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# The Tudbulul: Structure and Poetics in a Filipino Oral Epic \*

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The performance of the oral epic is a complex communicative event that includes the setting (the time, place, and occasion for the performance), the participants (the performer and the audience, and their sex, age, social status and conventions regarding their interaction), the performative aspects (such as the physical gestures that accompany the performance), the social function, and the role of the music and its relationship with the text, in creating compelling performance.<sup>1</sup> While there are exemplary studies that consider many of these aspects of the study of the oral epic, in general most of the literature on the subject has little to say, if anything, about the role of music in epic performance. Efforts to correct this omission may be found in a volume edited by Karl Reichl on the musical and performance aspects of selected oral epics from around the world.<sup>2</sup> However, with notable exceptions,<sup>3</sup> research on the oral epic in the Philippines, a region noted for its 'epic culture,'<sup>4</sup> has largely focused on the text and thus our understanding of the role of the music in the performance of epics in this region is rudimentary. This article is a step toward redressing this problem by examining the Tudbulul, an oral epic in eight episodes found among the T'boli of Mindanao in the southern Philippines,<sup>5</sup> in terms

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Reichl, ed., 'Introduction,' *The Oral Epic: Performance and Music* (Berlin: VWB, 2000): 23.

<sup>2</sup> Reichl, ed., *Oral Epic*.

<sup>3</sup> See Nicole Revel, 'Singing Epics among the Palawan Highlanders (Philippines),' *The Oral Epic*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin: VWB, 2000): 191–210.

<sup>4</sup> William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> The T'boli whose population is roughly between 80,000 and 100,000 people live in the hills and valleys of the Tiruray Highlands of southwestern Mindanao in settlements scattered over an area of about 750 square miles. While Lake Sebu is the geographical and cultural heartland of the T'boli, most of them live in the outlying hills and practice shifting agriculture in small communities of between ten and fifty households headed by a chieftain (*datu*), who is also their community spokesperson. Modernisation began through the introduction of missionary activity in the 1960s.

of its narrative structure and the role that musical poetics plays in imbuing the narrative with dramatic and affective tension.

### Background

Oral epics in many parts of Southeast Asia relate to genealogies which serve as a claim to the right of succession as well as to affirm a particular moral order. These types of genealogical epics are effectively a form of 'historiography common throughout the Malayo-Polynesian world, from the Merina Kings of Madagascar to the chronicles of the rulers of Java and the simple folk histories of the chiefs of Tikopia.'<sup>6</sup> Ultimately they serve to extol rulers. However, for the T'boli succession is not part of the political system; leadership (or chieftainship) is not inherited but rather acquired. The T'boli oral epic, therefore, does not serve to maintain genealogical records but rather serves to maintain customary law and as a vehicle for ethical edification through accounts of the actions of the culture hero, Tudbulul. Most T'boli still live according to traditional life-ways, though the singing of the epic over three nights within the traditional context of grand ceremony called the *moninum* (literally 'to drink wine') has all but disappeared.

This ceremonial complex, in which the T'boli epic plays a key role, consists of an alternation of six reciprocal ceremonies and feasts, each of which lasts three days, and may take many years to complete. The epic is sung in the ceremonial big-house (*gono moninum*) in front of the *tudblungon*, the main structural vertical post that symbolises the cosmic axis joining heaven and earth. The moninum ceremony functions partly to reaffirm the affinal (marriage) ties between the families and community groups of the bride and the groom. It is also a collective healing event. After the ceremonial meal and the haggling of the bride price, gift exchanges are negotiated through singing, and then the singing of the epic throughout the night begins. The ceremony's other function of collective healing and renewal is reinforced by the content of the epic, which partly hinges on the various transgressive and redemptive actions of the hero, Tudbulul (or Semgulang). Like most narratives, the Tudbulul epic encourages subject identification and presents a consensual ideological model.<sup>7</sup>

Each of the eight episodes of the epic focuses on a specific aspect of T'boli customary law as revealed through the epic hero's exploits. While there is no specific order for singing the episodes, the first and last episodes which concern the story of Semgulang's birth and his wake, respectfully, frame the entire performance. The episode titles and a brief summary of each of their contents is as follows:

- 1 *Semgulang Tutul* (Semgulang's Story). The episode concerns the story of Semgulang's birth and parentage, as well as the origins of traditional skills and practices attributed to him.
- 2 *Semgulang Konul* (Semgulang Drowns). Semgulang undergoes a trial by ordeal, wherein he almost drowns, and his manhood is tested.

<sup>6</sup> R. H. Barnes, 'Time and the Sense of History in an Indonesian Community: Oral Tradition in a Recently Literate Culture,' *Time: Histories and Ethnologies*, ed. Diane Owen Hughes and Thomas R. Trautmann (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 260.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Narrative and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Open UP, 1991) 70.

- 3 *Semgulang Kemleng Mugul* (Semgulang Cuts his Wrist). Drought causes suffering amongst Semgulang's people; feeling utterly helpless in the face of the crisis he attempts suicide.
- 4 *Semgulang Benahung* (Semgulang's Soul Loss). In yearning for a wife, Semgulang loses his soul, falls critically ill but is restored to health through shamanic healing.
- 5 *Semgulang Metaad Libun* (Semgulang Barter Women). Semgulang negotiates the exchange and marriage of women within his community.
- 6 *Semgulang Tawan Sohul* (Semgulang Afflicted by Madness). Semgulang loses his mind through sorcery after renegeing on a promise to marry the Lady of the Moon.
- 7 *Semgulang Mifit Libun* (Semgulang Chastises Women). Semgulang triumphs as champion for the women of his community and beyond but in so doing incurs the wrath of a rival.
- 8 *Semgulang Nodung* (Semgulang's Wake). Semgulang dies, his community perform a wake and instigate customary funerary rites.

### The Epic Performer: Mendung Sabal

Singers of the Tudbulul are not distinguished by gender, though many of the best singers are women. By consensus among the T'boli of Lake Sebu, Mendung Sabal, whose epic will be examined in this article, is the most esteemed living singer. She was born at Lake Sebu (Surallah), the T'boli heartland, probably some time toward the end of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War Two.<sup>8</sup> She was orphaned as a child and became a singer or *tau lemingon* and an adept or *tau mulung* ('one who knows') during her teenage years. In general outline, the story of her vocation and initiation into adeptness is similar to that of many other adepts in T'boli society. Her vocation story began with contact with a renowned adept (*tau totol*) who stimulated her desire to learn. Neophytes normally attach themselves to a renowned adept from within the family, in the immediate community or from the wider kinship network. Though such an association is not highly formalised, their relationship is considered intimate, and they are regarded as 'close like relatives' (*sedu mu le*). In this way, neophytes not only learn their craft but also about the existence of secret knowledge such as magic (*bulung*) and proper moral conduct. This knowledge is later reinforced through contact with the spirit, and specifically through the injunctions of the spirits during the initiation dream. Thus while neophytes initially learn by example, without formal instruction, the path to adeptness normally begins only after the neophyte has become attached to an adept. Mendung's main role model was Ye Sanon, a woman of extraordinary talent, whose poetic and performance skills were said to be unrivalled.

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<sup>8</sup> Most elderly T'boli do not have a precise idea of their age and reckon it by comparison with other members of their family or their immediate community. The way I assessed the age of many older T'boli was to relate their lives to key historical moments such as the Japanese occupation of the lowlands near the T'boli territory and the reconnaissance operations of American troops over the Tiruray Highlands during the Second World War. Other, more recent and significant events that allowed me to gauge the general age of the T'boli I knew included the resettlement of lowland Christian Filipinos within the adjacent lowlands and then their movement deeper into the highlands in the immediate post-war period as well as the establishment of Christian missions in the region in the early 1960s. When I first began fieldwork among the T'boli in 1983, it was difficult to determine the accurate age of any individual T'boli above the age of thirty.

As is the case with most neophytes, Mendung experienced a revelatory dream or calling during her early teenage years and during which she came into contact with the spirit world. Through this contact Mendung received knowledge that was understood to be of benefit to the entire community. Her contact with her own spirit guide, Lentinum, led to her dramatic recovery from the serious illness that immediately preceded her revelatory dream. During the dream, Mendung recounted, her spirit guide appeared and instructed her in the art of singing the epic and passed on to her the entire eight episodes during dreams while she remained unconscious over the course of several days. Because Mendung learned the epic in its entirety, she was cured of her illness. Thus Mendung's passage from neophyte to adept was bound to the magico-religious process that assisted her recovery. To this day, Mendung's singing of the epic is most always undertaken in the presence of her spirit guide, Lentinum.

Around the time of her initiation into adeptness Mendung was married, through prearrangement, to an older man, and she was subsequently married off to three other men in the course of her adult life. Her last husband, Datu Sabal, had eight wives. Mendung was his fourth wife and had three children to Datu Sabal, one of whom attends college. Like most T'boli, Mendung is aware of the importance of educating the young and its contribution to achieving some measure of self-determination for her people. Aside from singing epic songs, Mendung also plays a variety of instruments including the suspended gongs (*s'magi*) and the two-stringed lute (*hegelung*). She is also a shamanic healer or *tau meton bu* ('one who sees'). Having sung beyond her community, as far away as Australia, her status amongst T'boli singers is unequalled.

### Performance Style

The Tudbulul epic is sung unaccompanied, a feature that gives much freedom to the performer. This freedom is exhibited in a highly ornate, melismatic style of singing that characterizes much of the performance, especially the introductions to each episode, though there are also sections of syllabic singing. The verse melodies are mostly stichic, that is, the same melody (or nearly the same melody) is used for every line of verse, though sometimes it is strophic wherein the melodies consist of phrases that extend over more than one verse line. The stichic melodies are narrow in pitch range, spanning an interval of a fifth or so, while the strophic melodies exhibit a greater pitch range. Variety is achieved through the contrasts between non-metrical and metrical sections as well as between narratives and dialogues. Figure 1 shows a transcription of the beginning of episode six, 'Tawan Sohul,' and illustrates the melismatic, free passage in the introduction and the stichic, restricted range, and metered section that follows.

### Narrative and Narrativisation

The following synopsis of the story contained in episode six, which is about one hour long, is based on piecing together my identification of various sequences of cause and effect and then rendering them in a linear sequence. However, Mendung's narrativisation or emplotment of the story, as we shall see, is not so straightforward:

Semgulang commits a transgression: he reneges on his promise to marry Lemfayon (Lady of the Moon) after courting her. In revenge, she resorts to sorcery and Semgulang goes insane. He runs amok and wreaks havoc upon the whole community. He wanders in the



wilderness as various beings attempt to cure him, including Lemfayon, but to no avail. Eventually, the Bowi bird (who turns out to be Sengulang's grandfather) takes him to the underworld, to the Navel of the Sea, where he undergoes various curing rituals that begin to bring him to his senses. He then goes through further rituals at the moon and sun, and his full intellectual and spiritual powers return. He eventually returns home to marry Lemfayon who turns out, after all, to be his 'soul mate.'

As may be seen in the summary of the episode (see Figure 2), which is based on the singer's narrativisation of the story, the sequence of events is not always clear-cut. To begin with, it is important to note that each episode of the epic is divided into sections called *kehewot*, which essentially delineate changes in the plot and action. In this particular episode, *Sengulang Tawan Sohul*, there are 18 *kehewot* or sections. Thus, the summary is based on these eighteen sections. On closer examination of Mendung's narrativisation we may note certain recurrences and returns to earlier material and out of sequence events. For example, in section 11, two of the

**Figure 2.** Summary of the narrativisation of the episode

<p>Characters: Tudubulul (T): central character, culture hero  Lemfayon (L): Lady of the Moon; Princess of the Lake; later wife of Tudubulul  Nga Bal or Monkey (M): Guardian of the Moon (male)  Betel (B): Guardian of the Sun (female)  Datu Sobong (DS): Chieftain of Sobong; brother of Lemfayon  Bowi: Messenger of D'wata (supreme deity); grandfather of Tudubulul</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Sorcery; Tudubulul (T) goes mad. T goes upstream to the Source of Water.</li> <li>2 T runs amok. Python swallows T. <b>People search for him in vain.</b></li> <li>3 <u>Lemfayon (L) finds python.</u> L cuts python into 8 pieces; T emerges. <u>L fails to reason with T.</u></li> <li>4 T goes to the wilderness; his madness is contagious. <u>L fails to persuade T to go with her: to heal him.</u> <b>Rerun of cause of madness.</b> T wanders upstream after dialogue with Monkey (M).</li> <li>5 M pursues T in vain. Datu Sobong (DS, brother of L) chides M, wants to kill T. <b>Rerun of scene of terrorisation of the women.</b></li> <li>6 People flee in fear of T.</li> <li>7 T continues to create havoc.</li> <li>8 DS attacks T but fails. Recounting that T reneged on promise to marry.</li> <li>9 Revelation that L used sorcery in retribution for T's broken promise. <b>Rerun of havoc created by T.</b></li> <li>10 <u>M talks to T.</u> M gathers medicines. Betel (B) disparages M's medicine.</li> <li>11 <u>Nature spirits hold counsel: rerun of L's use of sorcery on T.</u> <u>Discussion of T's moral failings.</u> <b>M and B search for T; rivalry surfaces. They fight over guardianship of T.</b></li> <li>12 B asks T if he recognises her.</li> <li>13 B watches over T while he sleeps. <u>T wakes and recalls B as Lake Princess.</u> <u>T agrees to go with B to the sun.</u> Bowi intervenes and takes T to the Navel of the Sea.</li> <li>14 Description of 8 layers of the sea; B accompanies them.</li> <li>15 <u>Bowi recalls T's offenses.</u> T's chattels seek him.</li> <li>16 <b>Rerun of scene, cause of madness, and T's moral failure.</b> Betel does conjuring; herbs applied to T fail.</li> <li>17 Bowi dares T to identify him, to name him. T identifies his grandfather. T responds to magic and undergoes healing ritual. <b>Other cause of madness is revealed, viz. the loss of chattels which left his soul in a state of dangerous yearning.</b> T taken to the sun and moon and his knowledge and power restored.</li> <li>18 T returns to home (Lemlunay) and marries L. Revelation that L is T's soul mate (<i>tegut loyof</i>); they were born on the same day, at the same moment.</li> </ol>
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secondary characters in the episode, Monkey and Betel, search for Tudbulul in an attempt to cure him. However, according to the narrativisation Monkey had already spoken to Tudbulul in the previous section (10) where he had established his desire to help Tudbulul undergo a cure to heal his madness. Also consider the last passages of section 2, where the description of the action centres on the people of Tudbulul's community searching for him so as to assist him, even before knowing he has gone mad. At the same time, the account of his madness takes place earlier in the narrative.

On the face of it, these returns and out of sequence events do not seem to make much sense, though they most likely have something to do with T'boli rhetorical protocols. Moreover, on a larger narrative scale, we may discern features of return and recurrence in the narrative that concord with more widespread, perhaps universal, compositional practices associated with the ring composition. This is an ancient practice that cuts across civilisations and cultures from around the world, including Asia. In her recent book *Thinking in Circles*, an essay on ring composition, Mary Douglas underscores the new interest in ring composition with a detailed analysis of monumental literary works that include Homer's *Iliad*, sections from the Old Testament, and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Douglas notes that

The minimum criterion for a ring composition is for the ending to join up with the beginning ... A ring is a framing device. The linking up of starting point and end creates an envelope that contains everything between the opening phrases and the conclusion. The rule for closing the ring endows the work with unity; it also causes all the problems that another set of rules has been designed to solve.<sup>9</sup>

These rules include the splitting of the narrative into two halves so that 'If the end is going to join the beginning the composition will at some point need to make a turn toward the start.' Another rule is that the meaning of the narrative is loaded at the centre of the story.<sup>10</sup>

An examination of the Tudbulul episode in the light of these basic principles indicates that the narrative structure of the Tudbulul, or at least this particular episode, resembles fundamental aspects of the ring composition. Beginning with the most fundamental precondition for the identification of a ring composition, namely, that the end corresponds with the beginning, we find in the T'boli epic a link between the beginning, where Tudbulul commits a social transgression and exits his community in a state of madness, and the finish, where through a series of discoveries, revelations and rituals, he becomes incorporated back into his community sound of body and mind, which signals completion. In short, Tudbulul leaves home intact, enters the wilderness in a state of lack, and returns home whole again. The correspondences are also indicated by key words and clusters of words indicating thematic parallels, namely references to the key words 'tawan sohu' (in the context of the onset and termination of sorcery) and the word 'bulung' (which is the application of magic to bring about illness or to restore it). This beginning and ending also contains repeated references to Tudbulul's moral condition.

With respect to the other rule mentioned by Douglas—that is, the central loading at the mid-point of the narrative—in the middle of the T'boli epic the principal revelation of the

<sup>9</sup> Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2007) 37.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas, *Thinking in Circles* 37–38.

story surfaces: namely, that Lemfayon, the Lady of the Moon, had used sorcery on Tudbulul because he reneged on his commitment to marry her. This is where the crux or moral of the story resides, and so the main meaning is located in the central point of the narrative. Taken together, Tudbulul's transgression, his failure to marry Lemfuyan, her subsequent retribution through the use of sorcery, and Tudbulul's restoration, also through the use of magic, are gathered together in the middle of the narrative at section 9. Verbal correspondences, such as the reference to sorcery, magic, and madness also link up the beginning with the beginning and the end.

Aside from the correspondences at the beginning and end and the mid-point loading, there are no other compositional strategies that suggest an ideal or perfectly formed ring composition. I am referring here to parallels that occur in ring compositions where the second half of the composition from the mid-point onward returns to the beginning in perfect parallel with the first part, thus forming a balanced set of correspondences. This does not seem to happen in this episode of the T'boli epic. However, while this epic may not fit the ideal ring schema perfectly there are thematic correspondences that align the structure of this epic with this feature of parallelism in the ring compositional form. In Figure 3, for instance, note that the revelation—the mid-point of the narrative (section 9)—comes roughly midway between the start of Tudbulul's liminality (section 2), and his transitional period in the wilderness, and the

Figure 3. The Tudbulul as ring composition

Narrativisation	Cosmographic Location	Ritual Passage
1 [Home] Narrative of sorcery. T goes mad. T upstream at Source of Water.	Mountain head water / upperworld	Separation from community (transgression, retribution, loss of sanity)
2 T creates havoc and mistreats women at the well. He is swallowed by giant python.	T is inside python	Liminality/transition (without status, naked, socially marginalised, and journeys into the wilderness in a state of madness ...)
3 L finds python and cuts it into eight sections. T emerges. L cannot reason with T.	Outside python (re-entry into world)	
9 REVELATION / MID-POINT OF NARRATIVE		
14 Journey through eight layers of the umbilical cord.	Inside umbilical cord	... journeys into the underworld ...
15 <u>Bowi recounts T's offenses / admonishment.</u> T's chattels find him. Healing ritual begins.	Outside umbilical cord (entry into underworld)	... for ritual healing)
18 T returns to home (Lemlunay) and marries L. Revelation that L is T's soul mate ( <i>tegut loyof</i> ); they were born on the same day, at the same moment.	Home (Lemlunay)	Incorporation into community; sanity restored



start of his ritual healing in the underworld, the navel of the sea (section 15). In addition, both these points in the narrative, the start of liminality and entry into ritual healing are succeeded and preceded by events that locate Tudbulul within a T'boli eight-part cosmography. That is, in the early part of the narrative Tudbulul is swallowed by the giant python only to re-enter the world through the partitioning of the python into eight sections by Lemfayon, the Lady of the Moon (section 3), and in the later parallel section of the narrative Tudbulul enters the eight-partitions of the umbilical cord that brings him to the Navel of the Sea in the underworld through the guidance of Betel, the female guardian of the sun (section 14). Figure 4 schematises this aspect of the ring form.

**Figure 4.** Ring form parallelism

departure	A			
		B		inside/ outside python
			C	revelatory mid-point
		B'		inside/ outside umbilical cord
return	A'			

### Narrative, Music and Metaphor

Up until now, I have only considered the narrative aspects of the epic. I now consider the epic's musical features, which are, of course, inseparable from the epic performance, for as I indicated earlier the T'boli epic is only ever sung. An examination of musical processes and structures helps us gain a more nuanced understanding of how music gives motion to the epic in actual performance. The musical process and structures concern the flow between smaller subsections within each section (*kehewot*) of the episode. These musical processes are not to be understood as something separate from the text, for they are intimately connected with the flow of the narrative. Each of the episode sections comprises combinations of the following subsections:

- 1 *hewot*, which sets the scene by outlining the circumstances of the characters and actions;
- 2 *k'wahelen*, which builds up the action in anticipation for the outcome of the action;
- 3 *utomen*, which is the outcome or climax that ensues from that action;
- 4 *kehedengen*, which is the ending, and which often uses metaphor to conclude the section; and
- 5 finally, there is also the *haking* which essentially means 'to change direction' (literally 'turning the head to left or right'), thus pointing to the next section of the episode.

Only the *hewot* and *kehedengen* are fixed in place. The *haking*, *k'wahelen*, and *utomen* do not necessarily follow in the same order throughout, except that the *utomen* or 'outcome' comes after the *k'wahelen* or action. The two key sub-sections in terms of narrative development are the *k'wahelen* and *utomen*. The *k'wahelen* or *genolun* ('anticipation'), as it may also be called, is a term used specifically in song and denotes the manner of singing and character of the melody. It is essentially about action. The *utomen* or *hebalingen* (literally 'outcome') is a term used in

song and especially in instrumental music and also refers to the ‘main point’ in T’boli rhetorical contests. Figure 5 presents the text of the first minute or so of section 11 where the spirits of the mountain and forests discuss what to do about Tudbulul’s grave predicament. The section begins customarily with the *hede*, a free, lament-like descending melodic passage that signals the start of a new section. The setting, condition, time, mood, or characters are then established in the *hewot*; in this particular *hewot*, the spirit custodians of the wild, Mele Botu and Mele Kanan, announce their entry into Tudubulul’s drama, calling out in grief to Litung, the spirit custodian of Mount Metutung. In the *k’wahelen* they ask the mountain spirit what can be done about Tudbulul’s descent into madness, then Mele Botu bemoans the fact that Semgulang has been bewitched by the Lady of the Moon. But Lintung, the spirit of the mountain, replies in the *utomen* sub-section that Semgulang’s madness is the deserved outcome of his transgression, his deception toward women, or in this case a particular woman, the Lady of the Moon.

The textual flow between the *k’wahelen* and *utomen* sub-sections is supported by a specific musical-temporal scheme that is essential to the dynamic unfolding of the narrative. An emic understanding of the processual and affective dimensions of this musical-temporal scheme is attainable through the metaphors the T’boli apply to the *k’wahelen* / *utomen* framework.

As indicated above, these two subsections are complementary and described in terms of *genolun* or anticipation and *hebalingen* or outcome. Other ways of describing the relations

**Figure 5.** Epic sub-sections

<i>Hede e e e ...</i>	<b>hede:</b> lament-like, free passage
<i>Setaba le Mele Botu’n, o s’taba le Mele Kanan</i> Mele Botu cries out, Mele Kanan cries out  <i>Setaba le ne Metutung ne, o Litung ti Metutung</i> Calling at mount Metutung, to Litung of Metutung	<b>hewot:</b> the setting, conditions, time, mood, and character(s), etc.
<i>O boluy de ton atulem, ne Semgulang lengel matan we</i> What is the solution? Semgulang has lost his mind  <i>Semgulang tawan sohul, t’ mimol be Mele Botu’n,</i> Semgulang is bewitched, adds Mele Botu  <i>We edetey ya Tudbulul, ben tawan gi be libun we</i> Oh, how pitiful is Tudbulul, bewitched by a woman  <i>Lemfayon no lem Bulon,</i> Lemfayon from the Moon	<b>k’wahelen/genolun</b> (‘delay’ / ‘anticipation’)
<i>ede ... libun Datu Bak Sobong</i> the sister of the Datu from Bak Sobong (‘the water source’)  <i>Yo ne mon o Lintung ti Metutung, deng buloken Tudbulul</i> Lintung, the spirit of Metutung, said: ‘Tudbulul [that is, Semgulang] deserves this.’  <i>Semo sembeweg libun ne, deng yo ne ton unγκulen</i> ‘That is the price he pays for deceiving women, for creating strife’.	<b>utomen/hebalingen</b> (‘outcome’ / ‘fulfillment’)

**Figure 6.** *Genolun* / *k'wahelen* ('anticipation' / 'delay') and *hebalingen* / *utomen* ('outcome') meanings compared.

Metaphors	Sections in Instrumental Music		Applications in Music
	<i>genolun</i> <i>la dengen baling</i>	<i>hebalingen</i> <i>deng baling</i> ( <i>tahu utomen</i> )	
	<i>la dengen baling</i> / 'anticipation'	<i>deng baling</i> / 'fulfilment'	
egg	incubation	hatching	<b>duration</b>
rice head	soft, water filled, unripened	hard, dry, ripened	<b>process from one to the other</b>
travel	journeying	journey's end	<b>movement / cessation of movement</b>

between the two sections, such as, *la dengen baling* ('without outcome') and *deng baling* ('with outcome'), respectively, also point to the dynamic textual and musical flow between action and result, movement and stasis. The creation of musical direction and 'movement' (*ogowen*) is essential to the *k'wahelen* or *genolun* and heightens 'expectation' (*gangga*) for the outcome, the 'true *utom*' (*tahu utomen*).

The metaphors of 'delay' and 'outcome' not only help to understand the musical and temporal relations between the sub-sections, *k'wahelen* and *utomen*, but also to account for the culturally patterned responses in performance. Figure 6 summarises several examples of how the T'boli elaborate on the dynamic relations between the notions of delay and outcome. The first example refers to the simple process of the transformation of an egg, from the stage of incubation to the stage of hatching. The second deals with the growth and ripening of upland rice. The rice head is called *la dengen baling* when it is soft, water-filled and unripe. When it is hard, dry and fully ripened it is referred to as *deng baling*. In this last state the process of ripening produces a reddish tinge and is referred to as *tahu* (literally 'true'). The third example concerns the long journey in which the forestalled traveler anticipates (*gangga*) his or her arrival at journey's end. Long journeys for the T'boli often involve treks through known paths during which time diversions, including stopping, talking, meeting people, sharing food and drink with folk, and unexpectedly encountering distant relatives along the way, inevitably take place. At the same time, a sort of impending cathartic satisfaction is also derived from the growing anticipation of the end of the journey. Similar cultural expectations of musical fulfillment are also contained in the *hebalingen* sub-section of the epic narrative.

A very similar dynamic pattern is found in T'boli instrumental music where, during the *genolun* sub-section, the performer attempts to create expectations for the 'outcome', that is the 'true *utom*', found in the *hebalingen*. The performer does this through improvisation, or in T'boli terms, 'letting it go' (*hewoten*). In 'letting it go' the performer tries to generate movement or direction (*ogowen*). *Ogowen* is derived from *ogow*, which means 'that used to make something move'. If a performance has no direction or movement, it may be described rather disparagingly

as *la tengonen du ogowen* ('without direction or movement'). If the performance exhibits a sense of direction or movement expressions such as *tey tilob ogow unihen* ('how very nicely the sound goes') are typically heard during performance.

The metaphors *genolun/k'wahelen* ('anticipation'/'delay') and *hebalingen/utomen* ('outcome'), embrace both musical organisation and affective experience. The more skilfully the singer or instrumentalist can delay or manipulate expectations, the more the *nawa* or 'breath' is fulfilled (*baling nawam*). The listener eagerly anticipates (*koso nawam*) the *hebalingen* which is why it is referred to either as *deng baling* (with outcome) or as *tahu utomen* (the place of the true *utom*). In instrumental music, the 'true *utom*' or the main musical motif consists of the imitation of an extramusical object. In T'boli rhetoric, *utom* also denotes the main point of an argument, as in 'what is your *utom*?', which is similar to the common English expression 'what is your point?'<sup>11</sup>

In T'boli epic singing, the *utomen* is the result of the action that has been outlined in the preceding *k'wahelen* sub-section in which the singer builds up narrative tension and suspense through the delivery of a blow-by-blow commentary, for instance, of the conflict between the hero Tudbulul and a rival. Only after this sub-section is the outcome of the conflict disclosed and the victor identified. During the *k'wahelen*, feelings of expectation are expressed by listeners through excited shouts (*kelele*), and cries of delight and satisfaction such as '*yo-de, yo-de*' at the dramatic resolution of the narrative in the *utomen* sub-section. The singer then returns to the *k'wahelen* or *genolun* sub-section, which quiets the audience until their expectations are again raised for the outcome of the next dramatic phase of the tale. In this way the relationship between the *k'wahelen* and *utomen* sub-sections in the epic parallels the dynamics of affect and transformation that exist between the *genolun* and the *hebalingen* sections in instrumental music.

## Conclusion

In his introduction to the edited volume on the oral epic, Reichl makes the fundamental point that despite the overwhelming evidence for the 'poetico-musical' nature of the oral epic, scholars generally investigate or interpret the oral epic as poetry only. This bias raises questions about the aesthetic properties of oral epics: is the interpretation of the epic as poetry only, correct and justifiable?<sup>12</sup> Clearly for the T'boli it is not, as revealed by the evidence for the intrinsic role that musical poetics plays in the dramatic and affective dimensions of their epic.

The singer's narrativisation or emplotment of the T'boli epic illustrates a resemblance to the universal ring compositional form in which the fundamental precondition is that the end must correspond with the beginning in some way. In the Tudbulul this correspondence is manifested in the link between the beginning where the hero departs his community as an intact, whole person, then roams the wilderness in a state of lack, and returns home intact and whole again. This correspondence is supported by the presence of key words and clusters of words at the beginning and end of the narrative that refer to sorcery and healing, magic and medicine. The beginning and ending also refers repeatedly to Tudbulul's moral condition.

<sup>11</sup> Manolete Mora, *Myth, Mimesis and Magic in the Music of the T'boli, Philippines* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Reichl, ed., *Oral Epic 2*.

However, the narrativisation and the poetry of the epic alone is not what makes its performance compelling. Rather it is the inextricable connection between the narrativisation and musical poetics at smaller structural levels that fills the performance with motion and intensity. The musical poetics here concern the recurring alternation and flow between the subsections referred to as *genolun/k'wahelen* ('anticipation', 'delay') and *hebalingen/utomen* ('outcome') and the aesthetics of complementarity that goes with it. It is the intrinsic bond between narrative and musical poetics, the structural alternations and aesthetics of complementarity, that helps move the narrative along and provides the dramatic, affective element of epic performance.

The consideration of the role of music in the examination of the Tudbulul contributes to our awareness of the oral epic as a poetico-musical form and along with more recent studies shows that the interpretation of oral epics as texts only is incomplete, particularly given the complexity of the oral epic as a communicative and performative event.