descending melodic directions, with overall level shifts that are normally moderately descending.

A comparative analysis of this female performance (Figure 5.7) with the earlier male performance by *Bpk.* Maslia (Figure 5.4) reveals that the primary distinction lies in the direction and range of pitch movement. While *Bpk.* Maslia's performance is moderately descending overall, *Ibu* Rosmiani's is steeply ascending—an effect likely attribut-

able to her initial hesitance and the gradual increase in pitch and intensity as her confidence grew.

Sikambang is the name of a legend and serves as an umbrella term for the Islanders' solo and responsorial singing repertoire and song-dances with violin and frame drum accompaniment performed by expert male singers (*pendendang sikambang*) at weddings, circumcisions, and formerly at baby thanksgivings which were regularly held on Sumatra's west coast till the 1980s. The tradition resembles the ceremonial songs and song-dances with instrumental music and set of legends called *sikambang* on Sumatra's west coast between Singkil and Sibolga but differs in some ceremonial procedures and terminology. Solo *pendendang* tend to sing with considerable carrying power at high pitch and in free metre with long melismatic, mainly descending phrases based on melodic formulae and featuring frequent melodic direction changes and overall melodic descents, while a *biola* instrumentalist plays syncretic Malay-European melodies and groups of drummers play cyclic rhythms on their frame drums (*gandang)* to accompany the male couple's song-dances. Men perform all the songs and dances at the "complete (*adat*-based) and "incomplete" *(hukum*-based) ceremonies, while some women have found an outlet for their painful emotions by singing *dendang* to their own lyrics and in the same melismatic style as the men in secret, because they are deprived of most other indigenous artistic outlets.

CHAPTER VI

MUSICAL EXPRESSION IN THE *ADOK* DANCE: CULTURAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

As discussed in Chapter V, the term *adok* generally refers to the first in a series of *sikambang* dances. These are performed by male guests at *adat*-based or *hukum*-based weddings and circumcision celebrations. Such dances, accompanied by an ordinary *pendendang* and *gandang* player, often extend for several hours into the night and serve primarily as entertainment.

In Haloban, the former capital of the Tuangku sultanate, however, the dance called *adok* denotes a very different, more serious dance and performance style. Executed by a quartet of male dancers, this form includes a five-part lyric sung by a specially trained singer known as *penampik,* who directs the dancers and accompanies himself with a very distinctive style of playing on the former "drum of sovereignty", the *gandang*. The dance was reputedly developed during the incumbency of Haloban's first *raja,* who is believed to have been sent to Haloban by the queen of Pagaruyung, Bundo Kanduang (BH, Mande Kandung) to found the Tuangku Kingdom at the request of

Haloban's four *datuk* (chieftains) in the 16th century, as mentioned in Chapter III. Thus, the singer of the *adok* lyric mentions the queen's name in the lyric (quoted in the complete lyric of the *adok* performance, p. 102) as well as other characters in the Cindue Mato legend. Successive royal families in Haloban needed ritual symbols to mark their sons' circumcisions and weddings, and the *adok* dance served the purpose: at circumcisions, it marked their liminal changes of status from childhood into adulthood, and at weddings from single to married status. Traditionally the performance also served as a way to attract the benign spirits of the ancestors to descend and take part in the event, thereby bringing blessings on everyone present.

A strict requirement from time immemorial was that the *adok* dance could only be performed at royal descendants' weddings and circumcisions, which, by definition, needed to be completely *adat*-based. Hosts were also required to include the ritual slaughter of at least one buffalo for the communal feasting, and the celebrations customarily lasted several days and nights. Another requirement was that the specially trained *penampik,* who sits apart in the performance area in front of the *pelaminan,* direct the dancers and sing the sacred *adok* verses in a loud, melismatic style while playing slow, solemn, stark rhythms on the *gandang.* This large, heavy frame drum is believed to have once served as the Tuangku *raja*'s drum of sovereignty (*gandang daulat)* and the sparse, slow rhythms beaten on its edge and skin befitted its former royal status. In contemporary practice, however, the musicians tend to favor smaller frame drums that produce a higher-pitched, sharper sound, as will be discussed below.

In fact, the function and style of the *adok* dance's drumming resembles that of the royal Malay "drums of sovereignty" called *nobat,* which traditionally featured "drums of sovereignty" played in the presence of the king in former Malay courts on Sumatra and beyond—including Pagaruyung, Aceh/Kuta Raja, Riau-Indragiri, Riau-Lingga, and Siak. These drums constituted the essential item of the *pusaka* (heirlooms) in a Malay sultan's regalia, symbolised the legitimacy of a sultan's reign. Its sounds resemble Haloban's solemn *adok* music in at least four respects:

the slowness and sparseness of its drum parts in the most sacred repertoire, the hastening of tempo near the end of a piece, the preferred loudly-carrying singing style, and the highly melismatic and free-metred vocal melodies. Like the former royal Malay *nobat* music, Haloban's royal *adok* music embodies solemnity and grandeur, with its gandang remembered as a sacred emblem of royal authority.

This slowness and solemnity of royal drum music is a very old tradition in Indonesia. For instance, the sacred *fogaele* dance of Nias—performed by children in extremely slow movement to present a gift or *sirih* offering to a descendant of the local chieftain—is one such example (pers. comm., Margaret Kartomi). Similarly, in eastern Indonesia, a slow warrior dance in Maluku is performed before the sultan of Ternate (pers. comm., Margaret Kartomi). Central Javanese court dances such as *srimpi* and *bedhaya,* once performed by royal princesses in Surakarta, also exemplify this tradition of slow, deliberate movement (see Brakel-Papenhuyzen, 1992, Chapter II). However, such performances are rarely seen nowadays because their slow movements are extremely difficult and tiring to execute, and few young dancers and musicians seem to be prepared to learn the required skills.

Until recent decades, many Haloban men attained the status of *penampik.* At present, however, only four musicians remain who are proficient in the performance of the *adok* dance's slow and sparse rhythmic style. All four are also singers trained in all aspects of *adok* music and are capable of directing the dance performance from the drum, thus fulfilling the full role of *penampik* (pers. comm., *Bpk.* Anhar Sitanggang, September 2016).

This chapter proceeds by outlining the historical trajectory of *adok* performance in Haloban from the 1950s—when the tradition remained robust—through its partial decline in recent years. It then presents an analysis and illustration of a recent *adok* performance in Haloban, followed by a comtemporary *adok* performance in Melbourne. Finally, the lyrics of the five-part *adok* song cycle are presented and examined in detail.

A. *Adok's* History from the 1950s to the Present Time

The elderly residents of Haloban—including fisherfolk, sailors, small traders, farmers and housewives—recall that the *adok* dance and its associated rituals were still regularly performed in Haloban during what they regard as a period of social harmony and relative prosperity in the early years of Indonesia's independence (between 1950 and 1965). At that time, Haloban served as the official capital of Kepulauan Banyak, and its leaders actively promoted the Soekarno government's call for a society governed by the *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation). This principle, rooted in traditional Indonesian philosophies, had been formally adopted into national ideology of *Pancasila* (Skt., "Five Principles") and was deeply embedded in the region's adat-istiadat (customary traditions).

Entire neighbourhoods, including Haloban, were encouraged to engage in communal labour, constructing home, roads, mosques, and assisting one another in managing the costs and logistics of weddings and other communal celebrations. The constraints imposed during the colonial era—such as the disapproval of week-long celebrations due to perceived loss of labour productivity—were replaced after independence by a widespread sense of liberation. This newfound freedom allowed for a resurgence in traditional expressions of respect for ancestral spirit and for seeking their blessings in accordance with both Islamic values and customary law.

The present-day elders also remember that the employment situation was relatively good, and not only in fishing and farming. As Haloban was the capital of the Islands, a number of official government jobs were available for educated youth. Moreover, the government also promoted the celebration of national holidays, such as Independence Day (17th August), Islamic festivals, notably *Idulfitri* and *Iduladha,* through performances of the traditional local arts. These conditions enabled most residents to seek and often receive approval from the *ninik mamak* to host *adat*-based ceremonies for their domestic celebrations, contributing to a flourishing artistic life.

Traditional performances, including the important ritual *adok* dance, were frequently rehearsed and performed while simpler, law-based (*hukum*) ceremonies remained relatively rare.

Community elders, including members of the Sitanggang family, remember that during the first half of the 1960s, Haloban was administered by intelligent and relatively well-educated men who inspired widespread optimism. There was a prevailing belief that through collective cooperation, the community could advance toward shared prosperity. Over the decades the best artists passed on their traditional performance skills and tenets of their *adat* philosophy to the younger generation, who, they say, are the well-informed artists and *adat* leaders of today. Even moderately well-off hosts gained in social prestige and confidence by taking advantage of the frequent opportunities to rehearse and perform at life event celebrations and on national days and *Idulfitri*, which contributed to the general atmosphere of hope for a bright communal future. Many people, young and old, could also sing, dance, or play musical instruments. The fly in the ointment, however, was that all the five administrators, including the Assistant Wedana who reported to the Wedana in Singkil, happened to be members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

Following the establishment of Suharto's anti-Communist New Order regime in 1965–1966, Haloban's harmonious *gotong royong* mentality was seriously interrupted (pers.comm., Ridwan Sitanggang, June 2014). Haloban's five government leaders were accused of being members—then perfectly legal Indonesian Communist Party, (PKI)—which the New Order regime was determined to destroy throughout the nation. The five leaders were rounded up and presumably killed, for they were never heard of again. At the same time, the Suharto government punished Haloban by withdrawing its status as the capital of the Islands. A new capital was established at Pulau Balai village, on the much smaller Balai Island.

The ensuing power vacuum in Haloban had dire consequences for the descendant of the *raja* of Tuangku Kingdom. His power was usurped a few years later by Sutan Umar, whose ancestor two

generations before was indirectly related to the last *raja* (his younger brother-in-law). Umar took possession of and sold the *pusaka* (sacred heirloom), the *silsilah* (family tree documents), and lands belonging to the descendants of the real *sultan*, retaining only a sword and a colonial era letter from the Dutch Resident (*Resident*) in Singkil, which he kept as *pusaka*, and set himself up as a "pretender *sultan*." Umar subsequently secured the position of camat and appointed his family members to key posts. To this day, his descendants continue to dominate local politics and economic matters, acting as intermediaries between Haloban and the Bupati in Singkil.

Meanwhile, the legitimate heir, Sutan Dharma Bakti (widely known as *Bpk.* Tatin), lost all his ancestral possessions. Despite his hard work as the farmer-head of his family, he was unable to afford to hold an adat ceremony with the *adok* dance for his own family ceremonies. I interviewed his in younger brother in 2014, *Bpk* Gunawan Sakti Alam, who had left Haloban for Singkil and passed away in 2016. He expressed concern that adat practices may not be sustainable in the future.

Today the families whom I grew most to respect in my visits since 2010 still talk fondly of the five men who administered the affairs of Haloban in the early 1960s. They are remembered as visionary leaders who prioritized community welfare and cultural integrity.

The *adok* dance continued to be performed at *adat*-based ceremonies in Haloban during the Suharto and *Reformasi* (post-Suharto "Reformation") eras, but it was virtually unknown outside this small town. By 2010, the influence of the royal-descendant family had diminished significantly, contributing to the near disappearance of adat-based ceremonies in Haloban. In the past nine years, only two hosts have obtained permission to present *adat*-based *baralek* in Haloban, one of which was based on interference in the *ninik mamak's* decision-making procedures. All other families have been compelled to present *hukum*-based weddings and circumcisions due to financial constraint.

In the *adat*-based *baralek* in 2014 its host succeeded in obtaining the *ninik mamak*'s permission to hold it. The host, a successful fish distributor, was financially capable of fulfilling all ceremonial obligations. However, the other *baralek adat* was much more controversial, as it involved dubious machinations of the family of the "pretender *raja*". When the prospective host put his proposal to hold an *adat*-based wedding to the *ninik mamak,* which comprises representatives of nearly all the families in Haloban, he was initially denied permission due to the couple's violation of *adat* norms—they had become engaged without securing parental consent from both families. However, the underlying factor was widespread resentment toward the host's family, who had alienated others by monopolizing land and refusing to participate in *gotong royong*. Given the importance of communal cooperation in such events, the *ninik mamak* refused to endorse the ceremony.

Clearly, an *adat*-based ceremony needs to involve most of families in this very small town. Undeterred, the host appealed to the government-administered *mukim* (Muslim parish) within the *kecamatan* structure. Since the *mukim* head was a relative of the "pretender *raja*" family, he obtained the desired permission over the heads of the *ninik mamak.* When the *adat*-based wedding was held, the *camat* ensured that government resources made up for the lack of *gotong royong* value. The full proceedings included a performance of the *adok* dance by a local *sanggar* (group of artists funded by a political party at election time). Although some villagers reluctantly contributed or attended for pragmatic reasons—particularly to maintain good standing with government authorities—the event was perceived as a commodification of *adat*. According to several interviewees, this incident undermined respect for traditional norms among the younger generation, raising concern about the future viability of the *adat* traditions.

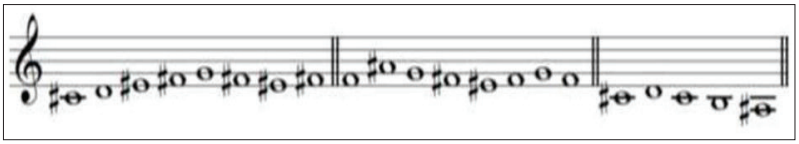
In the following section, I examine an *adok* performance of the five-part *adok* dance based on videos of (i) a performance in the mystical, sacral atmosphere of a fully *adat*-based circumcision

ceremony *(*I. *sunat rasul)* held from the 3rd to the 8th of April, 2007, and hosted by *Bpk.* Ridwan Sitanggang in Haloban in April 2007 and (ii) a stage performance of the same *adok* dance recorded in the more clinical atmosphere of a stage in Melbourne on 28 September 2016. Both were led by a *penampik* (a specialist *adok* singer and *gandang* player), who sings a 5-part text in mixed Haloban and Jamu Malay. During the performance, the boy to be circumcised (or the bridegroom, in case of a wedding) and three companions perform a dance, which usually lasts at least 30 minutes at a *baralek*.

B. Description of *Adok* Dance Performance in Haloban in 2007

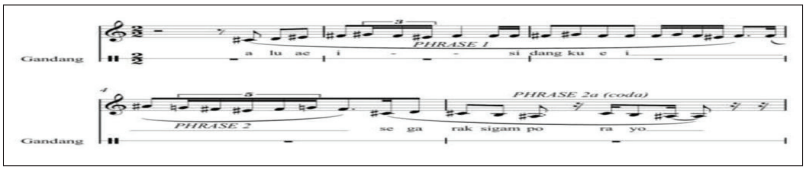
Wearing a satin trouser-suit (M. *teluk belanga)* and sarong, the *penampik,* enters the host's front room and sits cross-legged in front of the *pelaminan* holding his *gandang* upright on his lap. Hundreds of paper and cloth decorations hang over the *pelaminan* ("throne" for the *anak yang akan disunat* or the boy to be circumcised) on the left and from the ceiling of the host's home. Closing his eyes to concentrate, the *penampik* takes a deep breath and sings the elaborately melismatic phrases of the introductory lyric in a loudly-carrying voice, beginning with the locally pronounced Arabic phrase *Bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim* ("In God's name"), which is followed by a lyric in mixed Haloban and Jamu Malay about the *gotong royong* help given to the host to present the *baralek* (see the complete lyrics in Figure 6.7 at the end of this chapter).

As in other *dendang sikambang s*inging (see Chapters V and VI), his style features a high degree of melodic direction change, a low degree of adjacent tonal repetition, and a negative level shift. In the accepted local singing style, the *penampik* frequently tends to revolve around the central tone of the phrase by leading up to it with a melodic ascent, twice reiterating a turn ending on it, then after ascending to a higher note, immediately descending to the central tone again, followed by a repeated descent to the lowest tone, as shown in Figure 6.1 and its *melos*.



Note: Performed by *Bpk*. Ridwan Sitanggang (53 years). Original DVD recorded in Haloban, Pulau Tuangku, April 3, 2007. Tempo: MM = 40.

Figure 6.1 The Opening Vocal Phrase of the *Adok* Lyric in Haloban-Melayu Jamu Speech Variety



Melos: *PHRASE 1* *PHRASE 2* *PHRASE 2a*

Figure 6.2 Melos of the Phrases

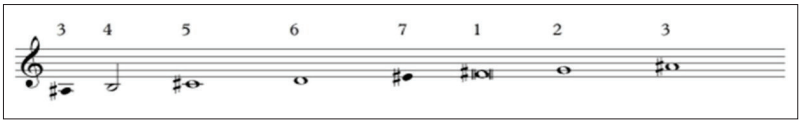


Figure 6.3 The Tonal Hierarchy

At the end of the opening unaccompanied melodic line, the *penampik* then beats out a single *ba* sound on the taut edge of his *gandang* followed by a deep *dum* sound, and gradually he builds up a motivically-based rhythmic line on these and other timbres. The rhythmic style is noted for its sparseness compared to other *gandang* playing in the Islands.

Meanwhile, the boy to be circumcised (*anak yang akan disunat)* and his three companions enter the dance arena and stand with a modest downward gaze in a square formation. They are barefooted, have henna-stained fingers, and wear a dark-coloured long-sleeved coat and trouser suit each with a *kain songket* (M., sarong of *songket* material) wrapped around the waist over their trousers. The *anak yang akan*

disunat wears an elaborate *adat* costume with a two-metre long, red and gold *selendang songket* (M., scarf of *songket* material) crossing diagonally over his chest and hanging down his back, and a ca. 50-centimetre high, three-tier pyramidical-shaped head-dress with tassles hanging from the top. One of his companions, who is quite elaborately dressed, holds a goblet-shaped tray (H., *sarana)* containing offerings covered with yellow, red, white and pink textiles and an embroidered, square cover on top. Another companion wears a simpler, less colourful costume and a black velvet *peci* (ca. 4 cm-high), with a very long *selendang* crossing over his chest and down his back, which he will playfully manipulate in the dance. The other companion is also more simply dressed and wields a medium-sized fan in his right hand. The *anak yang akan disunat* leaves the ends of his *selendang* hanging as he raises both arms and begins to flutter his fingers in a characteristic movement of the dance.

The *penampik* then sings the first *pantun,* which comprises a pair of rhyming couplets to greet the *anak yang akan disunat,* elders and guests, and serves to introduce Part II of the lyric and dance, titled *Cabik-Cabik.* This is also the name of a standard *adok* dance movement (*gerak)* performed by the two dancers wearing a *selendang,* who on hearing the *penampik* sing the directive, pick up and stretch out the ends of the long scarf with arms wide open.

Meanwhile, the four dancers, who have been standing very still on their corner of the square dance formation, begin to perform the uncommonly slow movements of the *adok* dance. At times, they all rotate on the spot, face to the left then the right, and take a step forwards or backwards and return to their basic positions. Sometimes all four dancers face inwards and step forward to create a close circle, then step back into their corner again. The *anak yang akan disunat* and the other dancer wearing a *selendang* perform the slow, expansive *cabik-cabik* arm movements, while the dancer holding the hourglass-shaped tray of offerings moves it up, down and sideways, and the dancer holding a fan flutter it periodically.

Meanwhile, the *penampik* sings ever more complex and lengthy melismatic phrases to the established lyric, and his sparse, formulaic but freely varied interlocking rhythmic lines on the main drum focus on the sounds referred to onomatopoeically as *dum* and *ba* (as explained in Chapter III).

After a pause, Part II of the dance, titled *Ayun Kumbang* ("sway the flower," which is a metaphor for a baby), begins. The *penampik* sings a melismatic *buai sikambang* (lullaby) to a lyric that induces its listeners into a peaceful, calm state. In the last line of the second pantun in Part III, titled *Erang-erang* (meaning unknown), the *penampik* refers to Made Kanduang (*alias* Bundo Kanduang), the ancestral queen of Pagaruyung, thus linking the performance to Haloban's royal ancestral legend.

After another pause, Part 4, titled *Datang-datang* ("arriving"), begins. The *penampik* sings a lyric which translates as "The *gandang* sounds, welcome *rantau-rantau* (emigrants) back to your home village". After the final pause, Part IV, titled *Mayam Panjang* (meaning unknown), begins, with the lyric referring to a meeting of the elders in the *balai* (pavilion) watching a lively *randai* dance. Near the end of Part V, the dancer holding the *sarana* hands it to the boy to be circumcised as a mark respect for his change of status from boyhood to adulthood.

The following collage of photographs (Figure 6.4.a to 6.4.d, album 1), shows the four *adok* dancers in full ceremonial costume performing at the circumcision *(sunat rasul)* ceremony in Haloban while the *penampik* sings and plays his *gandang* on the side in front of the *pelaminan* (not shown). Hundreds of paper and cloth decorations hang over the *pelaminan*/throne on the left and from the ceiling of the host's home.

Note: a**.** (**TOP LEFT**): **LEFT**: The *anak yang akan disunat* on the left stands holding his arms down at each side and flutters the fingers of his two raised hands. **FRONT**: the dancer crouches on one knee with the other stretched backwards and slowly lowers his hands on each side of his body. **BACK**: the dancer crouches and flutters his fan occasionally. **RIGHT**: the dancer crouches and rotates his hands occasionally. b. (**TOP RIGHT**): **LEFT**: The dancer steps forward very slowly in an anticlockwise direction, occasionally moving the *sarana* held in his right hand in different directions. **FRONT**: the dancer flicks the ends of his *selendang* across his chest as he steps forward very slowly. **BACK**: the *anak yang akan disunat* steps very slowly forward in an anticlockwise circle. **RIGHT**: the dancer waves his fan as he steps forward very slowly. c. (**BOTTOM LEFT**): **LEFT**: The *anak yang akan disunat* steps very slowly around a circle in anticlockwise direction. **FRONT**: the dancer steps slowly forward moving the *cerano* in different directions. **BACK**: the dancer moves his fan up and down as he steps forward. **RIGHT**: the companion of the *anak yang akan disunat* holds his hand behind his back as he steps forward slowly. d. (**BOTTOM RIGHT**): **LEFT**: The *anak yang akan disunat* is moving into a semi-kneeling position as he begins to stretch out the ends of his selendang. **FRONT**: the dancer lowers the *sarana* in his right hand and raises his left arm horizontally across his chest. **RIGHT**: the dancer is moving into a semi-kneeling position as he slowly rotates his hands. **BACK**: the dancer lowers his right arm and raises his left arm horizontally across his chest.

Figure 6.4 Ceremonial Dance Poses: Movements of the *Anak yang Akan Disunat* and Companions

The *adok* dance can of course be performed on a stage, but such a performance naturally loses its authentic atmosphere outside the context of a ritual ceremony.

C. Description of an *Adok* Dance on a Concert Stage in Melbourne

The performance of part V of this *adok* dance, staged in Melbourne on 28th September 2016, was directed by Haloban's main *penampik, Bpk* Anhar Sitanggang. The dancer portraying the *anak yang akan di sunat* and three other dancers appeared alongside three other dancers in a diamond-shaped formation. Each performer bore their weight on their left foot while resting their raised right heel lightly on the floor. Their movements consisted of extremely slow, deliberate gestures of the arms, hands, and fingers. Departing from traditional ceremonial attire, the dancers wore minimalist costumes consisting of a long white shirt over black trousers, complemented by a black *peci* (Muslim-style cap), and formal shoes.

The *anak yang akan di sunat* and three other dancers transitioned into a-seated position, resting cross-legged on the left leg with the right leg slightly elevated. From this posture, each dancer performs his own distinctive, slow movements of the arms, hands and fingers, as shown in Figure 6.6.

Note: The four *adok Haloban* dancers performing in standing position at a concert at Monash University on 28 September, 2016, with the seated *penampik* on the right singing and playing his *gandang* (not shown). **LEFT**: The dancer on the left puts the *sarana* that he is carrying on the floor, puts the heel of his left hand with fingers raised on his left knee, and rotate his other hand with fingers outstretched. **FRONT**: The dancer at the front leaves the ends of his *selendang* hanging as he raises both arms and begins to flutter his fingers in a characteristic movement of the dance. **BACK**:The dancer at the back and front takes one end of the *selendang* around his neck with his right-hand fingers and is about to take the other end with his left-hand fingers so that he can fully open out his *selendang* in front of him with both hands. **RIGHT**: The dancer on the right holds and flutters his fan in his right hand as he raises the fingers of his left hand as a dance gesture.

Figure 6.5 The Four *Adok Haloban* Dancers Performing in Standing Position

Note: The four *adok Haloban* dancers perform in sitting position at a concert at Monash University on 28 September, 2016, with the *pendendang* seated on the right singing and playing his *gandang* (not shown). **LEFT**: The dancer on the left holds the *sarana* in his left hand and flutters the fingers of his right hand. **FRONT**: The dancer at the front raises his arms and periodically flutters his fingers. **BACK**: The dancer at the back wearing a long *selendang* around his neck is about to perform the *cabik-cabik* movement by taking hold of the ends of the *selendang* with the fingers of both hands so that he can fully open it out in front of him with arms outstretched. **RIGHT**: The dancer on the right moves his fan down to floor level before raising it again in continuing motion for a minute or so.

Figure 6.6 The Four *Adok Haloban* Dancers Performing in Sitting Position

Given that the dancers' movements are directed by specific lyrical commands sung by the *penampik,* an understanding of the sung text is essential. The lyrics for all five parts of the dance are transcribed below.

D. The Bahasa Haloban–Bahasa Jamu Lyric by *Penampik*, *Adok* Performance, Haloban

The following transcription of the five-parts of the *adok* lyrics as they are performed in the Haloban–Melayu Jamu speech variety

were kindly transcribed by *Bpk.* Anhar Sitanggang, Haloban, on 10 July, 2016. It should be noted that successive repeated vowels, as in *ujuuuung* (standard Indonesian *ujung,* "corner), indicate that the word is usually sung to a melismatic phrase.

Due to the limited documentation and ongoing linguistic research into the Haloban–Melayu Jamu variety—currently being undertaken by a team led by Professor Robert Amery of Flinders University—a complete translation of these lyrics remains unavailable. Even *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang, despite his deep familiarity with the performance tradition, was unable to fully translate the text into Indonesian, as it contains a number of obsolete words. The following phrases bellow is the complete lyric of the *adok* performance. The general sense of the lyrics is presented in the description on pages 115 and 116.

Introduction

Bismillah irrahmani rahim

Uei uei sidang kuei sigarak sigma po rayo langkuei dibanto dalam siang tagarak hari sanjo duduk maulei tanga malam

Yahaiyun yakaiyun Bismillah bukan mangaji

Bismillah manapik adok malinta kapalo nandi mengadang ujuuuung dang Dang kumbang lahei

I. *Cabik Cabik*

Cabik cabik kain dibali Dietotanga tigoeto

Mintak tabik kami banyanyi jangan dibilang kurang baso

II. *Ayun Kumbang*

Ayun kumbang lakumbangei

Ohon dei yo dang di dendang allahoi dendang

yo dang di dendang sikandung ba laba danei yo mantawa alli dandam ladan damei lahei

Ohondei masak dangtarapung ditapiiiiian sarou labadanei

masak dangtarapung sikandungba labadanei lahei Ohondei hari dangko apo

Bulan kujadiii sarou laba danei, hari dangko apo sikandung ba laba danei yo bulan ku jadi dandam ladan damei lahei

Ohondei sabab dang mananggung damikian sarao labadanei

sabab dang managgung sikandungba labadanei yodambakian dandam ladan damei lahei

Ohondei tapandang sigumarang allahoinandong nandi nandong

kok alangtujuo sikandungba labadanei yotapandang sigumarang allaho inandong ambik kain

III. *Erang-erang*

Erang erang jambu erang katigo erang jambu ai jangan tuan baberang berang kok utang samo di bai Takapalo manabang tonggak sinantatabang bulu batung

Nangkok sayo dilamun lamun ombak, sinan takana Mande Kandung

IV. *Datang-Datang*

Datang-datang kini nei yo pundatang

Lenggo bayu kininbana yo rajo, rajo embangan Bumi hangui kininbana yo langik langik tapanggang Bakucak alam kininbana yo karano nyo

Babunyi gandang kininbana yo sala salamonyo Elok liuknyo kininbana yo rantau-rantau sialang

V. *Mayuam Panjang*

Mayuam panjang kinin sayang.

Oi dangsi panjang kini duduk ladi balei Bua palo kinin sayang.

Duduk mambilang kini la bua palo Oi namun candei kini sayang.

Bago tajelo kini lanamun candei Kaka palo kini sayang

Rusuk dipinggang kini kakapalo Oi urangrantikan kini sayang

Sadang rancaknyo kini tari labaranti

This unique *adok* dance and ritual stands out in Haloban's *si-kambang* culture. It is marked by its extraordinary slow and solemn performance style; the highly ornamented, resonant melismatic singing; a melodic tendency to focus on a central tone with turns around it; sparse rhythmic patterns on the typically small frame drum; the distinctive roles of the four dancers whose movements are performed in ultra-slow motion, and the social taboo imposed by the *ninik mamak* elders who may prevent a host from presenting a fully *adat*-based ceremony.

CHAPTER VII

LANGSER, HALOBAN'S MALAY-EUROPEAN HYBRID

Langser, or *Langser Madam,* is a hybrid couples' dance that combines Malay *joget*-like steps and Jamu-Pulo *sikambang* music with various European elements, as will be explained below. It is directed by a *komandir* (caller), who calls out instructions to the dancing couples in a patois of Jamu Pulo Malay and creolised form of Dutch (see the Transcription and Glossary of terms at the end of this chapter). However, contemporary callers acknowledge that the dancers no longer fully understand the original meanings of these commands.

As will be argued in the subsequent analysis, the dance's name, *langser,* may derive from the late 19th century European *lancer* dance, a subset of the *quadrille*. Furthermore, its choreographic structures, movement patterns, and the prominent role of the caller suggest affinities not only with 18th–19th century European *lancer* and *quadrille*

dance traditions, but also with the Portuguese *branyo* folk dances.[46] transplanted into Melaka during the Portuguese empire in Southeast Asia (1511-1641) (see Sarkissian, 2000, pp. 100–101). Local interlocutors say that *langser*'s Dutch components came to the Islands through a indirect and circuitous route, and the varied versions will be discussed in detail below.

As noted in Chapter V, prevailing gender norms and religious taboos against women performing have inhibited the traditional performance of *sikambang* couples' dances on stage in the Islands. These dances, once performed by mixed couples during weddings, circumcisions, *Lebaran*, and national celebrations are now typically enacted by men who alternate between the male and the female roles. In some cases, however, an adult do teach final-year primary school boys and girls to perform the dances in mixed-gender pairs.

A notable example of this occurred in 2010, when students in their final year of primary school in Teluk Nibung presented a beautiful performance of *payung* (the "umbrella dance"). Their teachers accompanied them on the *biola* and *gandang* playing *Pulau Pinang* ("The Penang Island Song") in a very similar style to the transcription of that song recorded by Kartomi in Sibolga (Kartomi 2012a, p. 228).

A similar pattern was observed in the first performance of the *langser* dance discussed in this chapter. This dance is usually performed by all-male couples at the end of an evening of *sikambang* dancing. One of such instance occurred in Haloban in June 2010, following an entire evening of *dendang sikambang* song-dances. In the section that follow, I will describe and analyse *langser*'s dance formations, steps, caller instructions, and music, and then compare it with the performance by girl-boy couples which I recorded in Haloban on the third day after *Lebaran Haji* (*Iduladha*) in 2014. The 2014 performance, similar to the 2010 rendition of *payung*, was danced by a group of final-year primary school girls and boys who

[46] Branyo folk dances from the village of Portuguise descendants in Melaka/Malacca are usually accompanied by a rebana (frame drum) and biola (violin) in a rhythm and beat similar to Malay joget music

had undergone a week of intensive training in its correct movements and formations. The performance was organised in celebration of the homecoming of a Haloban-born *perantau* emigrant), with *biola* and *gandang* accompaniment.

This chapter begins with detailed descriptions and analyses of two *langser* performances recorded in Haloban: (i) the 2010 all-male *langser* performance and (ii) the 2014 a mixed-gender performance. After commenting on the *komandir*'s instructions, it compares the *langser/ langser madam* performance tradition with that of the related *balanse madam* dance tradition practised by Nias descendants in Sumatran west-coastal Kuta Padang. The chapter also explores the dance's highly probable links with the 18th–19th century European *lancer* and *quadrille* dances. The chapter concludes with the proposition that the syncretic histories and character of both dances are attributable to the long complex process of transculturation resulting from Malay-European contact from the early colonial era across the centuries.

A. An All-Male Performance of *Langser* in Haloban, 2010

The performance recorded in 2010 commenced with eight all-male couples standing in two parallel lines about two metres apart. From the audience's perspective, the dancers performing the "male-role dancers" on the left facing each other and the "female-role dancers" on the right. They were wearing a *baju koko* (BH.), or *baju Islam* (BI.), consisting of dark trousers, a knee-length *kain songket,* a long-sleeved white high-collared shirts, a *selendang* (long scarf) draped over their shoulders, and a *peci* cap (Figure 7.1).To accentuate the gendered aspects of their roles, the female-role dancers adorned themselves with earrings or other female items to match the *melambai* (female-style) hand movements (as opposed to the *jantan* [male-style movements]) that they would perform.

The *komandir* (announcer) positioned at the midpoint between the two lines and periodically called out commands to all the dancers to group in certain formations. These included shifting from two paral-

lel lines to a large circle, forming two concentric circles, and returning to the original arrangement. At the climax of the performance, the dancers navigated a complex, maze-like sequence of paths, stepping between configurations as directed by the *komandir*.

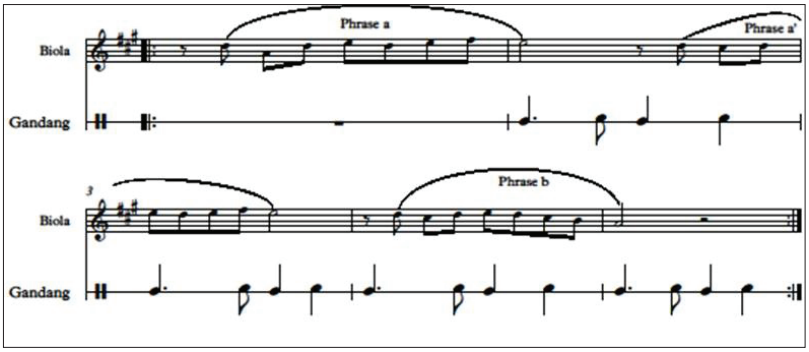
As our interlocutor *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang said, some of the announcements were in Malay, while others were in corrupted Dutch, or a combination of Malay and Dutch. However, this is perhaps not surprising, he said, because Dutch is no longer understood in Haloban today, more than seventy years after the Dutch were forced to end their occupation of the former Netherlands East Indies.

Note: All-male dancers in Haloban wearing white "European-style" coats and trousers plus parts of a *baju koko* or *baju Muslim* comprising Malay sarongs and *peci (*caps) in the *langser* couples' dance in front of a *palaminan* (ceremonial couch) with *biola* and *gandang* accompaniment. Video still by Ari Palawi in Haloban, June, 2010.

Figure 7.1 The *Langser* Couples' Dance

The *biola* player was 56-year old *Bapak* Ridwan Sitanggang who played his diatonically-tuned home-made violin, using only the first position, to produce a typical *sikambang*-style melodic line (Figure 7.2). He said he "improvised" his melodic phrases over the metre and repetitive rhythms established by the *gandang* leader and his score of

gandang musicians. He based his melodic invention in Transcription 8.1 on the following mainly ascending melodic formulae: tones 1 4 5 6 5 (A D E F# E), and the descending formula 4 3 2 1 (D C# B A). The dancers danced to the tempo set up by the lead *gandang* player, who kept to a medium tempo throughout until he increased the tempo to fast then very fast at the end of the dance. He also led the group of *gandang* players who played repetitive rhythmic motifs in unison such as: *//: dum . . ba /dum . ba . / dum . . ba ://* to accompany the amplified *biola* melody (Figure 7.2).



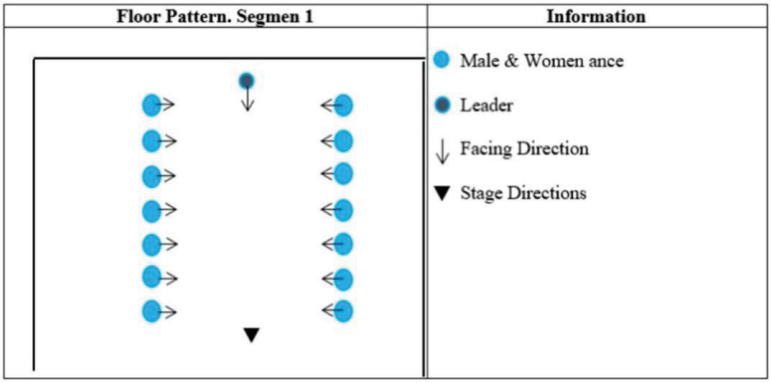
Note: Tempo: MM 60. Transcribed at original pitch and recording by Ari Palawi in Haloban village, 17 July 2010. Performed by *Bapak* Ridwan Sitanggang (*biola*) and around 20 *gandang* players.

Figure 7.2 *Langser* Music Played on *Biola* and *Gandang*

According to my main interlocutor in Haloban, *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang, the *komandir* called out instructions in Malay, Dutch or a combination of both languages to the two sets of four couples dancing before him. Some were commands to one couple while the others were to change to certain other dance movements or formations. One of the common commands in Malay was: *pasang aksi* (lit. "couple action"), implying "mark time on the spot", which was addressed to the parallel rows of male-role dancers on the left and female-role dancers on the right (see Figure 7.1) who moved forward and formed couples with their partners.

B. The *Langser* Dance Instructions and Floor Formations

At the outset of the performance, the *komandir* directed the male-role dancers to form a line on the left facing the female-role dancers (*dah-misen*), who arranged themselves in a parallel row on the left (Figure 7.3). As the formation took shape, the *komandir* moved along the length of the rows, offering guidance and corrections to dancers who appeared uncertain about the required movement (as indicated by the blue arrows in Figure 7.3). He then called out *balangser madam* (lit. "woman, dance the *langser*"), instructing them to "join your partner and dance the *langser,* madam".

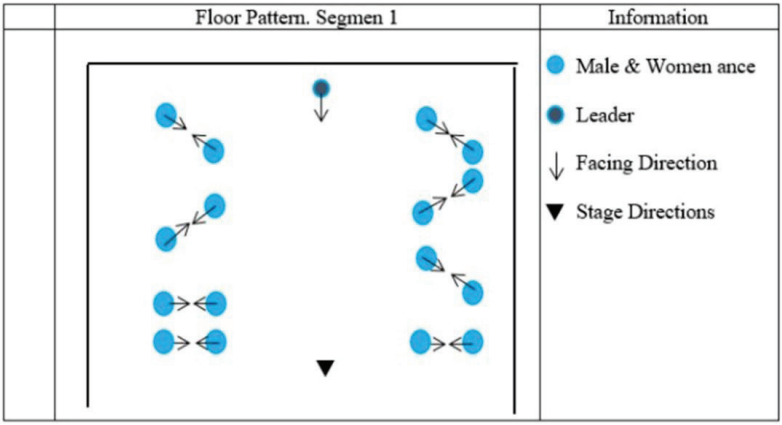


Note: After the *komandir* calls out "*langser dames*", eight male dancers stand in the row on the left and face eight female dancers in the parallel row on the right, with the *komandir* standing in between them at one end, ready to move to the other end to direct any dancers who need attention

Figure 7.3 The First *Langser* Dance Formation

Upon receiving the subsequent instruction—*end suker dames end kufelen tubor*— each male-role dancer approached his female-role partner to form a couple, resulting in eight pairs (see Figure 7.4). This was followed by the *komandir*'s next instruction: *dah di dames*, instructing the male-role dancers to swing their partners [the *dames*]

back and forth alternately to the left and the right while moving their arms back and forth as well. Then, after hearing his next instruction: *ambudikate,* meaning "mark time", they swung their hands back and forth while marking time (see Figure 7.4).



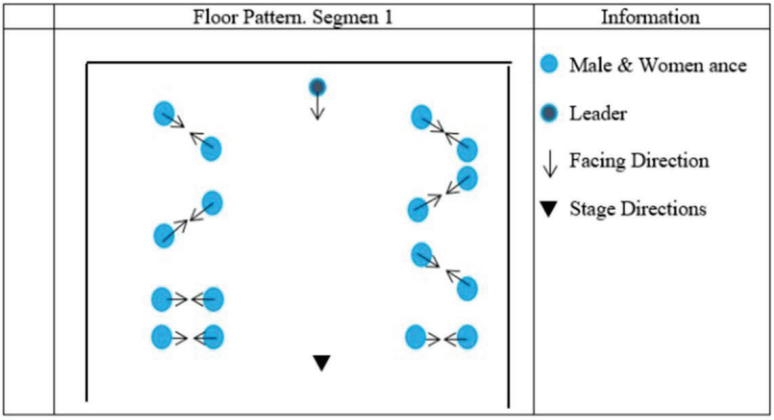
Note: After the *komandir* calls out "*end suker dames*", each couple steps toward his/her partner. The diagram shows the couples meeting mid-floor and responding to the "*end kufelen tuber*" command to dance *joget* steps in couples, then when the *komandir* calls out "*lastrei sesoplat*", each dancer leaves his/her partner and crosses the floor to resume his/her place in the appropriate parallel row.

Figure 7.4 The Second and Third *Langser* Dance Formations

Although the dancers performed in a lively, free manner, their dance formations on the dance floor were quite recognisable. The *tukang biola* sustained the performance's melodic continuity by reiterating the same core melodic phrases as earlier in the program, embellishing them with *bungaran* (melodic ornamentation), thereby enhancing the expressive character of the performance and inviting audience participation—many of whom responded by rising and joining the *balangser.* Meanwhile, the *gandang* player intensified the celebratory atmosphere with the same repeated rhythmic pattern noted earlier: //: *dum . . ba . /dum . ba . / dum . . ba . ://* as in Figure 7.2.

The *komandir* remained actively engaged with the dancers, sometimes circling around them, sometimes crossing their paths diagonally, or positioning himself in various corners to observe and correct their movements when deviations from the choreography occurred. When the *komandir* said *tuber,* the couples understood that they must hold each other's hands and dance in a circular formation. Upon hearing *lastrei sesoplat,* each dancer left their partner and returned across the floor toward his original group. The call *dahmisen* ("women") signaled both the female-role and the male-role dancers to resume their initial parallel-line positions, restoring the original formation.

Subsequently the *komandir* called out *balangser dames*, prompting the female-role dancers to approach their partners on the lef while executing *joget*-style movements. Simultaneously, the male-role group dancers shifted to the right. The *komandir* said *refdrum* ("circle to the right"), and they all moved into the fourth formation, extending their hands upwards and holding hands while swaying together and circling around the arena. When the *komandir* called out *koa,* the dancers formed a large circle (the fifth formation, see Figure 7.5) and on hearing him call: *eng eng koa* meaning "narrow the circle", they all moved inwards to form a tighter circular configuration, indicated in blue configuration in Figure 7.5. When the *komandir* said *alfo* (meaning "repeat"), the circle expanded once more, and the dancers alternated between inward and outward movements several times, concluding the sequence.



Note: After the *komandir* calls out *koa* ("form a circle"), the dancers form a circle, then when he calls out *refdrum, the* dancers hold hands and rotate to the right for some time. The *komandir* calls out *eng-eng koa* again, the dancers move inwards to form a small circle, then outwards again, and when he calls out *alfo* ("repeat"), they move inwards then outwards several times.

Figure 7.5 The Fourth and Ffth *Langser* Formations

Additional verbal cues delivered by the *komandir* during the performance included exhortations—in Malay—to encourage dancers to refine their movements and improve their overall performance style. For instance, the *komandir* called out: *Jang kagak seperti batu,* meaning "Don't [just] dance like a stone!" (where *jang* is a diminutive of *jangan* (BI., meaning "don't") and *goyang seperti kayu* "Sway [gracefully] like a tree [in the wind]". Sometimes the *komandir*'s calls began with a lexical borrowings or corruption of a Dutch word, such as *dahmisen* (from *dames,* Dutch), meaning "ladies", or he spoke in Malay, e.g. *engkau* meaning "you!" (BI. *engkau),* and *pasang aksi,* meaning "mark time on the spot".

Finally, the dancers returned to the initial formation. In response to the *komandir*'s directive *lastrei sesoplat,* they released each others' hands. While the *biola and gandang* players increased the tempo of their playing and the *komandir* called out: *lastrei* followed by *dahmisen,*

the dancers circled back to their respective partners. With the music accelerating to a rapid pace, the *komandir* called out *balangser dames* as in the beginning of the dance, and the male-role dancers resumed their position in a line on the left of the arena, while the female-role dancers returned to their parallel row on the right.

Some instructions were in Malay, such as *kembali,* meaning "return to your earlier spot". Others were derived from the Dutch, such as: *rum van drum,* meaning "rotate in the circle", and *rekturne* or *rechts rum*, meaning "turn to the right", and yet others combined Malay and Dutch as in: *kembali ra rum, meaning* "go back and turn around" (*kembali,* Malay: "go back", *ra rum*, Dutch: "turn around"). For further detaul, see *Bapak* Anhar's transcription of one *komandir*'s set of instructions and a glossary of commonly used *langser* terms in section 8.4—at the end of this chapter.

C. Possible Origins of *Langser*

We came away from the *langser* performances wondering how an apparently European-influenced couples dance—performed exclusively by male musicians playing diatonic melodies on a homemade Malay violin (*biola)* of European origin and a score of frame-drums (*gandang)*—had become integrated into the standard repertoire of social dances in such a geographically remote and relatively isolated outpost of the former Netherlands East Indies as Haloban.

Historical sources from the 19th century colonial-era literature indicate that Dutch and other European ships used to visit Haloban *en route* between Sumatra's west coast, Nias and Simeulue to obtain information about the area, language, culture and available trade goods. While the Islands were considered a relatively minor node in regional trade networks, their strategic position made occasional European visitation plausible. However, when we asked Haloban residents about their ancestors' encounters with former Dutch officials, they uniformly stated that there was no collective memory or documentary evidence of direct contact. Even if Dutch ships had indeed docked at Haloban,

this alone does not explain how or why the people had adopted such a syncretic dance into Haloban's regular repertoire of dances.

A number of local origin narratives have circulated to explain the introduction of *langser* into Haloban. One story was told by the grandson of the last "pretender king" of Haloban as follows. According to his account, after the Tuangku kingdom palace was built at Haloban around the year 1700 (based on his estimate), the *langser* dance was performed at the *istana (palace)* to mark the installation of the ninth Datuk Besar, in the presence of the Dutch *Kontroleur* who resided in Singkil—the capital of the *Onderafdeeling* Singkil (Singkil District) on mainland Sumatra. However, tthis version is historically untenable. Archival sources and the *trombo (royal genealogy)* of the Tuangku palace record only six generations of Tuangku kings. Moreover, there is no evidence to support the claim that the *Kontroleur* of Singkil ever visited Haloban.

An alternative explanation was offered by village elders in 2010. They recounted that a man of Nias descendant working on a Dutch warship moored in Gunung Sitoli harbour on Nias' east coast, had once witnessed Dutch dancers on board performing the *langser* dance with popular band accompaniment. Fascinated by the dance's formations and style, he memorized its movements and formations, and later introduced it to young, unmarried couples in the village, who adopted to dance as a source of enjoyment and entertainment.

These Haloban elders emphasised, however, that while the *langser* was readily embraced for its entertainment value, it was not held in the same regard as the community's sacred and ceremonially significant dances. Notably it was considered inappropriate for adult men and women to dance together, as women—respected as wives and mothers—were expected avoid appearing on stage, lest they be perceived as showing off. On rare occasions, children who had not yet reached puberty were allowed to perform the dance in a serious context during religious festivities, such as at *Lebaran* or *Lebaran Haji.* However, the dance was usually performed by men only, often in a light-hearted

or humorous atmosphere, as was the case in in the performance we recorded in 2010.

Indeed, the 2010 *langser* performance was performed with considerable mirth. Audience members frequently erupted in laughter as they watched the antics of their fellow dancers performing the female role in the dance, especially in the maze-like movements as the dancers found their right place in the row of alternate "males" and "females" in the section where they joined hands and danced in a large circle, or in two large and small concentric circles. Female audience members were particularly amused by their male counterparts' attempts at mimicking *melambai*-style (feminine) hand gestures, highlighting the comical effect of gender impersonation in this localised adaptation of a foreign- influenced dance.

To better understand the origin of *langser* in Haloban and the hybrid Malay-European character of the dance and accompanying music, I conducted additional fieldwork over three subsequent visits to Haloban as well as to several west-coastal Sumatran towns, including Padang, Sibolga, Barus and Singkil, and the village of Saniang Baka in Solok, West Sumatra. I shall draw together the evidence in the penultimate chapter of this book.

The most convincing origin story that I encountered in 2014 was from *Bapak* Basama, a Nias descendant residing in Sibolga and claimed to be 117 years old, though he had all his wits about him. He said that a fisherman friend from Haloban had told him that he had seen a *komandir* instructing *langser* couples dancing with great gusto on the top deck of a Dutch ship that was sailing from Sibolga to Nias in the early 1940s. So captivated was the fisherman by the dance that he memorised its choreography and taught it to his friends and relatives upon returning to Haloban, and that it continued to develop to this day.

If this account is accurate, it would explain the *komandir's* Malay and corrupt Dutch calls to the dancers. According to 117-year old *Bapak* Basama, and numerous contemporary performers in Haloban, their forebears so enjoyed dancing *langser* from the 1940s onwards

that over the decades it became a standard dance which had to be performed at the end of a celebration in Haloban, and has maintained its popularity ever since.

In the following section, I describe the more refined 2014 performance of the *langser* couples dance, featuring well-trained and talented boys and girls. In this version, the dancers executed 64 distinct formation changes over the course of a 32-minute performance, adhering to a more modest and serious demeanor, often dancing with eyes lowered in deference. This performance contrasts sharply with the more humorous and less formally structured 2010 version.[47]

D. A Mixed-Sex *Langser* Performance in Haloban in 2014

In June 2014, the Sitanggang family's Haloban-born *perantauan* relatives returned to their ancestral village (*kampung halaman)* for *Lebaran Haji,* and requested that their relatives organise traditional entertainment during their visit, contributing financially to support the event. In response, the family decided to ask Haloban's leading *balangser, Bapak* Ayub, to train a group of final-year primary school boys and girls to perform *langser* couples dance. As a result, a well-rehearsed, mixed sex performance of the dance was staged in June 2014, which I was able to document. The performance featured the traditional *dendang sikambang* accompaniment on *biola* and *gandang* and its compulsory caller (the *komandir),* who called out loud instructions to the dancers throughout the performance like in Western square dancing. The *tukang biola* accompanied them during the performance.

Prior to the performance, *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang recounted that until 2004, it has been costumary for groups of Haloban men and women to travel by boat annually to Singkil to purchase new

[47] In the 2010 performance, I recorded in 2010, the men were directed to perform only ten floor formations, while in the much more complete performance I recorded in 2014, the boys and girls performed a total of 64 floor formations according to my count.

garments. These included western-style skirts and blouses for the girls and shirts and trousers for the boys, especially for those selected to participate in the *langser* performance. Spurred on by the thought of their relative's intended visit for *Lebaran* in 2014, members of *Bapak* Anhar's family and friends went shopping for new clothes in Singkil in the week before *Lebaran*. Upon their return to Haloban, the boys and girls who were learning to become *balangser* (*langser* dancers) under the expert guidance of *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang had their mothers fit them with their new clothes, ready to perform.

Through daily rehearsals, the young dancers gradually become confident *belangser* dancers, demonstrating a clear understanding of the basic commands issued by the dance caller (one of their teachers) meant. They knew that the call (i) *langser dames!* directed the boys to stand in a row facing the girls in a parallel row; (ii) *suker* instructed the boys and girls in the two parallel rows should step toward each other and meet in the central part of the arena; (iii) *tuber* signaled the couples to form pairs and execute *joget* steps together while rotating around the dance arena (as in a waltz); (iv) *dah di dames* directed each couple to sway rhythmically to the right and the left for a few minutes; and (v) *lastrei sesoplat* indicated that each dancer should separate from their partner and return across the floor to join his/her original parallel row again.

On the third day after *Lebaran*, as was the established local custom, *Bapak* Anhar's family, together with members of three other families who had agreed to cooperate in a spirit of mutual cooperation (*bergotong royong*), participated in the obligatory village procession. Commencing after the *Azhar* prayer around 2:00 p.m. (see Figure 7.6), the procession was led by s*ilat* dancers and women singing *dikie* songs. They were followed by the boys and girls who were to perform *langser* (Figure 7.7), the *komandir* (commandant, caller), and an announcer with a loudspeaker who urged all the villagers to come and enjoy the performance later that day.

Note: The *komandir* with a loudspeaker makes announcements at the back of the procession around Haloban before the *langser* performance in 2014.

Figure 7.6 The *Komandir* in the *Langser* performance

Note: The *balangser* dancers wear their new *langser* costumes and arrive at the performance arena

Figure 7.7 The Teen *Balangser* Dancers

The musicians positioned at the rear of the arena performed a repetitive rhythm pattern in quadruple metre on their *gandang* frame drums: //: *ba* . *ba* . *ba* . . *dum* ://. On this notation, the onomatopoeic symbol *dum* denotes a damped, high-pitched sound (with a quaver value) beaten with the player's right-hand fingers near the edge of the drum skin (see Figure 7.8). The symbol *ba,* by contrast, denotes an undamped, resonant, low-pitched sound (with a crotchet value) beaten with the player's right hand a few centimetres in from the edge.

Note: A *gandang* player beating a sharp, high-pitched *ba* sound with the fingers of his right hand while damping the sound with three fingers of his left hand.

Figure 7.8 A *Gandang* Player

The performance began around 4:30 p.m. in the yard in front of the host's house, surrounded by a large audience of excited adults and children listening to the men playing a *biola* and a score of *gandang* (Figures 7.8 and 7.9).

Note: The *biola* player plays, holding his instrument on his knee and on his mid- shoulder bone. Another *biola* player sits on a chair as he plays, flanked on each side by *gandang* players.

Figure 7.9 The *Biola* Musician Playing

Note: Children in the audience watch the dance preparations and performance.

Figure 7.10 Children in the Audience

The *belangser* dancers gathered in the central arena, awaiting the arrival of the *komandir* with his microphone, the dancers listened for his first announcement, which meant they were due to start the dance. Eventually they heard him announce through the microphone: "*langser dames*!".

Note: The boys form a row as the musicians start to accompany the *langser* dance. The girls form a row facing the row of boys as the musicians start to play.

Figure 7.11 The Paralel Formation of the *Langser*

The *balangser* divided into two groups of eight boys and eight girls, and stood in two parallel rows facing each other, with the boys on the left and the girls on the right (from the front spectators' view) (see Figure 7.11). This was the first *langser* dance formation. The caller stood at one end, observing the dancers as they remained still or marked timeto the strains of *Dendang Pulau Pinang* ("Penang Island Song"). The caller moved periodically between the front and the back of the arena, ready to assist any dancers in need of his guidance (see Figure 7.4).

The *komandir* then called out: "*end suker dames*!", prompting the leading boy and girl at the front of the parallel rows stepped forward toward each other, followed sequentially by the remaining pairs until all eight couples stood together at the centre of the arena. Then the dancers heard the caller announce: "e*nd kufelen tuber*", which they understood to mean they should form couples and dance *joget* steps together as they rotated in couples around the arena (see Figure 7.12).

Note: The couples join hands and dance *joget* steps while rotating and moving around the arena.

Figure 7.12 The *Langser* Dance Steps

Note: The boys stand in a row opposite the row of girls as each couple enters the space between the rows and dances *joget*, rotating in clockwise direction

Figure 7.13 The Folowing *Langser* Dance Steps

The caller then *said: "dah di dames,"* and the couples knew to continuously sway to the right and to the left. When he called out "*end kufelen tuber*", each couple responded by rotating around the floor again, then when he called out *"lastrei sesoplat"*, each dancer left his/her partner and crossed the floor to resume his/her place in the original parallel rows (see Figure 7.11).

Note: The *komandir/*dance caller holds a microphone and directs the dancers to change from one section of the *langser* dance to the next.

Figure 7.14 Direction in *Langser* Dance

Then the *komandir* called out *refdrum*! (a corruption of the Dutch/German expression: *rechts rum,* meaning "rotate to the right"), and the dancers knew to lift their hands and arms up and then to hold their partner's hand and sway their arms together. The *komandir* called out *koa* (meaning "form a large circle"), and then *refdrum* again. After forming a big circle, the dancers raised their hands and then held hands, rotating anticlockwise to the right for some time (see Figure 7.15).

Note: The dance couples join hands and form a large circle, then all step forward to form a narrower circle, and continue to move in and out in this way several times.

Figure 7.15 Formation of Circle in *Langser*

When the *komandir* called out *eng-eng koa* (*eng* in Dutch means "narrow") the dancers moved inwards to form a narrow circle, then outwards again in large circle, and when he called out *"Alfo"* (lit. "repeat"), they moved in and out several times (see Figure 7.15).

Finally, when the *komandir* announced *lastrei dahmisen,* the dancers released hands, quickened their pace in response to the accelerated tempi, and re-formed couples to dance together once more. Upon the final call of *langser dames,* all the dancers returned to their two original parallel rows, and with a concluding musical flourish, the musicians brought the performance to an end.

E. The *Langser*-Related Balanse Madam Dance Performed by Villagers of Nias Descent in in Kuta Padang.[48]

While researching the *langser* dance, I encountered a related form known as *balanse madam,* which is regularly performed at weddings receptions and baby thanksgivings in two predominantly Christian villages of Nias descendants—Seberang Palinggam and Kuta Padang (or Kampung Nias) in the South Padang District of the present-day Padang city According to village elders, *balanse madam* is considered their principal heritage dance and a core symbol of their collective cultural identity. Prompted to these claims, I undertook fieldwork to observe and document the dance and its community contexts.

My initial understanding of *balanse madam* was informed by two undergraduate theses submitted to STSI Padang Panjang in 1998: Erwanto's "An Analysis of the *Balanse Madam* Dance Form", and Sulastri's "The Existence of the *Balanse Madam* Dance within Its Supporting Community". Both authors describe *balanse madam* performances as a couple dance directed by a *komandir,* who calls out instructions to its four dancers/two couples as they perform *joget* movements. The

[48] Video titled *Resepsi Pernikahan Dina, Putri Bpk. Edison*, published by Bob Branto in November 2012, published on YouTube on February 17, 2014 (downloaded October 20, 2016).

musical accompaniment is provided by an *orkes gamad,* comprising a *biola,* guitar, drum kit, *gendang Melayu*, tambourine and cymbals.[49]

Further context was provided by a 2009 blog post authored by Indrayuda, based on Erwanto's thesis titled "The Functions of the *Balanse Madam* Dance in the Social Life of Nias Society in Padang City". Indrayuda cited Erwanto (1998, p. 22), arguing that prior to the arrival of Portuguese in Padang in 1669 (*sic*), they had sailed along the coast of Aceh and North Sumatra, stopping at the royal ports of Tiku, Pariaman, and Padang. During this period, it is suggested, Nias migrants—many of whom worked as labourers for Chinese traders and domestic workers for the Portuguese—may have encountered Portuguese folk dances like *balanse madam* performed at their weddings, etc.

An important virtual source was a 1948 photograph depicting the *balanse madam* dance performed by boys and girls of Nias descent in Oedjoeng Karang village near Padang in 1946. The image shows boys dressed in white shirts and trousers and girls in Western-style skirts, all barefoot, stepping forward and gently touching their partner's raised hands while rotating in a clockwise circular formation.

[49] An *orkes gamad* is a Minangkabau name for a syncretic, popular Malay-European-style string and percussion ensemble that somewhat resembles an Indonesian kroncong ensemble.

Note: The *balanse madam* dance performed by boys and girls of Nias descent in Oedjoeng Karang village near Padang in 1946.[50]

Figure 7.16 *Balanse Madam* Dance in Oedjoeng Karang Village

The *balanse madam* dance is a modern, choreographed version of the Kuta Padang village's traditional motto dance. Similar to *langser,* its movements, formations, and musical accompaniment bear resemblance to those of popular French and other 18th and 19th century European *lanser dances.* These dances form part of the *kwadril* (Kuta Padang-Malay spelling) or *quadrille* (French spelling) square dance tradition, which was widely performed in Europe as well as in numerous French and Dutch colonies in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

In a typical *balanse madam* performance, eight young men and eight young women dressed in Niasan-influenced Malay-style costumes. The male dancers wear *teluk belanga* trouser-suits complemented by *kain songket and peci*, while the female dancers style their hair in a traditional bun (see photo 8.5 above) or, in a contemporary performance, a special headdress. The women also wear a *kebaya*

[50] This photo by an anonymous photographer was published in the *Singgalang* newspaper in Padang on 26 January, 2014, and reproduced at: http://niadilova.blogdetik.com/2014/01/27/minang-saisuak-160-tari-balanse- madam-1948

panjang (long blouse) with a European skirt, antique jewellery, and an open fan in their right hand.

The dancers perform in couples, sometimes touching their partner's raised hands, at other times without touching each other but maintaining eye contact (as in the Europrean *quadrille and lanser*-style dancing). In some sequences, the dancers link arms and mover together in pairs, circling in clockwise then anticlockwise directions. In other sequences, the female partner kneels down on one knee while her partner dances in a circle around her in clockwise then anticlockwise fashion. Occasionally, each couple hops forward as in the Melakan *branyo* dance, which is a Malay-Portuguese *kacukan*/ hybrid dance influenced by Portuguese colonial era *branyo* dancing (see Sarkissian, 2000). Hopping movement is a characteristic facet of Portuguese folk dance and its derivatives in Southeast Asian *joget*-style dancing.

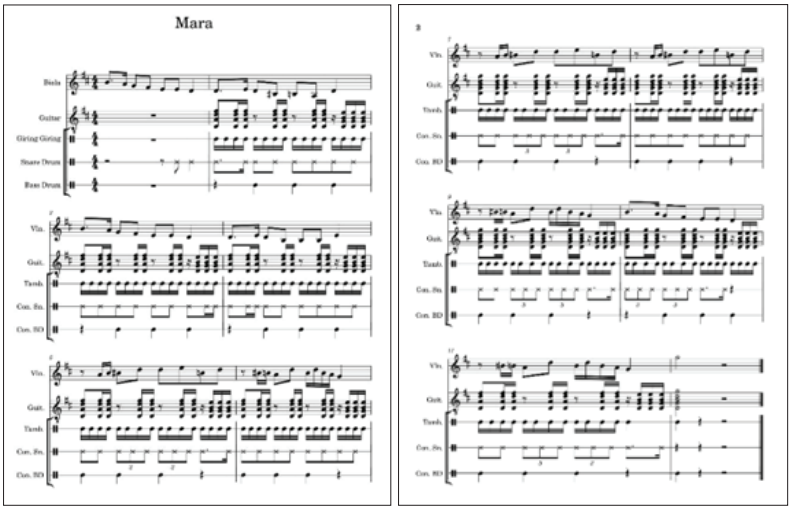
Members of the instrumental ensemble comprise a *biola* player, a Western-style drum kit, and Malay frame-drums. The *biola* and percussion play the typically Malay-style, diatonically tuned *lagu dua*[51] melody, in a major key at fast tempo. The melody comprises two-sections as usual in *lagu dua* music. The fast tempo of the music and dancing remains constant throughout.

In this modern choreographed version of Kuta Padang village's traditional *balanse madam* dance, four young men and four young women form couples and perform very similar movements and formations to the *balanse madam* dance performance. The dancers wear Niasan-influenced Malay-style costumes: the men in *teluk belanga* wit*h kain songket* and *peci*, and the women with a special headdress and *kebaya panjang* with antique jewelry, holding an open fan in their right hand. The fast tempo of the music and dancing remains constant throughout.

[51] In Malay music-culture, lagu *dua*, meaning "two-step," is a lively song-dance that usually follows a slow, introspective *senandung* song in a process called "song coupling").

Members of the instrumental ensemble comprise an accordion player, dram kit and frame-drums. Together with the percussion, the accordionist performs the Malay-style two-section, diatonically tuned Malay *lagu dua* melody in a major key at fast tempo, which often accelerates towards the conclusion of the piece. At certain moments, the drumming alone provides the only musical accompaniment without a melodic part.

In his thesis on *balanse madam*, Erwanto included a full-score transcription of *balanse madam* music (copied below) played on a West Sumatran *orkes gamat* which consisted of a *biola, gitar* (guitar), *giring-giring* (cymbals), snare drum and bass drum. Its diatonically tuned *biola* melody built on a G major scale with a varyingly-pitched tone 3/B comprises two repeated phrases of two bars each, labeled here as "a" and "b," along with a variant of "a", called "a/1." These phrases are arranged in the following quadruple-metric, five-phrase structure: //: a a b b a/1 ://. The melody is accompanied by largely syncopated *gitar* chords based on the central tone 1/G with varying top notes, a busy cup cymbals part (four semiquavers to every beat), and varied rhythmic motifs on the mainly down-beat snare drum and mainly upbeat bass drums. Its phrase "a" features a steep 8-tone descent and rise of a fourth followed by a convexly curving phrase "b" and a steeply descending phrase a/1.



Note: Music accompanying a *balanse madam* performance in Seberang Palinggam, South Padang District, Padang (date unknown, recording not available). Transcribed by Erwanto in his thesis, submitted at STSI Padang Panjang in 1998.

Figure 7.17 Music Accompanying *Balanse Madam* Performance

Both Erwanto and Sulastri assumed that the *balanse madam* dance and its accompanying music constitute a syncretic combination of Portuguese, Malay. Minangkabau and Nias stylistic facets. However, they did not substantiate this claim with concrete examples of the specific features drawn from each cultural tradition. Upon reading that these authors, along with the journalist Indrayuda, believed that *balanse madam* had been developed in the Seberang Palinggam district by former labourers and domestic servants of Nias descent during the Portuguese empire (1511–1641)—and that it continues to be venerated and preserved as a cultural heritage embodying a Malay-Portuguese-Nias/Minangkabau ancestry, it became evident that not only its artistic form and stylistic features of *balanse madam*, but also its historical trajectory of inter cultural contact, closely parallels that of *langser.* Yet, in the case of *langser,* the history of intercultural interaction appears more complex.

As with *balanse madam,* the syncretism inherent in the Islanders' *langser/langser madam* music and dance is clearly the result of multiple, layered intercultural encounters over centuries—particularly involving the Jamu Pesisir and Jamu-Pulo cultures. The Islanders' *langser* music and dance style embodies a confluence of Portuguese cultural elements (such as harmony-based melodies reminiscent of Portuguese folk songs with melancholy lyrics called *fado)* and facets of Jamu Pulo Malay culture (such as the Jamu-Pulo melodic formula-based melodies and *joget* couples dancing), but also elements of Niasan culture (including some of the lyrics that are partly in the Niasan language), and the Melayu Jamu Pesisir culture practiced along Sumatra's west coast between Singkil and Sibolga (such as their ornamented *dendang* singing style). The introduction of European musical instruments during colonial rule—most notably the accordion—further reshaped traditional Urang Pulo musical forms. This influence is evident in the hybridization of local melodies with Western harmonic structures, which continue to evolve in contemporary performances.

Therefore, neither *balanse madam* nor the *langser* dance involve the adoption of only a small number of foreign traits.[52] On the contrary, both are stylistically quite different from the Portuguese, Malay, and other prototypes that influenced their development. Their hybrid styles both represent a cultural transformation resulting from lengthy contact between at least two cultures, i.e. a transformative process that ethnomusicologists define as "transculturation".

Transculturation refers to the adoption not merely of isolated cultural traits, but of entirely new organising principles—musical and extramusical—including shifts in aesthetic, conceptual, and ideological framework. The motivation to adopt the new, broad music principles of equal temperament and harmony in *langser* music may have been the halo of dominant culture prestige in the Portuguese

[52] Culture contact theory often tends to emphasise Western rather than non-Western cultural examples of hybridity, as in the case say of a composer wanting to get a bit of exotic sound colour into a piece by adding just a few discrete traits from another culture.

colonial situation, or material or political advantage (Kartomi, 1981, 244).

F. Hypothesis: The Probable European Facets of the *Langser* Dance and its Name

As previously suggested, the *langser* or *langser madam* dance of Haloban appears to combine Malay *joget* dance movements with the French *lancer* dance, which is a variant of the French *quadrille* square directed by a dance caller (*komandir)*, as in European and American square dancing. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, *Lancer* was a fashionable dance in France, the Netherlands, England and its colonial territories, including those in Southeast Asia. Its four mixed couples moving in square or rectangular dance formations took turns to perform the dance from their corner of the square, though sometimes three took turns while the other couple rested. In former colonial centres such as Kuta Padang, Haloban, the Cocos Islands, the French Lesser Antilles that adopted and adapted versions of the dance, various names were used.[53] Thus, in the Cocos Islands and in Kuta Padang, for example, "quadrille" was rendered *kwodril (*pers. comm., Jenny McCallum, October 2016), while in Haloban it became *kwodri* (see Anhar's transcription of the *komandir's* calls at the end of this chapter. Naturally the specifics of the *lancer* and *quadrille* dances in the former colonial centres were varied; thus, in the version of the dance that we recorded in Haloban, the typically European set of four quadrille couples became eight couples, and the accompanying music was played on the local Jamu Pulo *biola* and *gandang* ensemble.

Historically, the *quadrille* comprised a chain of four to six courtly versions of English country dances called *contradanses,* probably derived from the Italian *quadriglia* (diminutive of *quadra*, meaning "small square"). The term *quadrille* originated in 17th-century equestrian parades in which four horsemen "danced" in square formations

[53] A derivative of the *quadrille* found in the French Lesser Antilles is known as *kwadril*, and the dance is also still found in Madagascar and old Jamaican/Caribbean culture (Clark and Clement, 1981).

(Clark & Crisp, 1817, 97). A parallel can be drawn with a hybrid Malay-Portuguese *joget* dance introduced in the 1950s by upper-class Eurasians in Melaka on the west coast of the Malay peninsula who claimed Portuguese descent (Sarkissian, 2000, 39).

Figure 7.18 The 1817 Caricature: "Accidents in Quardille Dancing,"

Linguistically, the name *langser* may reflect this cross-cultural exchange. In contemporary Indonesian, *langser* means "to slide" or "to move back and forth", and some local people think this may be the origin of the name. From a stylistic standpoint, *Langser* is a dance and musical style with a clearly hybrid, *kacukan* character in that it combines facets of the Urang Pulo Malay culture with elements of eighteenth and nineteenth century European *quadrille/kwodril* dances and music, and their *lancer* offshoot. Its hybrid character is best understood as a product of transculturation: a complex and sustained process of cultural convergence that began with early Portuguese contact (1511–1641) and continued during the Dutch colonial period. The Portuguese presence—primarily through Melaka but extending to West Sumatran ports—introduced not only European musical instruments but also melodic systems based on harmony and equal temperament, and couples dancing conventions.

Among the results of this early contact was the development of Indonesia's syncretic *kroncong* ensembles, Haloban's *biola-gandang*

ensembles, the *sikambang kapri* ensembles on Sumatra's west coast, West Sumatra's (including Padang's Nias descendants') *orkes gamat,* and other Southeast Asian string and percussion bands with their characteristically motivic, interlocking musical styles, diatonic tunings, melodies with harmonic implications, and hybrid dance steps and formations. Moreover, these ensembles accompany sentimental Malay vocal repertoires that resemble Portugal's *fado* folk songs with melancholy melodies and lyrics and are associated with the widespread couples dancing such as *joget, ronggeng, langser* and *balanse madam* dances that resemble Portugal's *branyo* folk dances in some respects, as various ethnomusicologists have pointed out.

Thus, *langser* contrasts starkly with the Urang Pulo's other more intimate items of music and dance that belong to their ancestral heritage, indeed that show no clear foreign influences whatever. They include the *adok* dance, lullabies, unaccompanied *dendang sikambang* music, and the *gandang* rhythms that accompany the martial arts and processions. However, like other forms of Urang Pulo repertoire, *langser* performances serve to promote social interaction and integration. Its performances are typically reserved for celebratory contexts (e.g., traditional weddings, circumcisions, *lebaran*), while men often perform in pairs due to local taboos around public female performance, the genre retains its function as communal entertainment.

Taken together, the Malay and syncretic Malay-European components of the Urang Pulo's musical traditions—and the traces of influence from west-coastal Sumatra, Simeulu, and Nias—affirm Kepulauan Banyak's distinctive cultural identity. The comparison between *langser madam* in Haloban and *balanse madam* in Padang contributes a novel theoretical perspective to ethnomusicological culture contact theory (Kartomi, 1981; Kartomi & Blum, 1994) which could be called "double transculturation". As Kartomi wrote about contact between two or more cultures in prolonged contact:

> The effects of contact range from i) the making of minor adjustments within existing musical styles, such as the small-scale transfer of discrete musical traits from one music into another, to the ii) creative transfor-

> mation of whole styles and of the ideological and music-organising principles on which they are based. Creative transformation, which may be termed syncretism, synthesis, or transculturation, normally occurs as a result of the convergence between cultures over a prolonged period of contact. Such convergence may result in an influx of new musical ideas, organising principles and repertoires. They may result in a greater level of individual or corporate creativity than before…Thus, it is that whole styles, repertoires, genres, pedagogical methods, extra-musical meanings commonly attached to music, the manner of theorising about music, and even the way a group dresses or behaves at musical events may change as a result of convergence in contact situations (Kartomi & Blum, 1994, ix).

I contend that *langser* and its associated vocal-*biola-gandang* music in Haloban, along with comparable couple-dancing genres along Sumatra's west-coast, constitute a clear example of a transculturation resulting from sustained cultural. This process began with the Portuguese presence in the region—particularly from Melaka in 1511–1641—and continued through interactions with coastal Malay communities in Padang and Sibolga. A second layer of cultural influence was introduced through Dutch colonial rule, as reflected in the corrupt Dutch texts of the caller's instructions. Thus, the process was one of "double transculturation". The same framework applies to the *balanse madam* genre in Padang by Nias-descended communities. Both *langser madam* and *balanse madam* represent "creative transformations" of Malay, Portuguese and Dutch genres, and the ideological and music-organising principles on which they are based exemplify the extreme end of Kartomi's continuum.

In both cases, the music-organising principles comprise: (i) the Portuguese implied harmonic melodies on the *biola*, (ii) the non-harmonic Malay vocal melody, (iii) the Malay cyclic drumming, and (iv) the Dutch caller's texts. When combined, these components were transformed either into the new *langser madam* or the new *balanse madam* style. A significant point of divergence between Haloban and Padang genres lies in their ideological framing: in Haloban, cultural norms prohibit adult women from appearing on stage, resulting in

all-male couples performing the dance. In contrast, Padang's performance conventions permit mixed-gender dancing, reflecting differing communal values regarding gender and public performance. Thus, the two examples of creative transformation of whole styles and of the ideological and music-organising principles on which they were based can be explained on the basis of this extension of culture contact theory which I have called "double transculturation".

CHAPTER VIII

VOCAL STYLES OF THE BARDIC *TALIBUN* PERFORMANCES AND MALE AND FEMALE *DIKIE* COMPARED

This chapter discusses two distinct and culturally unrelated vocal genres that may be performed upon a host's request during *baralek* celebrations in Kepulauan Banyak. The first is the *talibun* story-intoning genre, in which a bard (who is often a shaman) recites extended legends or oral narratives. These performances may also involve the bard offering counsel or chanting incantations and lyrical passages invoking ancestral or nature spirits in response to specific request by clients seeking spiritual assistance or fulfillment of personal wishes.

The second is the Muslim *dikie* (M.) or *zikir* (Ar.) genre that is not a indigenous to the island communities. These performances typically comprises devotional singing of Muslim texts in Arabic by groups of men, or the "reading" of *dikie* texts from books in Arabic by female choruses. These devotional acts are likewise performed at the request of hosts during *baralek* celebrations.

The aim of the chapter is to compare the traditional style of *talibun* performances and functions with the adapted style and functions

of the devotional exercises and performances called *dikie* (M.), or *zikir* (Ar.).

A. Style and Function of the Bardic *Talibun* Tradition: Entertainment and Magic

A *talibun* is a long poetic story or legend that is intoned in the Haloban or the Jamu Pulo speech variety, or a combination of both. It is usually performed by an expert storyteller or bard, locally referred to as a *pendendang talibun* (Ma. Pulo), who employs *talibun* poetic form (discussed below) in relatively free metre and rhythm. The performance may be delivered unaccompanied or with *gandang* accompaniment. While historical accounts suggest the possible existence of both female and male bards—similar to those occasionally reported in other parts of coastal Sumatra (pers. comm., Margaret Kartomi, Haloban, 2010)—contemporary gender norms in the Banyak Islands, which confine women largely to the domestic sphere, now largely preclude female participation in public bardic performance.

A bard must have an excellent singing voice, a good knowledge of the local repertoire of melodies, mastery of the appropriate vocal style, a robust memory for the extensive local repertoire of orally transmitted legends and other stories, and a creative ability to improvise new stories, allusions and humorous interjections for the audience entertainment. *Talibun* stories are also told along the entire west coast of Sumatra, where they are known as *talibun pasisir* (west-coastal Sumatran *talibun)* and are intoned in the various Malay speech varieties found along the coast (Kartomi, 2012a, p. 223).[54]

Despite its historical vitality, the *talibun* performances has become increasingly rare. In the 1970s, Margaret Kartomi documented a still-vibrant performance culture practiced along Sumatra's west coast, though even at that time, signs of decline were evident. Today, the number of active *pendendang talibun* (*talibun* bards) has diminished

[54] On Sumatra's northwest coast, *talibun* verses are also known as *ende-ende Tapanuli* ("Tapanuli verses"), and they are usually in a mix of Malay and Tapanuli/Batak languages.

significantly, and opportunities for performance have become limited. Consequently, this chapter can offer only a brief examination of the *talibun* as practiced in the Islands, drawing on a single recorded example. A musical transcription of a verse in *talibun* form below is presented to delineate the *talibun* singing style and poetry from the *dendang sikambang* style discussed in the previous chapter. It has enabled briefly to analyse it for comparison with the much more melismatic *pendendang sikambang* style in the Islands.

B. The *Talibun* Bards

Historically, *talibun* bards often held dual roles as shamans who could perform feats of "black magic" (M. *ilmu sihir,*) and "white magic" (M. *ilmu putih*). These practices involved communication with malevolent and benevolent spirits (M. *roh kasar* and *roh halus),* respectively, to fulfil specific requests on behalf of clients. The term "black magic" generally connotes the potential for serious harm inflicted upon a victim as a result of a shaman's actions and is typically regarded with social and religious disapproval. Conversely, "white magic" is viewed more favorably, even by Muslims, due to its association with benevolent spiritual intervention, often likened to the influence of *jin* (spirits) described in the Qur'an (pers. comm, *Bpk.* Armansyah, master-teacher and performer of the Malay Pulo *talibun* tradition in Teluk Nibung, Pulau Ujung Batu, 17 June, 2010).

Until about three decades ago, there was considerable demand for bards' performances and/or shamanic services at weddings, circumcision ceremonies, and baby thanksgivings. These performers were itinerant artists who lived from the proceeds of their activities, often traveling by sampan along a river or across the sea to work in villages on different islands. A host would commission a bard or a pair of bards or more to perform stories throughout the night as a form of entertainment of the person or persons being honoured and the audience of family and guests at a wedding, circumcision, or other celebration.

In contemporary practice, when a *pendendang talibun* is invited to perform at a wedding or circumcision ceremony, the host may request either traditional narratives or newly composed stories, with performance typically extending from 9:00 p.m. into the early morning hours. If the occasion is a wedding, the bard may intone a romantic story or intersperse the tale with advisory verses (*naseb,* lit "advice") directed at the newlywed couple concerning their expectations and responsibilities of marriage (pers comm. *Bpk.* Muhammad Edwar, Teluk Nibung, 17 june, 2010). In the case of circumcision, the bard may intone a story about an adventure of a young man that contains advice to the boy to be kind to his parents.

Until the 1960s, two or three itinerant *talibun* bards often travelled around the district seeking opportunities to perform and other work, taking turns to perform all night for several nights in a row. Their compensation typically consisted of ample food and drink, occasionally supplemented by gifts such as rice or traditional cakes.

The narratives presented by bards are often deeply emotive and designed to elicit strong affective responses from the audience. A prevalent theme is that of separation and longing, as in the popular motif of the *perantau*—a young man who leaves his *kampong haloman* (home village) in search of fortune, encounters hardship abroad, and is ultimately unable to return. Such tales frequently provoke tears among listeners, resonating with personal experiencess of loss and migration. These stories may recall for some parents the absence of their own children, or for spouse the departure of husbands or brothers, who, for various reasons, were unable to return home (pers. comm. from *Bpk.* Armansyah, Teluk Nibung, 17 June, 2010).

C. Pitunang and Salimbuak

In earlier times, a bard-shaman reputedly use his *ilmu Nabi Dawud* ("mystical knowledge from the prophet David"*)* to intone a mystical mantra called a *pitunang* at the behest of a client. These *pitunang* were mantras intended to produce a range of outcomes, such as inducing romantic attraction, invoking sadness or depression in an adversary, or

even causing physical harm through poisoning. However, it is claimed that such examples of *ilmu sihir* (black magic) no longer occur in the Islands (pers. comm., *Bpk* Armansyah, 17 June, 2010. A bard may also use a kind of knowledge called *salimbuak* whichallowed him to intuit or predict the subsequent couplet of a verse upon hearing the initial two lines.

D. Poetic Form and Content

Talibun is a verse form that may contain six, eight, ten or twelve lines of a varying number of syllables. The poem is structurally divided into two key components: the *sampiran* (introductory or analogical couplet) and the (the core message or intent of the verse). The is often metaphorical or symbolic, serving as an indirect prelude to the, which delivers the emotional or narrative payload of the verse Kartomi, 2012a, pp. 223, 431).

An illustrative example of a six-line *talibun* verse describes a young man from Padang Tarap village who wanders into a flower garden—an indirect metaphor for his search for a romantic partner. The next couplet refers to his visit to the market at dusk to buy some betel leaves, which is an apparent irrelevancy. However, in the closing line, the bard draws an analogy between the uniformity of the betel leaves and the divergence of emotional experience: although the leaves are similar in appearance, their taste differs. This metaphor signals the young man's unreciprocated or hopeless romantic longing.

The 6-line verse in *talibun* form and Transcription 9.1 of a musical performance of it are as follows:

Anak orang di Padang Tarap	*A young man in Padang Tarap*
pergi berjalan ke kebun bunga	*goes into the flower garden*
hendak ke pekan hari t'lah senja	*wants to go to the market after sunset*
Di sana sirih kami kerekap	*To get our regular supply of betel nut leaves*
meskipun daunnya serupa	*the leaves there are the same*
namun rasanya berlain jua	*no matter, the feeling is different*

In some other areas along Sumatra's west coast, verses may have between 6 and 20 lines each.

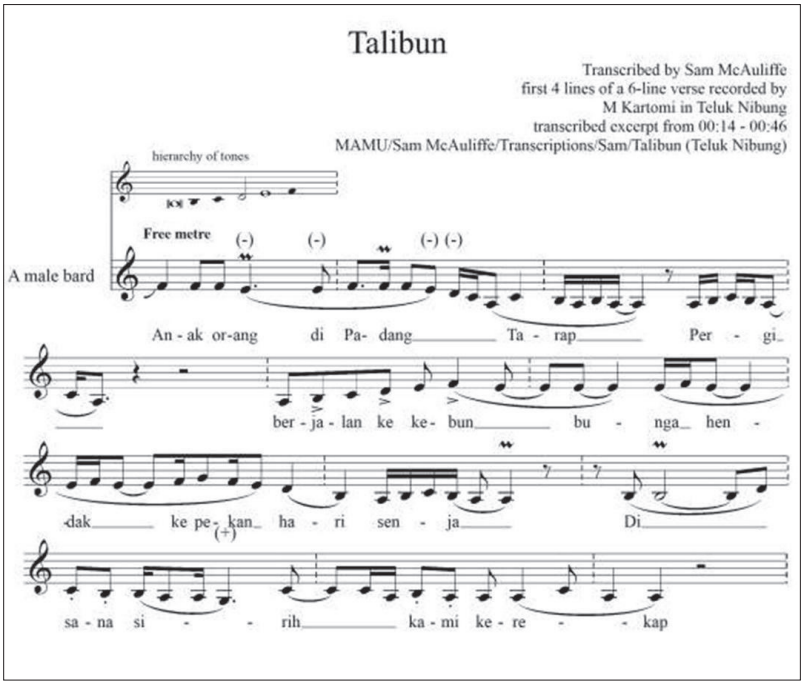
On commissioned ceremonial occasions, bards often exchanged *talibun*-form verses with a guest, or a series of guests in some areas. The bard and a woman, say, would exchange verses about love, longing, marriage, and moral advice. However, the verse-exchange (*bersaut-saut)* performance practice is not normally allowed in Kepulauan Banyak today, mainly due to prevailing moral or religious norms that prescribe the domestic seclusion of women and discourage their public participation in performance (pers. comm., *Bpk*. Armansyah, 17 June, 2010).

E. Analysis of *Talibun* Performance Style

This section presents a transcription and analytical overview of a *talibun* verse performance by the bard (*pendendang talibun)*, *Bapak* Tarmizi, recorded in Teluk Nibung in 2010. He sang with eyes closed while holding his frame drum (*gandang)* on his lap and resting his cheek on it for comfort and support. **Figure 8.1** depicts the intoning of a lyric in *talibun* poetic form in a loudly carrying voice at a moderate tempo (MM ca. 60).

Note: Shows a *pendendang talibun* (Bp Tarmizi) performing *talibun* verses from memory in Teluk Nibung while holding a frame drum (*gandang)* on his lap and resting his cheek on it for comfort and support as he concentrates on his art.

Figure 8.1 A *Pendendang Talibun* Performance



Note: *Analysis:*
Melodic direction change: 100 x 28 / 69 = 40.56
Tonal repetition: 100 x 18 / 69 = 26
Level shift: 100 x (2-11) / 11 = -81.8

Figure 8.2 Transcription of the *Talibun* Verse Performed in Teluk Nibung

As Figure 8.2 shows, the intoners of *talibun* poetic lyrics normally adopt a relatively free rhythmic style and free metre, and irregularly place stresses on certain tones for emphasis in the story-telling process, as in the above. While the overall tempo remains moderate, tempo acceleration is occasionally employed to match the intensity of the unfolding narrative. The *talibun* singing style features much less melisma than in *dendang sikambang* performances, and it is often quite syllabic, especially when the bard is intoning a story as opposed to giving advice or expressing emotion in song. It contains a little incidental ornamentation *(bungaran)*—including turns, glides, glottal

stops, and vibrato effects—these are employed with far less consistency than in *sikambang* singing. However, a bard can occasionally insert a regular metric melody for musical variety or to illustrate the emotion implied by the lyric of the moment in his storytelling. Additionally, he may also vary the performance by singing an elaborately melismatic *dendang* at an appropriate thoughtful moment when he wants his audience to contemplate a happening or thought in the story.

In terms of compositional technique the bard's musical and poetic invention is closely mirror that of a *pendendang sikambang* performing a lullaby. He often intones a series of very active melodic lines—with a high frequency of directional changes and minimal tonal repetition—or a more chant-like style dominated by repeated tones and minimal melodic motion. Like his *dendang sikambang* performance, a bard may intone around his choice of a large number of cadential formulae remembered from other performances he has heard, which often occur in retrograde form (such as the formula on tones 5 3 2 1 and its retrograde 1 2 3 5).

Thus, the performance transcribed above exhibits a moderate degree of melodic direction change (40.56%) and a small degree of adjacent tonal repetition (8.86%). The principal cadential formulae are tones 5 4 3 1 (EDCA) and its retrograde 1 3 4 5 (ACDE), with other melodic formulae (such as 2 3 4 5 (BCDE) and 5 4 3 2 (EDCB) occurring within lines. Its overall direction of melodic movement is quite steeply descending, i.e. the level shift measures -63.6 (minus 63.6) degrees, and it is performed at a moderate tempo of MM *ca.* 60.

In conclusion, a *pendendang talibun* must possess not only a powerful and sustained vocal technique, capable of projecting over long durations, but also a highly trained memory capable of recalling and spontaneously generating hundreds of verses—some up to 20 lines long and often rhymed. Additionally, the bard must have deep familiarity with local folk stories and legends, and the ability to keep his audiences enthralled for many hours. In many cases, such a bard also draws upon shamanic skills and estoric knowledge to enhance the perceived potency of his performance. His intoning style is generally

much less melismatic than that of other pendendang sikambang, but he applies similar rules of composition to his performances, including improvising on cadential and other melodic formulae, and he sings verses in free metred and free rhythmic style. In Haloban, the bards typically perform in *Bahasa* Haloban or a mix of Melayu Pulo and Haloban speech varieties, while those on the west coast of the mainland Sumatra tend to perform in coastal Malay/Melayu Pasisir.

F. Male *Dikie* Devotional Intoning and Female *Dikie* Performing Functions and Style

In the Kepulauan Banyak, Women and men engage in religious perform devotions and prayers in gender-segregated context. Among the primary religious activities of men and boys are congregational prayers and Qur'anic recitation within mosques and madrasahs (Muslim schools). Following these prayers, worshippers often engage in the intoning of Sufi religious texts called *dikie (Malay)* or *zikir derived from the Arabic dhikr—meaning "remembrance [of God]".*

Stylistically distinct from both *talibun* and *dendang sikambang,* the *dikie* genre serves a fundamentally different purpose. While *talibun* belongs to the secular poetic and musical traditions of the Islands, is firmly rooted in Islamic spiritual practice, This form of intoning the litany on Aceh's west coast and in the Islands was first developed in the 18th century by the Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqa)* in Aceh—especially on the west coast during the era when Aceh's capital, Kutaraja (now Banda Aceh), was the centre of the Malay world—the to Kepulauan Banyak, where it continues to be performed today. Worshippers usually combine their intoning of Sufi-Muslim *dikie* verses with mental and physical exercises that help them "remember God" (Amir 2006, pp. 21–22).

Sufi Islam played an important role over the centuries in developing Malay and Acehnese cultures. Traditionally there were three spheres of influence: (i) the Syafi'i *madzhab* (school of jurisprudence) which is strong in north and east coastal Aceh, (ii) the *Shii'te* school which operated along Sumatra's west coast in the 19th and 20th centuries

but now exists in only a few small communities, and (iii) a syncretic form of Islam which combined Sufi-Islamic and pre-Islamic elements as are found in Kepulauan Banyak and some other areas. These three schools influenced the performing arts (Amir, 2006, pp. 21–22). For example, areas influenced by syncretic Sufi worship developed the *dikie* and its *ratib* texts, while areas influenced by Shi'ism are home to performing arts that deal with death and tragedy, such as the *pho* and *malelang* song-dances in west-coastal Aceh (Kartomi 2012a, pp. 289, 298–300). The syncretic Sufi form of Islam was important in Kepulauan Banyak until recent decades, when the Syafi'i *madzhab* school became more influential (pers. comm., *Bpk.* Anhar Sitanggang, Haloban 2014).

Dikie, or *zikir,* is the Malay term for the Arabic *dhikr* (lit. 'remembrance'), the texts of which teach moral and religious values. *Dikie* is part of the Islamic practice of *tasawwuf* (mystical practice) that developed from the 7th century in the Perso-Arabic region. It aims to improve the worshipper's knowledge of his inner self *('ilm al-batin*) as opposed to knowledge acquired through perception *('ilm al-zahir*). It developed as part of a syncretic form of Islam which combined Sufi Islamic and pre-Islamic elements found in socities such as Kepulauan Banyak's. *Dikie* includes the chanting or intoning of *witr* (Ar., lit. "chant") or *ratib* (M., Sufi-Muslim texts), with the lead singer-worshipper called a *radat* (from the Arabic *raddad,* meaning "repeater"). Notably, *dikie* is always performed collectively; its social function lies in reinforcing spiritual unity and communal bonds within the worshipping group, and has therefore never been performed solo. Thus, the words chanted in the religious exercises called *dikie* consist mainly of sacred verses such as praises of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad, either accompanied by frame drum playing or unaccompanied. In cases where textual and melodic phrasing do not align naturally, vocalists may adapt the text or insert filler syllables to preserve musical continuity (Amir, 2006, pp. 190–197, 200–202).

A transcribed excerpt from a *dikie* performance recorded in Haloban illustrates some of these stylistic characteristics. The

phonetically-transcribed text (in a local Acehnese-Jamee speech variety) begins (in translation) with a reference to "The rope of God,"—a metaphor for Muslim unity derived from *Surat Ali 'Imran* (Qur'an 3:103), which translates as "And hold firmly to the rope of God all together and do not become divided. The group then quotes the creed "There is no God but God", and finally declares:" In God's name (Bismillah), we offer this *ratib*".

Musically, this *dikie* excerpt exemplifies features that sharply distinguish it from indigenous genres like . The melody is heptatonic and centers firmly around the tonal pitch 1 (F#), with limited cadential variation—primarily 4 3 2 1 (B A G F#), repeated thrice in this excerpt, once at the lower octave.

Its male chorus sings mostly in fixed quadruple metre, with minimal rhythmic variation and little to no melodic ornamentation,, and in near Western intonation. Its deep descent in the middle of the verse is unlike any traditional song studied here, making the analysis of its overall melodic direction/level shift a meaningless exercise except in that it draws further attention to its dissimilarities of style with the *sikambang* tradition. This, however, is not surprising because *dikie* melodies like this are deliberately modelled on local perceptions of Arabic models they have heard.

G. Female *Dikie* Performing Functions and Style

Dhikr (or dikie), the Islamic ritual practice involving vocal recitation, is a central element of religious life in Urang Pulo. Typically performed by men, it serves both a spiritual and social function within the community. While men's *dikie* groups are mainly devotional in purpose, women's *dikie* groups have a highly social and performative function. The women sing a series of standard *kitab* (*dikie* texts) read from their books of printed *dikie* texts in Arabic (see Figure 8.2.) so that they are ready to perform whenever they are asked to do so.

Note: Left: The index page of a book of *kitab* intoned by the women's *dikie* chorus group in Haloban. **Right**: Women in a home intoning a *kitab* as they rehearse their *dikie* repertoire for performance at a *baralek*, Haloban, June 2007.

Figure 8.3 *Kitab* Intonation by Women's Dikie Chorus Group

The women gather weekly in each other's homes to practice their *kitab* chanting (see **Figure 8.3**), forming a kind of rotating rehearsal and social gathering. They are regulary invited to perform during local celebratory events such as *baralek*. During such events, the female chorus may process around the village and on the verandah of the host's home at the celebration, receiving a modest payment (see Figure 8.4). Government representatives also sometimes ask them to perform at *Idulfitri* and National Day celebrations. The female chorus in Haloban created their own motto song to a well-known *dikie* melody which they sang for the visiting Governor of Aceh when he visited them during the Green Turtle Festival in 2010.

Note: Left: A female chorus processes around Haloban singing *dikie* songs as a contribution to a circumcision *baralek/*celebration in Haloban, 3 April 2007. **Right**: A female chorus sing *dikie* songs inside the host's house at a celebration in Haloban, 3 April 2007.

Figure 8.4 *Dikie* Song Performances in Haloban

In conclusion, both *talibun and dikie* singing styles and functions differ strongly from each other, as do the female and thSe male singing styles and functions. The *talibun* style and social function resembles that of the typical *dendang sikambang* genres in some respects, while the male and female *dikie* traditions are kept quite separate from both the *talibun* and the *dendang sikambang* traditions. However, all these genres serve particular social purposes and are regarded as important expressions of the artistic and ideological lives of the people living in the rural and urban communities of Kepulauan Banyak.

CHAPTER IX

THE IDENTITY AND THE CONSERVATIONAL DILEMMA OF THE BANYAK ARCHIPELAGO

This chapter synthesises the current discourse among the leading artists, elders, and other members of the Islander communities regarding questions of cultural identity and the sustainability of their music-culture. Central to these discussions is the complex issue of how best to revitalise its traditional practices and transmit deep cultural knowledge to younger generations. A related concern is how to promote awareness of the music-culture's distinctive character and its historical, cultural and—through intermarriage and migration—genealogical connections to the former Sultanate of Pagaruyung and the whole Malay west-coastal and offshore island communities of Sumatra. Many community members believe that increasing recognition of these connections may provide a pathway toward resolving the current challenges of cultural preservation.

A. The Most Distinctive Items of the Cultural Centre's—Haloban'sArtistic Identity

According to the Islands' most respected artists and elders, Haloban is the cultural epicentre of the Kepulauan Banyak. This distinction is due not only to its historical status as the site of the former royal palace, but also to its continued ability to host the full-length performances of the traditional music and dance repertoire during all-night wedding and circumcision celebrations. Haloban also maintains two distinctive dances that symbolise its local identity and are not performed elsewhere in the archipelago.

Their most important symbol of this identity is their unique, sacred *adok* dance. Performed exclusively in Haloban, this slow and ceremonious dance features a specially trained *penampik* (a singer who also plays the gandang drum) who intones long poetic verses about the primal ancestors (Bundo Kanduang and Cindue Mato) of the first king of Haloban who was appointed centuries ago by his father, the sultan of Pagaruyung. The *adok* is performed at pivotal moments in a man's life—circumcision and marriage—ceremonies during which the entire community honors and commemorates its ancestors, especially the Pagaruyung ancestors. The *adok* dance tells in song and enacts in dance the ancestral legend of Pagaruyung and its prince who became their first king. Storytellers can tell the whole legend, which is summarised as follows (based on Kartomi, 2012a, p. 46):

> In the beginning the primal Queen of Pagaruyung, Bundo Kanduang, gave virginal birth to her son Dang Tuanku, the substitute for Allah on earth who ruled over the *luhak nan tigo* ("three districts") kingdom of Pagaruyung with his mother. As it happened, he shared his soul with a poor, uneducated commoner called Cindue Mato, who agreed to carry out most of his wishes, including capturing his future wife, Puti Bungsu, from a distant kingdom. This led to war with Dang Tuanku's rival in love, Raja Imbang Jayo, whom he fought and eventually had executed. When Dang Tuanku died, Cindue Mato went into exile on the south coast at Indrapura. Eventually, he returned to Pagaruyung but found he

had to kill Imbang Jayo's father, who was seeking revenge for his son's death. The way was then open for Cindue Mato to become the first king of the highlands and the coastal areas of Minangkabau. Meanwhile (according to the legend's *darék* version), the three other members of the royal family had either ascended to seventh heaven or (according to the south-coastal version) had fled by river and sea boat to Lunang, near Indrapura, where they died and were buried, leaving the son and daughter of Dang Tuanku and Puti Bungsu (Sutan Alam Dunia and Puti Sri Dunia) to rule the Minangkabau and Rao kingdoms respectively. The Sutan married a princess from Aceh but soon divorced her without paying the full bride-wealth, whereupon the king of Aceh punished him by forcing him to surrender the coastal area of Minangkabau to Aceh. (Aceh actually took over the Minangkabau coastal trade outlets in the 16th century and is said to have helped Islamise the people in the early 17th century).

Despite these complex genealogical and political histories, the Islanders' elders emphasise that their ancestral allegiance is exclusively to the former Sultanate of Pagaruyung, and not to the wider Minangkabau culture, which they regard as distinct from their own. They are keenly concerned about pointing this difference out.

The other unique item in the Haloban repertoire is the *langser* couples dance, with its *kacukan* Malay-Portuguese dance steps, its foreign-sounding callers' instructions, its *gandang* musicians' playing of distinctive Malay rhythmic motifs (*rantak*), and its *biola* player production of diatonic melodies with harmonic implications. However, the oral history of this dance only goes back a half-century, whereas *adok*'s is thought to be centuries old. Its European-derived components include a mix lexicon of Dutch and Malay in the caller's spoken commands. Comparative analysis reveals notable similarities between *langser* and the *balanse madam* dance practiced by Niasan descendants in Padang. While their choreographic structures may appear similar, its Malay-Portuguese *nandung* vocal music and *biola-gandang* accompaniment differ radically in style from the popular-style Minangkabau *orkes gamat*.

Haloban's practice of the Islamic arts also differs in emphasis from that of its indigenous traditions. Women's performance genres such as *dikie* are perceived as Arab-influenced genres with "a Muslim flavour" (*kesenian yang bernafaskan Islam*), while the men's *dikie* and other devotional genres are regarded as religious expressions developed for the purpose of *dakwah* ("Islamic proselytization"), and referred to as "Islamic-themed arts" (*kesenian Islam*) (Kartomi, 2011, p. 270).

Importantly, *adok* is only one of many genres of traditional music and dance in the Islands. Haloban artists and elders consider the *buai* lullabies, *talibun* intoning, processional *randai* and *gelombang duo baleh* dances, and the large *sikambang* repertoire of couple's dances with *dendang nandung, biola* and *gandang* accompaniment to be part of the musical identity of the whole Kepulauan Banyak. Nevertheless, Haloban remains the only place where one can currently find complete, all-night performances of that lengthy ceremonial repertoire.[55]

Given these cultural assets, Haloban has all the necessary resources to establish itself as a formal cultural centre for Sumatra's west coastal and offshore island area. With appropriate support—both governmental and private—a currently proposed development initiative could transform Haloban into an attractive destination for local, national, and international tourims. Such a transformation holds the potential not only for cultural revitalisation, but also for economic regeneration through the creation of employment opportunities and sustanaible development. Further details on this project will be discussed in Section 9.3.

B. The Recent Decline in the Practice of the Islanders' Musical Arts

[55] Artists in other population centres in the Banyak Archipelago such as Pulau Balai and Teluk Nibung cannot remember all the items of the *sikambang* dance and song repertoire, thus the performances at their weddings and other ceremonies only go on between ca. 9:00 p.m. and midnight, after which they go home to sleep.

According to elders and leading artists in Haloban, the practice of traditional music and dance among younger generations has been in noticeable decline since approximately 1990. Moreover, opportunities for public performanes, particularly at government or private sector functions remain rare. Until quite recently, community members primarily practised their traditional musical arts in the context of local *baralek*, largely uninfluenced by the national mass media. Even today, few Islanders own television sets or regularly listen to the radio except in the capital Pulau Balai which houses the government communication networks. In most other settlements, including Haloban, residents must generate their own electricity—typically limited to several hours daily—which further restricts access to modern entertainment media.

Thoughtful community members, both women and men, attribute the continuing decline in musical practice and maintenance to a range of interrelated social-economic factors. Foremost among these is the worsening economic situation in the Islands exacerbated by declining fish catches due to competition from industrial ocean trawlers, limited employment opportunities, and the general lack of institutional or commercial support for cultural initiatives. Government authorities and business entities have largely failed to sponsor performances by the few remaining youth *sanggar,* contributing to the erosion of incentives for transmission. Consequently, many villagers can no longer afford to celebrate their weddings and other ceremonies with performances over several days and nights as in the past. In such cases, recorded music played on cassette players often substitutes for live performance, leading to a general decline in the depth of knowledge and skill associated with traditional performing arts.

During fieldwork conducted over the past thirteen years, I have observed that certain traditional musical items I recorded during earlier visits to Kepulauan Banyak are now rarely performed. Not surprisingly, some artistic leaders have expressed deep concern about this cultural attrition and the potential rupture in the continuity of Urang Pulo artistic traditions. This decline raises pressing questions

about preservation, transmission, and the sustainability of the Island's intangible cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, despite this overarching trend of decline, some Haloban artists continue to maintain their performance knowledge of the repertoire virtually intact. In cases where relatively affluent host in Haloban holds a domestic *baralek adat*, the *adok* dance, the processions, and the *adat* procedures are presented in the traditional way. While *sikambang* music and dancing no longer span multiple consecutive nights as they did in the past, it is still customary for such performance to extend throughout a single night.

Importantly, not all genres have suffered equally. The Islanders' beautiful traditional lullabies remain an integral part of daily life and continue to be sung by parents to soothe their babies, either carried on the hips or swung in hammocks (see Chapter V). Unlike much other vocal music, but akin to the *dendang sikambang* repertoire, many lullaby texts are in the local Haloban-Melayu Jamu Pulo ("Islander Malay") speech variety. This dialect differs in some respects from the Melayu Jamu Pasisir (west-coast Sumatran Malay) speech variety and needs to be documented and recorded by linguists before the classical language is lost. These lullabies play a crucial role in preserving the musical and idiomatic textual traditions of the Urang Pulo. They represent one of the few genres that have endured the profound cultural changes brought on by the forces of modernisation. Their resilience may be attributed to their deep emotional resonance: as the first musical experience for most Islanders, lullabies, leave an indelible imprint on memory and form of the foundation of an individual's musical consciousness throughout life.

C. The Organology and Performance Style of the *Gandang* in Kepulauan Banyak Compared to West-Coastal Sumatra

This section examines the organology, sonic qualities, and performance style of the all-important *gandang* in the *adok Haloban* and other *sikambang* performances, with a particular focus on regional

divergences between Kepulauan Banyak and Sumatra's west coast, specifically the area stretching from Singkil to Sibolga.

The distinctive facets of the musical identity of Kepulauan Banyak as opposed to that of the culturally related west coastal area of Sumatra between Singkil and Sibolga lies partly in the organological design, sound qualities, and performance techniques of their main musical instrument, the *gandang*.

Figures 9.1–9.5 document the typical features of *gandang* made and used in Haloban and neighbouring villages, while Figure 9.6 depicts a typical *gandang* from Natal, and Figures 9.7–9.8 present two structurally divergent drums played in Sibolga. Although all *gandang* makers use goat skin for the drumheads, *nangka* (jackfruit tree) wood for the body, rattan pieces for the rings affixed to the top and bottom sides and thin rattan for the lacing of the head to the body, the resulting instruments vary significantly in design and function.

In Haloban, *gandang* are notably smaller in diameter and less deep than on the west coast. The preferred timbre is sharp and resonant, akin to that of a small *rapai* in Aceh. This sonic preference has led to a functional interchangeability between the *gandang* and , particularly in cross-regional performances. For instance, during a performance tour in Australia (Monash University, September 2016), Haloban artists subtituted *rapa'i* for *gandang,* illustrating their adaptability and openness to instrument substitution (pers. comm., *Bapak* Misri Caniago in Haloban, 17 October 2014). In fact, during a 2014 visit, *Bapak* Misri requested that small *rapa'i* be brought from Banda Aceh for local use and play.

Figure 9.1 illustrates three views of a *gandang* made by *Bapak* Misri in Haloban. Its skin measures 21cm in diameter and its tapering sides measure 4cm in depth (the photos were taken in 17 October 2014). The head consists of a tautly stretched piece of buffalo skin. During performance, the musician sits cross-legged with the *gandang* held upright on the lap. A sharp, short, high-pitched sound—referred to as *ba*— is produced by striking the edge of the drumhead with two

or three fingers of his right hand, while simultaneously damping the vibration with the fingers of the left hand.

Figure 9.1 Three views of a gandang Made by *Bapak* Misri in Haloban

To produce the contrasting *dum* sound, the musicion strikes the drum approximately 4 cm inward from the rim using four flattened fingers, while lifting the left hand to allow for resonance (as in Figure 9.3, just before left hand lifts).

When the player wants to tauten the skin of the drum, he tightens the sturdy rattan rings around the back of his *gandang* and the sound is brighter when beaten. He can further tauten it by holding it for a few moments next to a fire or heater. Note the H-shaped rattan lacing and knot-ties stretching from the skin to the back ring.

Figures 9.2–9.5 present contrasting examples of *gandang* from Saniang Baka, Natal, and Sibolga, illustrating the morphological and performance-related divergences across the region.

Figure 9.2 Gandang form Saniang Baka, West Sumatra

Note: Front and back views of a *gandang* in Natal (photo taken 1 November 2014).

Figure 9.3 *Gandang* from Natal

Note: Two views of a gandang from Sibolga

Figure 9.4 Other *Gandang* from Natal

Note: A recently made thick-sided *gandang* in Sibolga (photo taken 3 November 2014).

Figure 9.5 *Gandang* from Sibolga

D. Revitalising the Arts and Culture of the Banyak Archipelago as part of the Greater Malay West-Coastal and Offshore Island Area of Sumatra

The expressive culture of the Haloban community, including its musical traditions, ceremonial dances, and distinctive Bahasa Haloban, represents a valuable repository of intangible heritage. Haloban Elders and artists increasingly recognise the importance of revitalizing these traditions, not only for cultural preservation but also for strengthening communal identity and supporting socio-economic development.

Of the twelve factors that Catherine Grant (2014a, p. 300) adapted from UNESCO's "Language, Vitality and Endangerment" document[56] for her "Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework", artists and elders in Haloban emphasise the critical importance of intergenerational transmission. Declining participation among youth in several villages highlights the urgency of this revitalization. Therefore, targeted support for schools and *sanggar* (artistic troupes and training centres) is essential. Resources such as costumes, musical instruments, stage equipment, and opportunities for public performance are needed to maintain continuity. This is especially important as the context and function of some items are changing. For instance, the sacred *adok* dance was adapted for a stage performance by boys and girls facing each other in a long line at the Green Turtle Festival in Pulau Balai in 2010; and a quite different though more authentic version was adapted for the concert performance at Monash University in 2016. Grant (2014b) also mentioned that attracting the media is a way of invigorating endangered culture.

In the lead up to the Green Turtle Festival and its associated competitions held in Pulau Balai in 2010, the elders and leading artistsof the Islands convened to reflect on the core expressive elements of their cultural identity. As a result of these deliberations, they decided to train local schoolgirls and boys to present staged versions of two ceremonial dances traditionally performed as markers of Urang Pulo identity. Both performances were documented on video.

In Pulau Balai, a local *adok* dancer and choreographer instructed the local school boys and girls to perform a newly choreographed version (*kreasi baru*) of the sacred *adok* dance, which was performed publicly on an open-air stage during the evening celebrations in Pulau Balai. Simultaneously, in Teluk Nibung, other groups of school-aged girl and boy were trained to perform the traditional umbrella (*payung*)

[56] UNESCO. (2000). "The Dakar Framework for Action-Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments", Adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April. Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/mahes/0012/001211/121147e.pdf

dance. Their performance was accompanied by two elderly male musicians—a *biola* player who played *dendang Pulau Pinang* in the usual elaborately ornamented melodic style and a *gandang* player.

Significantly, the 2010 festival marked the first official visit by the Governor of Aceh to Haloban. During his visit, he was welcomed with some dance performances. Shortly afterward, the research team also visited Haloban, where local artists presented rehearsed renditions of selected *sikambang* dances (as described in Chapter IV) and along with performances of *nandung* music.

At the time of writing, increasing scholarly and community attention is being directed toward the cultural positioning of the Kepulauan Banyak within to the whole west-coastal Sumatran and offshore islander area. These developments underscore the long-standing cultural unity shared among these coastal and insular communities. In recognition of this heritage, plans were underway for a "Sikambang Folklife Festival", to be launched from Haloban as a regional celebration of sikambang arts in the Malay West-Coast and offshore island area of Sumatra.

The envisioned festival intended to invite and host artists from various (i) offshore islands including Simeulue, Nias, Pulau Mursala (off the coast of Barus), Pulau Cut (opposite Tiku), and Pulau Pisang (opposite Krui in Lampung) and (ii) west-coast Sumatran towns including Singkil, Barus, Sorkam, Sibolga, Jago-jago, Natal, Pesisir Selatan, Air Haji, Air Bangis, Pulau Panjang Muko Muko, Manna, Pesisir Barat. The festival was designed as a platform for collaborative performances with Kepulauan Banyak artists, featuring numerous rare and historically significant. These events were to be professionally recorded by television and other media crews.

Concurently, an international conference was planned to contextualise the festival's cultural, political, and economic significance, aiming to raise the visibility of the region's artistic traditions and to encourage regional development. Unfortunately, the implementation of this ambitious initiative has been postponed due to on-going

challenges in coordinating communication among the many parties involved.

The growing awareness of regional cultural unity is attributable in part to this research, as well as to fieldwork by Haloban's master musician, *Bapak* Anhar and the author, including comparative analysis with Kartomi's west-coastal ethnographic data from the 1970s and 1980. These comparative studies have contributed to clarifying the main artistic expressions of Islander culture in its pan-west-coast Sumatran and offshore islands context. According to local accounts, the increading awareness among administrators and elders of the greater Malay west-coast Sumatran and offshore islands has also been shaped by collaborative fieldwork undertaken by from Haloban's master musician *Bapak* Anhar and myself. Our travels to meet artists along Sumatra's west coast and gather data on Urang Pulo relationships with other offshore islands—especially Simeulue and Nias—have helped document enduring cultural linkages between the Urang Pulo and neighbouring island communities. This growing awareness was further reinforced by the International Conference and Cultural Event of Aceh, held in Melbourne in September 2016, organised by Monash University's and Seuramoe Aceh, with support from Aceh's Department of Culture and Tourism and Museum, and the Ministry of Education and Culture in Jakarta.

To capitalise on the momentum generated by these initiatives, *Bapak* Anhar, *Bapak* Reza Pahlevi (Head of the Tourism and Creative Economy Department in Banda Aceh), and I collaborated throughout 2015–2016 with government and private business leaders, including the famous Acehnese singer Rafly, who currently serves as a members of Education, Arts and Culture Committee at the Regional Representative Council of Republic Indonesia in Jakarta, to implement an ambitious plan with potentially significant effects on the lives of the Banyak Islanders and their greater geographical area. The initiative has also involved academic institution, particularly the University of Syiah Kuala and its Centre for the Arts. Some of the Centre's students have previously participated in fieldwork in Haloban, where they learned to perform its *adok* dance.

The plan is (i) to ship active village artists and knowledgeable elders in west-coastal Sumatran and offshore island villages to Haloban to perform at the proposed *Sikambang* Folklife Festival, (ii) to coordinate the simultaneous presentation of a workshop for artists to compare their versions of the common *sikambang* music, dance and drama repertoire and associated legends and train young performers, and (iii) to hold an International Conference on the arts and ceremonial traditions of the greater Sumatra's Malay West-Coast and Offshore Island Area.

E. Establishing a *Rumah Budaya* in Haloban to Revitalise Banyak Islands' culture and Showcase the Pan-Sumatran West-Coastal Culture through *Sikambang* Arts

In addition to festivals and competitions—which undoubtedly motivate local troupes to rehearse and perform the traditional arts and new creations in public venues—the most most effective and sustainable means of revitalising the traditional arts of the Urang Pulo would be to secure sustained private and government funding for the construction of a well-conceived *Rumah Budaya* (Cultural House) in Haloban. This facility should be constructed from locally sourced timber, designed to accommodate natural air circulation, and architecturally inspired by the former Haloban palace. It should also provide salaried positions for a Director and a small team of staff who would be responsible for designing and implementing cultural programs across the Islands' five main population centres. The Director must be a highly respected dancer and/or musician with a visionary commitment to revitalising the arts for all Urang Pulo and attracting a steady flow of visitors and collaborators.

The construction should feature spacious indoor and outdoor stages to support regular rehearsals and performances of traditional music and dance, as well as facilities for the creation of new artistic works. A multi-room museum should be integrated into the complex, with appropriate archival storage to house copies of former royal

silsilah and significant documents from the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods relevant to Haloban's and the Islands. This museum would also display local artefacts, handicrafts, traditional costumes, musical instruments and historical work tools of inhabitants.

The *Rumah Budaya* would cater not only to local residents but also to domestic and international tourists and visiting university student groups. For instance, in June 2016, group of students from Syiah Kuala University visited and learned to perform the *adok* dance in Haloban from expert dance teachers and musicians, living with Haloban families in homestays. Upon returning to Banda Aceh, these students began teaching the dance within the university *sanggar* and other *sanggar*s in Banda Aceh. The Rumah Budaya would stimulate the creation of a variety of service jobs which Haloban residents desperately need as supplemental income to the limited proceeds of their fishing and farming pursuits, including employees in restaurants serving the excellent local fresh seafood and local dishes, and other retail shops.

A key developmental factor of the Centre would be to welcome traditional artists and elders from the greater west-coast Sumatran and offshore islander area to spend time in Haloban. These individuals could teach, perform, and assist the Museum curator in documenting and interpreting the displayed or archived collections. To safeguard the collection against potential natural disasters, it is also recommended that a duplicate museum to be established in a more accessible and secure mainland location, such as Singkil or Sibolga, thereby extending the reach and resilience of the Haloban museum and cultural centre.

For decades, the Urang Pulo have remained a marginalised, forgotten, and neglected constituency within the province of Aceh, including in their own *kabupaten* of Aceh Singkil. Public and private sector investments in infrastructure—such as electricity, communications networks, roads, public buildings, and public transport—have largely been limited to the main town of Pulau Balai. This neglect is often rationalised by authorities through references to the region's vul-

nerability to tsunamis, ambiguous communal land tenure systems,[57] and the prioritisation of resource allocation for mainland regions. Few Islanders outside Pulau Balai have access to television, labour-saving devices, and mobile phones, and the internet is not normally available.[58] Nor has the national government's Department of Education and Culture or Aceh's Department of Culture and Tourism actively sought to promote knowledge of and practice of the local arts as in many other parts of Indonesia.[59]

Nevertheless, field research conducted by *Bapak* Anhar and myself in the 2010s, alongside comparative data from Kartomi's research in the 1970s and 1980s, demonstrates that the Islands possess a rich and distinctive expressive culture. While part of the wider west Sumatran Malay cultural sphere, the Urang Pulo maintain a unique identity rooted in their distinctive Jamu-Lingbano-based Bahasa Haloban, as well as in the collective memory of the Tuangku kingdom—a golden era marked by cultural, spiritual, and political ties with neighbouring

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[57] Until the mid-twentieth century in the Tuangku kingdom there were customary laws for member households that gave direction to the joint use of the undivided land belonging to the members of a local community as a whole and refusal to grant free access to outsiders without permission. "The commons included both specific lands and the traditional community institution that determines that carrying capacity for its various subunits and defines the rights and obligations of those who use it, with penalties for lapses" (Snyder, 1990, p. 30–1, writing on theory of "the commons"). But when the Dutch and later the Indonesian governments imposed political borders of residencies and *kabupaten* and in the Suharto era, *kecamatan,* traditional communal patterns of land ownership were disrupted. In fact, the view of the commons as traditional, local, and regulated by community fits expressive culture as well as land- anything that is learned and transmitted as heritage (Titon, 2016, p. 490).

[58] Sometimes poor families play music on cassette players for entertainment, including at their weddings, if they can borrow the equipment, but that is often the limit of their modern devices.

[59] Unlike the performing arts of Java and other parts of Indonesia, which were largely regulated by the national arts policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture out of the national capital Jakarta, the performance of the musical arts has been affected by the marginalisation of the Urang Pulo which has resulted in their social neglect.

islands, west coast towns such as Barus and Sibolga, and the sultanate of Pagaruyung, from which they trace their origin legend. They also trace their moderate Islamic belief and practices, including the male and female *dikie* intoning, call to prayer and Qur'an-reading, to the sultanate.

In my assessment, it would be ineffective to attempt a revitalisation of the Banyak Islanders' arts on genre-by-genre basis, as Grant (2012) proposes. Instead, a more holistic approach is required—one that integrates the full spectrum of artistic and cultural expression in connection with the great west-coast Sumatran and offshore Islander area. For the Islanders' rich cultural heritage is part and parcel of the culture of Sumatra's long west coast, extending from Pulau Pisang (near Krui) in the south to Calang in Aceh in the north, and including the offshore islands.

This collective heritage can provide a strong foundation for collaborative strategies aimed at promoting cultural resilience, addressing social challenges, and fostering economic development. Ultimately, such strategies could also play a crucial role in restoring the self-confidence and cultural continuity of the Urang Pulo as they navigate the complex transitions brought by modernisation and globalisation.

CHAPTER X

MEANING IN MOTION: FROM ANCESTRAL VOICES TO CULTURAL FUTURES

This book has brought the musical arts and oral history of the Islanders (Urang Pulo) living in Banyak Archipelago to the ethnomusicological stage for the first time. It has documented, classified, and analysed a range of the traditional arts, including musical sound, pieced together what can currently be known of the Islanders' general and musical history, and investigated the tenets of their identity and its musical expressions. It has further addressed the concerns voiced by elders, artists, and cultural custodians regarding the decline of traditional arts, emphasising the urgent need for revitalisation and sustainable development of these practices within the broader socio-cultural landscape of the west coast of Sumatra and its offshore islands.

The current project extends and builds upon the foundational work of leading scholars in Sumatran ethnomusicologists, including Margaret Kartomi, Megan Collins, Jennifer Fraser, Bart Barendregt, David. J. Goldsworthy, Liberty Manik, Ashley Tuner, Yoshika Okazaki, Lynette Moore, Mauly Purba, and Iwan Amir. Its original contribu-

tions to ethnomusicological knowledge of Sumatra lie in its : (i) the creation of a comprehensive archive of field-based audio and audio-visual recordings, photographs, and video materials documenting the formerly unrecorded Malay music-culture of the Banyak Islands, deposited in the Margaret Kartomi Gallery of Musical Instruments and Artefacts (in 2010–2016); (ii) the historical and genealogical reconstruction of the former Haloban court on Tuangku Island; (iii) the systemic classification and analysis of both indigenous and syncretic musical genres across the archipelago; and (iv) the delineation of the Islanders' artistic connections with the west-coastal Sumatran mainland, especially in the urban and rural areas in and around the west-coastal towns of Singkel, Barus, Sorkam, Botot, Sibolga, Jago-Jago, Natal, Saniang Baka, and Pagaruyung.

The project's original theoretical contributions to the discipline of ethnomusicology primarily lie in the areas of (i) music-cultural identity, (ii) place and identity; (iii) vocal quality, (iv) culture contact, (v) kingship and its musical symbols in pre-colonial Malay courts, (vi) gender and emotional expression in performance, and (vii) music endangerment and revitalisation theory in recent modernising times. I shall now discuss these issues one by one.

A. Music-Cultural Identity

The Islanders' concept of cultural identity (*identitas)* is profoundly shaped by their maritime, archipelagic environment and relative geographic isolation in the Pacific Ocean. Their syncretic belief systems—an amalgamation of animist elements and Sufi-inflected Muslim beliefs—intertwine with cultural memory of the former Tuangku kingdom, which maintained historical links to mainland Sumatran sultanates and neighbouring Simeulue and Ono Niha cultures. This complex cultural matrix underpins a deeply rooted pride in their ceremonial arts, particularly the *sikambang* tradition of music, dance, bardic storytelling, and martial performance, as well as in the distinctive poetic lyrics sung in the Haloban dialect—a local speech variety influenced by Devayan and Sinabang. It is also related to the

people's peripheral contact with European powers in the colonial era and their initially buoyant and later depressingly neglected experience as part of Independent Indonesia.

As Henry Johnson wrote on the general concept of identity (2013, pp. 1–2):

> The notion of crossing cultures in expressions of musical and cultural identity is a phenomenon inherent in many styles of music, old and new. As a construct that provides a reference point for locating cultural or national affiliation or association, the notion of cultural identity is a contested term. On the one hand, it gives a sense of social harmony, a unified social group who share many cultural and social traits. On the other hand, however, identity formation is far more complex, often exhibiting multiple sites of affiliation and crossing social and cultural margins.
>
> Through music, as one cultural form, people express individual and cultural identity in complex ways. The inherent eclecticism of many creative arts can often provide distinct examples of composers or performers working within and across cultural boundaries. While transculturation may at times not be a surface-level experience, there are often examples of music and musicians working distinctly across real and perceived cultural frontiers. There is also social hybridity where the movement of people and their diasporic flows create social contexts of transcultural relevance. Traditional and new music forms are often constructed across cultures, moving between and across real and imagined boundaries.

This exploration of the Banyak Islanders' music-cultural identity confirms that the constructs of identity are embedded in shared aesthetic practices that express a collective sense of belonging, harmony, and cultural continuity.

As affirmed by elders, leading artists, and other community members in Haloban, the *sikambang* genre serves as the most emblematic and complete representation of the Islander musical heritage—comparable to the position of *gamelan* and *wayang* in Javanese

culture, or Shakespearean drama in the Elizabethan English theatrical canon. *Sikambang* music divides into (i) **the unaccompanied**, free-metred solo singing of classical poetry, marked by melodically flexible, non-harmonic structures free from external influence, and (ii) **accompanied** , featuring Malay-style melodies sung with the *biola* (violin), incorporating European-influenced harmonic contours and supported by indigenous cyclic rhythms patterns performed on one or several *gandang* (frame drums).

> However, the inquiry also delineates some distinctive characteristics of the Jamu-Malay Islanders' vocal music, dances, and instrumental music in their ritual context. It excludes their devotional exercises such as *dikie* as well as the Malay, Indonesian and international popular and folk songs performed by young islanders in the only town with paved roads and a constant electricity supply, Pulau Balai, and on the media.

Despite this common feeling of marginalization, each of these locales articulates a distinct local identity, particularly during preparations for major communal events such as the Green Turtle Festival (2010) and the upcoming Sikambang Folklife Festival. These events have catalysed discussions of cultural identity not only among the islanders but also among migrant communities—such as those displaced to Sifahando village (Nias Island) after the 2004 tsunami—who retain knowledge of the *sikambang* dances originally learned from Haloban artists.

B. Identity and 'Place'

As Martin Stokes (1994) has argued, musical identity can be productively examined through its discursive associations with 'place'. In the context of the Banyak Archipelago, a comparison of musical practices across its three primary population centres–Haloban, Teluk Nibung and Pulau Balai, reveals shared perceptions of geographic isolation and administrative neglect in their Pacific Ocean location far from mainland Sumatra, each claim to possess a separate identity. It tends to come to the fore when preparing for a major communal event such

as the Green Turtle Festival 2010. Discussions of their identities are beginning again in preparation for the Sikambang Folklife Festival, which will be held in Haloban. No doubt neighbouring population centres along Sumatra's west coast and certain offshore islands that practice their versions of the *sikambang* culture will also try to delineate their particular identities in the lead up to the Festival, as will migrant populations from Haloban such as Sifahando village (in North Nias Regency of Nias Island) who had to move to other places after the 2004 tsunami, but can still remember how to perform the *sikambang* dances learned from visiting teachers from Haloban.

The elders in the three 'places', Haloban, Teluk Nibung and Pulau Balai, define their identities of place as follows:

1. Haloban

Haloban, is widely regarded as the cultural centre of the Kepulauan Banyak and the historical successor of the former Haloban court. It is the principal site where *Bahasa* Haloban/Lingbano was traditionally spoken and remains the location where the local *adat istiadat* (customary laws), origin myths, sacred *adok* dances, and the royal heirlooms and symbols are best preserved. theaccompanied by the "drum of sovereignty", the local performance style of *sikambang* ceremonial arts, and other vestiges of the former royal tradition. Moreover, Haloban's leading artists are the only ones with mastery over the full royal *sikambang* repertoire, including both the sacred ancestral-honouring *adok* dance and the syncretic *langser* entertainment dance. If a Haloban host can convince the *ninik mamak* that he can afford to present a full-scale *baralek adat (customary festivals).* In that case, all the men present dance the whole *sikambang* repertoire (including the *langser* dance) from 9:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., and continue the next night, unlike in Teluk Nibung and Pulau Balai, where only a few of the *sikambang* dances are remembered. No one knows how to perform the *adok* and *langser* dances.

Until 1965, Haloban served as the busiest harbour in the Islands, serving as the main port of call for boats sailing from Sibolga, Barus

and Singkil to Simeulue and Nias and with many fishing boats used and managed by local men. However, Haloban lost its administrative status as capital of the Kepulauan Banyak and its government buildings in 1965–66 when the Suharto regime relocated the capital to Pulau Balai, allegedly in response to Haloban's suspected affiliation with Communist Party (PKI). The loss of political centrality led to infrastructural neglect; to this day, electricity is only supplied until 6:00 p.m., after which the people live by candlelight. In 2004, when the tsunami waves flooded some of its houses, the Indonesian Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (BRR) decided to build scores of new houses for the displaced inhabitants in a new village called Asantola, a few hundred metres away. Haloban will be the place for the Sikambang Folklife Festival, with the guests and tourists expected to taste local homestay hospitality.

2. Teluk Nibung

Teluk Nibung is a smaller settlement that also claim ancestral status, being named in the oral tradition as the first home of Tataan (see Chapter III), the pre-royal settler in the islands. However, the village suffers from an entrenched reputation for sorcery and black magic, making it socially marginal. Host of local *baralek* must often invite performers from Haloban to refresh the dancers' memory and swell their number so they can perform the dances. However, they can usually only manage to perform from around 9pm to midnight, including some repeats. Notably, in 2010, a local *talibun* artist and a *biola* player taught schoolchildren to perform the *payung* couples dance to their *dendang Pulau Pinang* musical accompaniment (Chapter VII) for the Green Turtle Festival, sailing to Pulau Balai for the performance, but also dancing in the school yard in Teluk Nibung.

3. Pulau Balai

Pulau Balai is the most populous centre in the archipelago, though it lacks the ancestral and ritual prestige of Haloban and Teluk Nibung.

It was a tiny fishing village until the Suharto government moved the islands' capital from "Communist-tainted" Haloban to its shores on Balai Island. It is now the only area with paved roads, a health clinic, and consistent 24-hour electricity. As in Teluk Nibung, a Pulau Balai *baralek* host needs to invite artists from Haloban and Teluk Nibung to swell the number of men dancing the *sikambang* repertoire until around midnight.

Though culturally related, the musical identity of Urang Pulo diverges in notable respects from that of the mainland west-coast populations between Singkil and Sibolga. The Urang Pulo places a greater emphasis on vocal music, although many men are also skilled in playing frame drums (*gandang*) during all-night sikambang dance sessions at weddings and circumcisions. accompaniment—characterised by harmonically generated melodies to accompany the solo *sikambang* singers—is also prominent. As my organological comparison of the instruments called *gandang* in west-coastal Sumatra shows, the *gandang* in the Islanders' and the west-coastal dwellers' *gandang* differ somewhat in their organological designs, sound qualities, and performance techniques (Chapter IX).

In addition, this book has found that the Islanders' concept of identity is radically different from the local *kabupaten* government's view, which is based on the official cultural policy of the national-level Ministry of Education and Culture's view that many of Indonesia's traditional art forms are "too rough, too crude: not respectable" and in need of "development;" and this has had a sanitising effect (Yampolsky, 1995, p. 711). Consequently, a limited number of the Islanders' traditional dances have been transformed into *kreasi baru* ('new creations') for commercial presentation for media and tourist.

As we have seen, the Banyak Islanders' traditional music culture remain predominantly ceremonial in its function and orientation, unlike many other regional traditions in Indonesia that have been extensively commercialised. With the exception of a few youth groups in Pulau Balai performing popular music for entertainment and

occasional media appearances, the commodification of traditional performing arts in the archipelag has been minimal.[60]

C. Kingship and Its Musical Symbols in Pre-Colonial Malay Courts[61]

This book also makes a small contribution to the method in historical ethnomusicology. In general, the evidence of the prevailing concept of kingship that operated in the Tuangku kingdom at Haloban resembles the concept of kingship held in the few Malay courts that have been subject to detailed study (Reid & Castles, 1975; Matheson & Andaya,

[60] The governments of Indonesia at the national, provincial, district and subdistrict levels have a history of taking a direct interest in the performing arts. The New Order government under Suharto engaged in discourse about the 'development' of the regional traditional arts. Between 2010 and 2016, the period focussed on in this book, this discourse has hardly affected the Kepulauan Banyak, where little has been done to foster the traditional arts until the lead-up to the 2010 Green Turtle Festival, and little has been done at the official level since, though the efforts to promote tourism and therefore the more glamorous song-dances and pop music bands continues.

[61] Early research into Malay concepts of kingship by Anthony Reid, Virginia Matheson, Lode Brakel, Lance Castles, Leonard Andaya, Barbara Andaya and others was published in a book edited by Anthony Reid and Lance Castles in 1975. The editors concluded that each Malay Southeast Asia royal court was initially based on a small village polity. Some of them were raised in status later, depending on whether they became active trade centres, such as in 15th century Kerajaan Melaka and 17th–19th century Kerajaan Lingga in the Riau archipelago (but not of course tiny courts in relatively isolated areas such as the Banyak Archipelago). All the courts these scholars studied had a tenuous, symbolic hold on power through possession of their royal *pusaka* (symbols of sovereignty), including musical instruments, especially unique local forms of drums. In many courts, the *raja* or sultan owned a *nobat* ensemble that was initially transplanted from the Mid dle East or Moghul India, containing the sacred *nekara* drum, as it is called in the Riau Archipelago. The editors concluded that perceptions of power, kingship, and state in these neighbouring traditions shared many features. However, scholars need to study many more Malay courts to avoid being misled by external values (1975, p. vii). I have compared their studies with mine in the former Tuangku court and found some similarities and several important differences, especially in the significance of their sacred *gandang* (frame drum). The Tuangku court is a rare example of a tiny court that has never been studied by other scholars before.

1982). It holds that the authority of the king, *sutan* or sultan had to be supported by symbols of sovereignty.

However, whereas the kings in Pagaruyung, Riau-Lingga and other strategically located major courts possessed *nobat* ensembles of Middle Eastern and Moghul origin and grandly titled pieces of music as essential symbols of sovereignty, the symbol of kingly power in the minor court at Haloban was the sacred *adok* dance and accompanying drum. In this very slow dance by a royal descendant as he enters adulthood at his circumcision and later his wedding ceremony with three male friends, the *penampik* sang long poetic lyrics about the Pagaruyung ancestors to his own elaborately ornamented, free metred melody and accompaniment of sparse slow rhythms on the sacred *gandang*. *Adok* is not allowed to be presented anywhere in the Islands except at Haloban, and it must be performed by four well-trained dancers (one of whom can preferably claim royal blood) in an highly solemn atmosphere and full *adat* costume below a ceiling full of elaborate, symbolically meaningful decorations hanging over a *pelaminan* throne. This very slow music and dance resembles the extremely slow pace of the male or female *sina* dance in neighbouring Nias, accompanied only by a vocalist intoning extremely highly ornamented streams of melody with a spare, free-metred drum part (pers. comm. Margaret Kartomi, who recorded a *sina* performance at Hilisimatanoe in Nias in 1971).

An interesting aspect of the nature of power and government in multi-cultural, pre-*raja* Haloban was the belief, as written in the ancestral genealogy (*trombo)*, that Kepulauan Banyak was once ruled by a consortium of five *datuk* or elders—immigrants from Simeulue, Batak Toba, and Batak Mandailing locales. They were responsible for security, agriculture, marine and fishing, and social affairs. Eventually, however, their ceremonial *adat* needs and socio-political affairs became so complex that they requested a royal prince be sent from Pagaruyung to rule over them (as shown in chapter III). Notably, women were excluded from these legendary accounts, except domestic roles. Such details about many more petty Malay kingdoms than

Haloban need to be collected before we can generalise the nature of power in the former Malay courts.

Gender and Emotional Expression in Performance

Gender roles in the Banyak Islands' village society are clearly delineated, shaping not only daily life and occupational roles but also the nature of participation in musical, dance, bardic, and martial arts traditions. Men primarily engage in fishing, sailing, agriculture, or more recently, in civil service or migration (*merantau)* to urban centres or abroad in search of economic opportunities. In contrast, women—particularly married women and elderly spinsters—are typically confined to the domestic sphere, where they focus on household and familial responsibility. These gender divisions also extend into artistic life, where female participation in public performance is traditionally restricted.

Until their mid-teens, girls and boys are allowed to dance in mixed couples at a wedding and other *baralek*, and recently some have been trained at school by expert village artists to perform couples' dances such as *payung* and *adok,* with male musicians accompanying them with vocal music or *biola* playing of harmonically-generated melodies and motivically-generated rhythmic *gandang* drumming (see chapters V and VI).

However, by adulthood, public artistic expression becomes the exclusive domain of men. At ceremonial events such as baralek, men assume both male and female roles in couples' dances (Chapter IV). The community consensus holds that it is inappropriate for adult women—whether married or single—to perform music or dance in public, lest they be seen as immodest or attempting to display their physicality. Importantly, both men and women are quick to clarify that this restriction is not rooted in orthodox Muslim prohibitions on gendered performances but rather in customary divisions of labour and tradition.

Despite their absence from public stages, some women sing *dendang sikambang* in secret while out of hearing in the forest, allowing

them to process and articulate personal experiences and emotional states (Chapter V). In interviews, male performers often describe their emotional engagement with solo *sikambang*-style song or the *adok* dance, they usually answer in an iconically signifying manner (to use Turino's semiotic parlance, Turino, 1999.), evoking nostalgic reverence for the former Haloban kingdom and ancestral honour. In contrast, when women describe their emotional states while singing *sikambang* in private, they tend to articulate their experience in a highly individualistic, personal, indexically signifying manner (*a la* Turino) that while singing and pouring out their emotions, they feel sad and depressed as they remember and improvise lyrics about lost love and other opportunities throughout their lives. Thus, while the means and modes of expression differ significantly between genders, both men and women identify *dendang sikambang* and other elements of the traditional performing arts as central to their cultural identity and shared Islander heritage.

This exploration of gendered expression in Urang Pulo's musical culture resonates with broader themes in Southeast Asian ethnomusicology. Judith Becker, for instance, has examined the intersection of gender and religious performance in Indonesian music, showing how women navigate spiritual and musical spaces in culturally specific ways. Urang Pulo's *dhikr* performances reflect both local gender norms and broader patterns observed in Islamic musical traditions. In recent decades, some women have joined *dikie/dhikr* and *qasidah* vocal groups and enjoyed singing religious and secular texts from songbooks in public after attending regular rehearsals in each other's homes. These performances represent a subtle negotiation of female Muslim identity in a context historically dominated by male public expression (see further Blackburn, 2004, 2008).

D. Sustainability and Revitalisation

Over the past thirteen years, I have observed an overall decline in the practice and transmission of the traditional arts in the five active population centres of the Banyak Islands. Even in Haloban—historically the cultural centre of the former Tuangku kingdom—,"*adat*-based ceremonies", which traditionally spanned a minimum of three days and nights, are now rarely held. Instead, "*hukum*-based" ceremonies, typically lasting only one day and night, have become more common. These abbreviated events usually include a simple procession and a handful of *sikambang* performances, substantially reducing opportunities to present and sustain the full repertoire of this once-vibrant tradition.

The oral transmission of *sikambang* and related performing arts is no longer widespread among younger generations. This has led to a waning interest in learning traditional music and dances, even within Haloban. While some young people occasionally received training in private *sanggars* (informal arts centres) or school-based programs—particularly in preparation for cultural festival—such opportunities are sporadic and underfunded. Presently, only three *sanggars* remain operational, supported primarily through minimal and often politically motivated funding from local parties or government bodies, typically during election cycles. As the number of orally trained young performers dwindles, so too does the vitality of the traditions. Moreover, many individual artists and groups, e.g., women performing devotional and entertainment songs, rely on written texts rather than spontaneously inventing new rhyming verses or modifying old pantun and *syair*, and *talibun* bards, have become exceedingly rare.

Modern technology and mass media have the most pervasive effects on the viability of the traditional arts in the Islanders' only centre with a regular power supply, Pulau Balai. But even in other communities, the shift towards digital entertainment and mediated cultural consumption is leading to a progressive loss of repertoire and diminished intergenerational engagement. Among the twelve factors adapted by Catherine Grant from UNESCO's *Language, Vitality and Endangerment* paper for her "Music Vitality and Endangerment

Framework", the most critical in the Banyak Islands context is the breakdown of transgenerational transmission.

An important result of my field research in the 2010s and its comparisons with Kartomi's data and findings in the 1970s and 1980s is the knowledge and recordings we have accumulated of the Islanders' distinctive ceremonial arts within the broader culture of Sumatra's Malay west coast and offshore island area as a whole. It is therefore advisable to take advantage of the Islanders' rich cultural heritage as part and parcel of the *sikambang* culture of Sumatra's long west coast and offshore island area, extending from Pulau Pisang (near Krui) in the south to Calang in Aceh in the north, though the styles and cultural contexts in each centre differ from each other in many ways.

However, the challenges of cultural conservation should not be viewed solely as the burden of the Banyak Islanders. A collective mobilisation is required across the west coast of Sumatra to confront the shared crisis of cultural endangerment. Infrastructure development, economic support, and policy attention must accompany revitalisation efforts if the region's intangible heritage is to survive and thrive. Reviving and promoting the *sikambang* tradition is not merely about preserving an art form but also about reinforcing local identity, dignity, and a sense of belonging.

In this spirit, the proposed Sikambang Folklife Festival adopts as its motto a poignant couplet (*isi)* from a well-known maritime pantun in Sumatra's west coast and offshore island area:

Berlayar hati tak senang, air mata sepanjang laut

[Sail on with a heavy heart, my tears are as immense as the ocean]

The loss of the people's *sikambang* heritage would indeed constitute an unmitigated cultural tragedy—not only for the Banyak Islands but for the entire west coast and offshore Malay world—unless its people and their allies can "sail on", reclaiming their cultural inheritance and reasserting their place in regional and global cultural landscape as rightful heirs to the great *sikambang* tradition.

APPENDIX I

ADDENDUM

A. Transcription and Glossary of the *Langser Komandir*'s Instructions in A Patois of Jamu-Pulo Malay and Currupt Dutch

1. Instructions called out by the *Komandir* in a *Langser* performance in Haloban, June 2016. Transcribed by *Bapak* Anhar Sitanggang,

Wib wib mar Dameson
Oplas kore giro giram inku inkua kumpul lima Lepasture
Oplas Balangser madam Balangser Agus
Inggirland Nurdiman
Vikalovani farti alfikat Bulne
Rumdikate Balangser qodri Rekturne
Vikalovani farti alfikat Kembali
Vingka diso Ahungkar ingkisa diso
Vingka disa Kembali Ra rum

Note: My interlocutors say they understand only a few of the above "Dutch" words and phrases but know what the instructions mean. The "Dutch" words include: *balangser dames! rumdikate*! *ra rum! refdrum!* and *rekturne!* The Malay words include *kumpul lima, kembali,* and *balangser.* Presumably, the word *Inggirland* is a combination of the Indonesian *Inggeris,* meaning English, and the land of England.

2. List of *Langser* Instructions

alfo! - repeat! (e.g. form a large circle then a narrow circle again with repeats)

ambu dikate! - mark time as you swing your arms back and forth! (as in Figure 7.3)

balangser dames! - perform the *langser* dames! – e.g. form a male row and a parallel female row

dah di dames! - swing your female partner back and forth!

damesen: ladies, females, partners

end kafelen tuber! - form couples and rotate around the arena together! (as in a waltz)

end suker dames! –step forward toward and meet your female partner!

eng-eng koa! - form a narrow circle! (by stepping inwards from a larger circle)

kembali! - return to where you were!

koa! – all dancers go and form a circle!

lastrei sesoplat! - release your partner's hands and cross the floor to join your original row!

rumdikate! - rotate!

ra rum! - rotate on the spot! refdrum! - turn around to the right! *rekturne!* rotate to the right!

suker - step forward toward your partner and join her!

tuber! - hold your partner and berjoget (dance) around the arena!

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SPEECH VARIETIES AND LANGUAGES

Ar. - Arabic
BA - Bahasa Aceh
BD - Bahasa Devayan, spoken in Simeulue
BH - Bahasa Haloban
BI - Bahasa Indonesia
BJP - Bahasa Jamu Pulo, a speech variety of Malay/Melayu
BL - Bahasa Lingbano, former name for Bahasa Haloban
BMe - Bahasa Melayu, Malay
BMi - Bahasa Minangkabau
BN - Bahasa Nias, Bahasa Ono Niha
BPB - Bahasa Jamu Pasisir Barat, a speech variety of Malay/Melayu
D - Dutch
G - German

GLOSSARY

Adat	: Local complexes of norms and traditions
Adok	: literally, *adat* (traditional customs)
Ayunan	: sling suspended from the ceiling
Biola	: violin
Buai	: lullaby
Bupati	: Regent
Camat	: District Head
Dendang	: song
Desa	: village
Gandang	: frame drum
Kabupaten	: regency
Kapal Cepat	: speed boat
Kapal Feri	: ferry
Kapal Nelayan	: fishermens' boat

Kecamatan	: district
Kepala Desa	: the Head of a Village
Kepulauan	: archipelago
Kota	: city
Pulau	: island
Robin	: traditional boat
Selendang	: long scarf
Sekolah Dasar	: Primary School
Walikota	: Mayor

Family terms in Jamu Pulo Language

Membo	: *Cucu*, grandchild
Anak	: *Anak*, son
Anak Anak	: Children
Perempuan	: *Silawe*, woman
Laki Laki	: *Sihale*, man
Emak	: *Ibu*, mother
Apak	: *Bapak*, father
Aki'u	: *Adik Sepupu*, younger nephew
Kakak	: *Kakak Sepupu*, elder nephew
Mamak	: *Paman*, uncle
Etek	: *Bibi*, aunty
Nenek	: *Nenek*, grandmother
Andung	: *Kakek*, grandfather
Unyang	: *Bapak/Ibu dari Kakek/Nenek,* Grandparents of a grandmother or grandfather
Udo	: *Kakek/Nenek dari Kakek/Nenek* Grandparent of a grandparent

Musical Terms:

Free or Additive Rhythm	: rhythm in which time values of notes and rests can freely be added to or subtracted from a musical line by the performer; rhythm in which time-lengths cannot be divided into regular bar lengths and are not limited by the need to fit into a regular pulsation
Glide, glissando	: ascending or descending gliding movement from one pitch to another without break of sound
Level Shift	: a numerical designation of the degree of a melody's ascent or descent
Melisma	: at least two tones sung to one syllable of a given text
Melodic Formula	: tone pattern continually recurring within a melodic line or at cadential points, thus established as being typical of a style
Ornamentation	: melisma and incidental melodic decoration, *bunga-bunga*
Pitch Level	: the actual pitch of a tone in performance.
Tone Prominence	: an estimation of the relative prominence of each tone of a *melos* according to the tone's frequency of occurrence, its number of appearances as final tone of lines and as the initial, final, highest, and/or lowest tone of song, its relative time-length and its occurrence in repeated tone passages
Tone Repetition	: successive repeated tones of the same pitch

Tone System	: the totality of tonal relationship in a given tonal material
Variability	: the incidence or rhythmic, intonational, melodic, and ornamental differences between performances of the one composition
Vocal Style	: sum total of recurrent characteristics in the vocal performance of an individual, or common characteristics in the vocal performances of singers of a geographical area

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Malay Music Culture of Urang Pulo: Identity and Dilemma presents a seminal ethnomusicological investigation into the distinct, yet under-researched, performing arts of the Urang Pulo (Islanders) inhabiting the Banyak Archipelago, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Based on longitudinal fieldwork conducted between 2010 and 2023, this book systematically classify and analyze the archipelago's syncretic (*kacokan*) cultural heritage, which synthesizes influences from West Coastal Sumatra, Minangkabau (Pagaruyung), Nias, Simeulue, and colonial European interactions.

This book also provides the first scholarly documentation of the core *sikambang* tradition, encompassing the sacred *adok* ritual dance of the former Tuangku Kingdom, the Malay-European hybrid *langser* dance, bardic *talibun* storytelling, and the intricate vocal ornamentation of *dendang buai* (lullabies). Beyond organological and musicological analysis, the study critically interrogates the construction of Urang Pulo identity within the "Greater Malay West-Coastal and Offshore Islands Area" of Sumatra. It further addresses the "conservational dilemma" facing these intangible cultural assets, analyzing the decline of traditional practices due to economic marginalization and modernization while proposing frameworks for cultural revitalization.

This work constitutes a critical contribution to the preservation of Indonesian intangible heritage and the study of Southeast Asian maritime cultures.

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