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Physicalising the spirit-dimension by song, dance and 'fakery' in indigenous mainland Riau, Indonesia

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The Orang Sakai of Mainland Riau, on the east coast of Sumatra, have an elaborate performing art genre through which they physicalise the unseen spirit-dimension in a shamanic ritual called dikei. *Their shamanic ritual utilises songs, dance as well as comedy. This article elaborates on how songs and dance visualise the unseen beings and provides detailed examples of Sakai performances during which shamans 'dance with' or 'move with' the spirits. A second theme of the article is the question of the relationship between the meaning of 'performance' and fakery, and suggests that there are three types of performed fakery, two of which are accepted as valid and necessary performances which technically contribute to the performance of medicine and the physicalisation of spirit presence.*

Much of the performing arts in Southeast Asia are still spirit-related: they are still connected to ritual in one form or another, either by being performed in ritual, or by having to be connected to some form of ritual. When a performing art is part of ritual or is 'the ritual in the main', we need to ask in what way is the performance related to the ontological reality of spirit? We cannot simply dislocate the performance from the ritual as the performance is the technique of the ritual and not just a representation. This also suggests to us that national attempts at 'upgrading' a performing art genre are not simply a matter of 'tidying up' the aesthetics of a performance, but also a challenge to the very ontology on which the art genre is based.

Although it has been argued by many authors that spirit-based healing rituals are performances through which healing is carried out, not all spirit-based healing performances can be said to utilise or have developed elaborate performing art genres for this purpose.[1] From this body of literature on ritual healing, 'performance' can simply mean the acting out of a therapeutic situation. Other ritual traditions though may

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1 *The performance of healing*, ed. Carol Laderman and Marina Roseman (London: Routledge, 1997); Sue Jennings, *Theatre, ritual and transformation: The Senoi Temiars* (London: Routledge, 1995).

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have developed an elaborate performance in the theatrical and dramatic sense, through which the purpose of the ritual is brought about by the aesthetics of a performing art. The performance then is not just a 'doing the healing ritual', but a performance genre for a telic purpose, such as healing, or ordering the cosmos.

Some writers have problematised the notion of performance as it is applied to healing and religious rituals.[2] To say that a certain activity is 'a performance' can suggest that the presentation is not real and raise doubts about the phenomena in question. Local people who stage the performance might have differing notions of what a performance is, or view their cultural performances as still relating to spirits in varying degrees. A performer does not merely embody a character out of the imaginary reality of a script, but embodies an ontological being, or regulates a structured relationship with such an ontological being.[3] That being must be present for the performance to be valid, no matter how good or artistic the performance is. Further, what it means to fake something by means of performance can have different meanings in relation to a ritual.

In limited instances 'performed fakery' for a ritual's aim might even be an accepted procedure. One of the classic examples in the performance of healing is the extraction of a material object from the patient's body. Earlier Western authors referred to this drama as a 'sleight of hand', suggesting performed fakery. But the issue of fakery comes into focus here because to the 'rationalist' outside observer the ontological existence of spirits is questionable in the first place. Instead, a 'sleight of hand' may be a performative means of resolving the problem of how materially physical objects can come out of spirit/soul phenomena. Looking at it in this way would allow us to suggest that 'sleight of hand' performances are in fact physical simulations of an act that should be occurring at the spirit level and which the performance indexes; and through indexing it gains its therapeutic import. What is important is what is happening at the non-physical level of the spirit-dimension beyond the five senses. Hence, performance is a technique of indicating to the audience or to an individual that spirit-based activity is occurring in the world. It is a means of physicalising the spirit-dimension and indigenous participants make their own judgements about the performance in relation to its purpose.

One of the first levels of the physicalisation of spirits is through sounds which can be induced through physical objects or the human body. The human body produces two types of sounds, verbal and non-verbal. The non-verbal can be deliberately produced for indexical symbolic purposes or naturally manifest as the human body moves in the ritual space. Verbal sounds are word-sounds. Word-sounds are meaningful sounds that the body produces through the mouth (speech acts), or what Saussure called *parole* (speech). Word-sounds are not the only sounds that the body produces at any given moment though. As an example, I am sitting on a

2 See Edward Schieffelin, 'Problematising performance in ritual', in *Ritual, performance, and media*, ed. Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 194–207; Edward Schieffelin, 'On failure and performance: Throwing the medium out of a séance', in *The performance of healing*, pp. 59–90; Susana Rostas, 'From ritualisation to performativity: The Concheros of Mexico', in *Ritual, performance, and media*, pp. 85–103.

3 Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, *By means of performance: Intercultural studies of theatre and ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

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chair before a table and a person in front of me annoys me. Unable to restrain myself my body moves forward 'creaking' my chair back, my chest 'thumps' the table rim, my hand 'slaps' the surface of the table, and the word-sound 'stop' blasts out from my mouth. At this moment of interaction my whole body has produced a quick sequence of interrelated sounds (in the world), one of which is a word-sound as well.

We don't usually think of our speech as being word-sounds because we are brought up to relate to language through scholastic and educational abstractions of meaningful texts (literacy). For people brought up in non-literate cultures speech production might be viewed in a very different way; for example, as meaningfully extemporised sounds emerging from the body.[4] Further, word-sounds are not necessarily interpreted but are understood; their images are moved into and moved with. Word-sound semiosis is part of the movement within and between interacting bodies. Thus, in ritual performance it might be too simplistic to say that an audience 'interprets the performance'. People understand the event by entering its space, moving and interacting with its sounds and sights from their situated presence and respond to it on multiple levels of bodily modality.

A further level of physicalisation of spirit is through kinetic performance. When dancing, the body generates an energy that draws people into its gravity, drawing the spectator's imagination towards its scenario.[5] Through kinaesthetic performance the happenings of spirit which the movements simulate are brought into sensual physical life. It is for this reason that people might find it difficult to speak of their aesthetic experience of the performance in elaborate terms. Their whole body is engaged, not just their cognitive faculty.[6]

The Orang Sakai of Riau (Sumatra)

The Malay-speaking indigenous peoples (Orang Asli) of east coast Sumatra (mainland Riau) have developed a performative art tradition that entails elaborate dances, songs, and comedy in their shamanic healing rituals. One tradition is that of the Orang Sakai who live in the area north of Pekanbaru, the provincial capital.[7] Their area lies between the market town of Minas and the small town of Duri. The Orang Sakai are traditionally shifting cultivators who generally kept their distance from the outside world by living in the forests that stretched between the edges of the local Malay kingdoms of Siak and the Rokan kingdom. Siak administered them through the *pebatin* system which was used to administer the non-Muslim peoples

4 Nathan Porath, 'Seeing sound: Consciousness and therapeutic acoustics in the inter-sensory shamanic epistemology of the Orang Sakai of Riau', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 14, 3 (2008): 647–63.

5 Susanna Knauth Langer, *Feeling and form: A theory of art development from philosophy in a new key* (New York: Scribner's, 1953).

6 Michael Jackson, 'Knowledge of the body', *Man* 18, 2 (1983): 327–45.

7 For accounts of other Orang Asli groups in Riau, see Tenas Effendy, 'The Orang Petalangan of Riau and their forest environment', in *Tribal communities in the Malay world: Historical, cultural and social perspectives*, ed. Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou (Singapore: ISEAS; Leiden: IIAS, 2002), pp. 364–83; Tenas Effendy, 'Petalangan society and changes in Riau', in *Riau in transition*, special issue, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 153, 4 (1997): 630–47; Ashley Turner, '*Belian* as a symbol of cosmic reunification', in *Metaphor: A musical dimension*, ed. Jamie C. Kassler (Basel: Gordon and Breach [rev. ed.], 1994), pp. 121–46; Turner Ashley, 'Cultural survival, identity and the performing arts of Kampar's suku Petalangan', in *Riau in transition*: 648–67.

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in the kingdom. In the past they called themselves Orang Batin (followers of the *batin* headmen). There were thirteen *batin* headmen who represented the local people of 13 regions (*pebatinan*) to the Malay sultan of Siak. Although most *batin* were men, it is also recorded that a woman could also be a *batin* as well.[8] The *batin* office was passed on from a man to his sister's son and could only be ratified by the sultan of Siak.

Today the Sakai are not matrilineal but follow a cognatic organisation. The Sakais were and still are relatively egalitarian. The relationship between the sexes is complementary rather than hierarchical, and although age is an important factor, the relationship between people of different generations is expressed in familial terms.

The Sakai cultural heritage, of which *dikei* is part, is a non-literate culture. All cultural forms are not only embodied but find their locus in the liver-heart (*'ati*) in the body itself (*batin*). All tangible forms of culture are made from embodied sets of knowledge applied to material collected from the forest, and are ephemeral. All verbal cultural-productions are embodied and orally extemporised.

In this embodied matrix of signs there are three main institutions that are based on performing genres that utilise the extemporisation of poetic word-sounds. These are the shamanic healing complex based on the performance of *dikei*, the bardic tradition of the storyteller *tukak cito* (Mal. *tukang cerita*) and the magician (*dukut/dukun*). The shamanic incorporates the magical although the latter does not necessarily have to entail the former. All three institutions are based on a highly elaborate theoretical and experiential understanding (ethno-psychology) of body-awareness, inner-self and sensorial sensations.[9] The extemporisations of shamanic, bardic and magical forms through word-sounds are conceived as temporary materialisations from an inner embodied source.

Context of shamanic performance

In this article I will focus on the performing art form of the shamanic tradition called *dikei*. The word *dikei* originates from the Sufi *zikir*. In Sakai it refers to the shaman's activity of trancing, dancing and singing as a total performance within a ritual context of healing. *Dikei* is defined as *bikin ubet* (making medicine).[10] Shamans (*kemantat*) will refer to their *dikei* engagement as '*waktu bu' dikei* (the time of *dikei*). This implies that they are in a shifted state of awareness, seeing spirits and travelling with them, physically dancing as well as generating medicine to heal people. People who attend a *dikei* session say that they *nengot dikei* ('watch a *dikei*'). By this they mean that they are spectators watching the event. Being part of an audience is also to give aid (*bantu*) to the patient by being present. The Sakai Malayan ontology

8 Max Moszkowski, *Auf Neuen Wegen Durch Sumatra* (Berlin: Reimar, 1909).

9 Nathan Porath, 'Being human in a dualist and not-so-dualist world: Exploring Sakai concepts of self and personhood', in *Anthropology and science: Epistemologies in practice*, ed. Jeannete Edwards, Penny Harvey and Peter Wade (Oxford: Berg, 2007); Nathan Porath, 'Not to be aware anymore: Indigenous Sumatran concepts of consciousness', *Anthropology of Consciousness* 24, 1 (2013): 7–31. Porath, 'Seeing sound'.

10 Nathan Porath, 'Creating medicine on a swing: The effectiveness of mirroring, mimetic sensoriality and embodiment to facilitate childbirth among the Sakais of Riau (Sumatra)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 17, 4 (2011): 811–28; Nathan Porath, 'Freud among the Sakais: The father-archetype, the talking cure and the transference in an indigenous Sumatran shamanic healing complex', *Anthropos* 108, 1 (2013): 1–17.

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posits that the world (*dunio iko*) has two main dimensions, that of the human physical dimension (*alap manusio*) and that of the invisible spirit-dimension (*alap lain*). The spirit-dimension is comprised of '*bahan* '*alus*' (refined materiality/substance) in contrast to the physical dimension comprised of *bahan kasa*' (crude materiality/substance). The two substance-realities phase into each other by the intermediary *alap semanget* (*semanget* dimension). The *alap semanget* is the dimension behind the seen physical one. Through it, spirits interact with humans. Refined *semanget*-substance inheres in every object. It constitutes a) the non-physical materiality of spirits, b) the life-full embodied *semanget* of living beings, and c) *mayo* (non-life-giving images of physical objects). The images (*mayo*) of physical objects do not give life to the objects, but are of the same *semanget* substance. *Mayo* provides objects with vitality of form ('*upo*) and appearance as well as definition of use (*guno*). A withered or decrepit object is one which has lost its *mayo*. *Mayo* can also be de-physicalised. Spirit goods are non-physical *mayo* which have been de-physicalised from objects given to them as gifts in *dikei* rituals. People see the *mayo* of objects in dreams and other altered states of awareness.

Spirits live in the spirit-dimension and are associated with particular locales in the natural environment. They are wilful beings that interact with humans through embodied *semanget*. Here, spirits do not possess the human body but only interact with parts of *semanget*, affecting conscious awareness. Shamans are not possessed by spirits and neither do spirits speak through them. Instead in *dikei* shamans see or catch glimpses of the spirits as they appear before the inner-eye (*nampak*) or they can travel (*jalat*) with the spirits by having their *semanget* merge with them. The merger with the spirit in the spirit-dimension leads to dancing the spirit in the physical dimension. It is the shaman's ability to see, interact and travel with spirits that determines the veracity of a healing performance. A *dikei* performance is culturally understood to be a mimetic physicalisation of events happening in the non-physical spirit-dimension; an iconic simulation of *semanget*/spirit.

A *dikei* healing session is approximately a two-hour event starting after sunset, which for the spirits is their morning. These healing events can be performed at any time if there is a need for them. A major event of *dikei* is a *kelonkap*. A *kelonkap* is a *dikei* ritual in its complete form. Although some minor healing might be performed during the first hour, a *kelonkap* is a celebratory event in which many people and spirits attend, a number of shamans perform, a spectacular gift of an 'image' (*mayo*) is transferred to the principle shaman's tutelary, the 'image' (*mayo* '*uma*') of the house is healed and cosmic world boundaries are re-established. A *kelonkap* event is usually performed once a year and they are sponsored by a recovered patient, a shaman who wants to appease his tutelary with a gift, or someone who can afford to sponsor one for a purpose. A lot of work is invested into making a *kelonkap* possible. People of the settlement put in the work in order to allow their healer to maintain a good relationship with the spirits which is needed for ordinary healing. Shamans themselves like to perform in *kelonkap* because they are allowed to enter the spirit-dimension, see beautiful people (spirits) and travel to beautiful places for their own pleasure (*bu'suko'atinyo*). Shamans may also heal themselves from their own ailments.

The first night of the *kelonkap* usually lasts until midnight and is a festive affair for the people of the settlement. It is called *malap butinjau* and although it has a

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celebratory atmosphere its purpose is to notify the spirits that a *kelonkap* will take place the next evening with the intention of giving a gift to the spirit. At night the shaman's tutelary notifies him or her in a dream what form the gift should take. The next day the shaman instructs the people of the settlement what gift they should make. Men go out to the nearby woods and search for palm-leaf sprouts (*daun kopau*/Mal. *kepau*) and wood for the puppets and decorations. In the house where the event is to take place the men build the gift-offerings (*kelonkap*) out of soft *kuma* wood. Such items can range from congregation halls (*balai*), transport vessels such as boats, yachts and even a sedan, as well as a gift of a 'maiden' (*gadih*) in the form of a bouquet of flowers (*puat*/*puan*).[11] There are numerous possible gifts. Usually one large main gift is made. Sometimes smaller multiple gifts are made. In *dikei* healing and particularly for a *kelonkap*, objects are created from palm-leaf and soft wood, for the refined image (*mayo*) inherent in the object which is extracted and transferred to the spirits as gifts.

In the other part of the room women sit in a semicircle as they slice the long palm leaves into pliable ribbons which they plait into birds and other animal puppets, as well as various flowers. In one corner is a mounting pile of finished plaited items. These puppets are not animated in any particular way, but like the gift-model, gain their refined image (*mayo*) the moment the plaited ribbons are brought together to form the image of the animal the puppet is supposed to represent. The animals usually represented in puppet form are various bird spirits, such as *Olak Kesumo* (Red Eagle), *Mu'ai* (Magpie Robin), *Kuwau* (Night Heron), *Bu'uk Kunik Butimbo Tasik* (Golden-Bird-Bailing-Water from the Lake), *Mencalo Angin* (Teal of the Winds), *Balam Angin* (Turtle Dove of the Winds), *Bu'uk Tiok* (Mynah Bird) and *Buu'uk Anso Bu'dui* (Spiked Goose). Other animals are *Ajo Buayo Gilo* (Mad-King-Crocodile), *Pelanduk Putih* (White Mousedeer), *Gudah Sembilat* (Horse-of-Nine-Images). All these puppets serve as props that help physicalise the unseen spirits and are utilised during the one performance, after which they are discarded. A decorated plastic water bowl becomes the Cosmic-Flower-Pool (*Taman Bungo*) with the animals perched around it or 'swimming' in it, and the house decorations transform the dilapidated bark house with its one main room called *tonga uma* (the house centre) into a cosmic stage for theatrical shamanic performance and heroism as well as momentarily physicalising the cosmos itself.[12]

Performers

The central performer is the shaman (*kemantat)* who serves as an intermediary between people and spirits and between the spirit and human dimensions. A *kemantat* can be either male or female, although most are male. The shaman partakes in both

11 The *puat* is a highly condensed and multivalent symbolic object in *dikei* as well as in Sakai knowledge about the self and the environment (cosmos). The different leaves of the *puat* represent the different species of tall trees (*Sialang*) in which bees nest. There are many types of *puat* as well as tiered three/seven/nine-branched *puat*. On one basic level the *puat* represents what in broader Indonesian discourse is called *Kayu Alam* (World Tree, Cosmic Tree).

12 For a detailed description of Sakai bark houses see Nathan Porath and Gerard Persoon, 'Lean-tos, huts and houses: Forms of shelter among nomadic forest dwellers in Southeast Asia', in *Indonesian houses: Survey of vernacular architecture in western Indonesia, vol. 2,* ed. Riemar Schefold, Peter Nas, Goudenz Domenig and Robert Wessing (Leiden: KITLV, 2008), pp. 279–308.

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dimensions and 'has one eye to the spirit-dimension and one eye to the human dimension' (*satu mato kepado alap lain dan satu mato kepado alap manusio*). During *dikei* shamans wear a sarong to distinguish themselves from the rest of those present. Sandbukt writing on the Kubu shamans of Jambi in South Sumatra suggests that the Kubu associate the sarong and other shamanic paraphernalia with downstream Malay 'Otherness' and therefore it is an appropriate garment for the shaman to wear in his dealings with the spirit-others.[13] Today among the Sakais, spectators can also enter the *dikei* space wearing sarongs, but this is not significant for *dikei*. It is only important that the shaman does. If another person falls suddenly into a trance during a *kelonkap* the assistants will immediately put a sarong over that person's head and pull it down to their waist. The sarong attire is a tradition brought over from a period when the Sakais mainly wore bark cloth, and cloth was obtained through trade with merchants travelling upstream from downstream Malay society. Similar to the descriptions of the Kubu, cloth was associated with the formality and otherness of downstream Malay society.

A shaman's clothing above the waist is a matter of personal preference. On their heads, most shamans wear a padded red or reddish circlet which has two projecting padded horns. This is the shaman's crown (*deta bekampuh*).[14] The shaman who represents the people to the spirits wears a crown although an individual cannot have his wife make one for him unless he dreams that a spirit had already crowned him with one. Sometimes shamans will have a woman make a circlet with two horns out of palm leaf for a particular session. During a *dikei* session, particularly during a *kelonkap* where there is a lot of performed interaction between shamans and assistants, the shaman is called *ajo* (raja) in a light-hearted way. It thus befits the *ajo kemantat* to wear a crown as he represents the people to the various rajas' of the spirits.

In the left hand the shaman holds a rattle (*gontong*, lit. bells). This is a plaited rattan bracelet-sized ring with scrap-metal pieces from cars and bicycles, keys and other discarded pieces that people find on roadsides dangling from it which make a jingling noise. Shamans hear the jingling noise as comforting ringing bells when they *dikei*.

Sometimes as the shaman dances he holds a carved wooden knife (*podak*) in his right hand. Although this object looks like a knife the word *podak* means sword. The shaman uses the knife to battle with the spirits. As the shaman holds the knife he moves menacingly with martial art gestures, searching for spirits that may suddenly attack him. The *ajo kemantat* gracefully lashes his knife at the threatening spirits he sees before his mind's eye (*mato batin*). A Chinese fan can serve the same purpose by flicking offending spirits off with a graceful quick twist of the wrist. Shamans who are skilled in *poncat silat* (martial arts) movements sometimes perform a martial arts display as well at the beginning of a *kelonkap*. Moving steadily forwards and

13 Ovyind Sandbukt, 'Kubu conceptions of reality', *Asian Folklore Studies* 42 (1984): 85–98.

14 In an earlier period the Sultan of Siak would bestow on the *batin* headmen a *deta bekampuh* as a sign of office. These would be worn when meeting state officials. There may also have been an original association of the shaman's crown with Alexander the Great, who in classical Malay histories is *Raja Iskandar Zul Kernain* (King Alexander with the two horns), the great rajah of antiquity from whom the Malay sultans of Johor claimed descent.

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backwards with martial art defensive arm gestures, shamans defend their territory from hostile spirits. Sometimes a mock contest is played out between one or more shamans or between a shaman and a non-shaman skilled in *silat*. Not all shamans necessarily dance with the rattle, the knife or the fan, but together with the crown, they form part of the Sakai shaman's costume and heroic image.

Another important item of the shaman's attire is his cloth (*kain*). The shaman's cloth is a long piece of material about 60 centimetres in width, which is either red (*kesum'o*) or white (*puti'*) in colour.[15] As the shaman enters a shamanic trance in absolute darkness, the shaman covers his head with the cloth and stretches it to cover his prostrated body. The cloth is used for specific healing scenarios and becomes an extension of the shaman's performing body, adding to the dance imagery when a spirit-character is physicalised through its performance (*bu'main* '*antu*).

Figure 1. *Ajo Kemantat* with crown and sarong, cloth, rattler and 'mace'. Tucked under his belt is his 'sword'. (Photo taken by the author, Penaso 1997)

15 In the past a yellow cloth was donned when performing for a raja.

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The assistants or attendants are called *didayak* and *dibalak*. These terms are also used to refer to any particular individual in the session who differentiates him or herself from the audience and contributes to the ritual by responding to the shaman. *Didayak* is from the Malay *dayang*, meaning court lady. The word *dibalak* (Mal., *dubalang)* means court soldier or guard. Usually the main female assistant (*didayak*) is the shaman's wife, although it can be his sister or another female relative. The main *didayak* sits beside the shaman. She fetches and carries for the shaman when s/he gestures for something and also comically responds to the shamans' idiosyncrasies. The *didayak* has to directly respond to the shaman when s/he turns to interact with the people present. Women can alternate in the role, sometimes two or more women assist the shaman, and sometimes a man (*dibalak*) assumes the same role too. A female patient is also referred to as *didayak*.

The *dibalak* (warriors) are the younger men who protect the shaman (*menjago ajo*) when she or he prostrates or twirls. There should be at least one man sitting behind the shaman when he or she starts to *dikei*. Men who joke, tease and dance with the shaman are also *dibalak*. The marital status of these men does not matter. They are the fit young men of the settlement. *Dikei* language also refers to a male patient by this term, providing him with the persona of a wounded soldier.

Finally, the drummers (*bidu*; Mal. *biduanda*, palace orderlies), of whom there are usually one or two in an ordinary healing session, or more in all-night events (*kelonkap*), are sometimes referred to by the shamans as *bucak nobat* (the *nobat* bachelors). The *nobat* were the royal drummers and the Sakai borrowed the term from the Malay court performers to refer to their own drummers who play a hefty drum made of goat-skin called *odoh*. The *odoh* is a one-head drum which when played sits on the drummer's upper leg with its top leaning on the drummer's chest. The drum is hit on its edge with the palm and fingertips of both hands at roughly 11 and 2 o'clock. The drummer can alternate roles and return to being a member of the audience or become a *dibalak* when he stops playing.

During *dikei* events, the audience and the patients are passive spectators. At the start of a *dikei* (be it a healing session or a *kelonkap*) the men (*anak inang*) sit on the floor leaning on the inner panel of the front wall of the house on either side of the front door. The women (*anak asuh*) sit in the inner side of the house facing them. Together they form a U-shape or crooked semicircle. The *bidu* drummer sits anywhere he conveniently chooses. The space in the middle of the room is left free for the shaman to perform before the altar on the other side of the room where the gift of a model to be given to the spirits stands.

People sit or lie on the floor in any way they choose, watching the consecutive scenarios unfold. The audience does not usually interact with the shaman. But anyone can differentiate themselves from the audience and take on the role of *dibalak*/*didayak* and thus become assistants. In an all-night ritual a member of the audience who is prone to experiencing shifts in awareness might also suddenly fall into a trance. At this point they have to be treated by the *dibalak*/*didayak* and brought back to being a member of the audience or be allowed to shamanise, again aided by the assistant. But the audience (the *anak inang*/*anak asuh*) who are in the shaman's care remain passive in relation to him. The category of the *dibalak*/*didayak* mediates between the category of the overactive shaman and the category

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of the relatively passive group of people present who have come 'to watch' (*nengot*) a *dikei*.

Generalities of the performance

Dikei involves everything that the English word 'performance' implies. *Dikei* utilises healing techniques that involve not only trance, but also dance (*ta'i*), song (*nyanyi*) and humour (*bu'slo'o*). Each spirit has its own dance as well as song which the shaman extemporises to call on it. In *dikei* healing sessions, shamans do sometimes 'play' (*bumain, bugoli*). Play refers to playing the spirit (*bumain 'antu*) or playing the gift (*bumain kelonkap*) that the shaman intends to give to the tutelary. When shamans 'play the spirit' their *semanget* merges with the spirit and travels with it. The meaning of 'playing the gift' is that at a certain moment in the event, the shaman performs with the object in hand. Sandbukt explains that what the Kubu shaman performs in the physical dimension is an indication of his activities in the spirit one. This also applies to the Sakai.[16] Thus, among Sakais, if the *kelonkap* model is a boat, the shaman will enter it and ecstatically perform travelling with it as his *semanget* travels with the image (*mayo*) of the boat in the spirit-dimension.

In ordinary healing sessions (which usually last for two hours), assistants (*dibalak*/*didayak*) try to keep the shaman under control by exhorting him to only see spirits (*nampak*) rather than travel with them (*jalat*). A *dikei* healing session downplays the sense of 'performance' as playful entertainment and capitalises on the meaning of performance as competent healing activity (*bu'ubet*). A *kelonkap* event (lasting for two nights) capitalises on the theatricality of the performance and all the techniques that are utilised for it in *dikei. In kelonkap* shamans revel in the play of performance. It is in *kelonkap* where telic ritual shifts to telic theatre with humans and spirits as celebratory spectators.

The principle shaman enters into the spirit-dimension under his cloth seated on a mat with the drumming in the background in the 'centre' of the house. Once the shaman's awareness has been shifted to the spirit-dimension he stands up, the mat is taken away, and the *didayak* rubs granules of puffed rice down his legs to his feet to lighten them. The shaman then starts to dance, tracing the four cardinal points with his footsteps that then suggest the fifth in the centre. Gradually he closes his steps around the centre-point and with his cloth draped over his shoulders he begins to circle it. From this point the shaman will perform a sequence of consecutive spirit and healing scenarios until the end of his *dikei*.

In dikei, the shaman first sees the spirit and then calls on it. The image of the spirit appearing before the healer's inner-eye as a colourful image (*mayo*) is the first form of physical materialisation of the non-physical. It allows the shaman to gain a glimpse of the spirit as it appears (*nampak 'antu*) in colourful form. The shaman will then bring the tips of his fingers and thumbs of both hands together and pay respect to the spirit (*menyombah 'antu*). He might also throw puffed rice, symbolising flowers, in its direction as one would do to a passing nobleman. The spirit is then physicalised further in its performance by song, through which extemporised word-sounds produce a colourful image of the spirit's image and character.

16 Sandbukt, 'Kubu conceptions of reality'.

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Genres of shamanic songs

During a *dikei/kelonkap* event, shamans sing a few spirit songs to call the various spirits from their abode in the spirit-dimension to help in healing. Drumming accompanies the singing and the drumbeat opens the path (*jalat*) to the spirit-dimension. The word-sounds of the song travel along this path to call the spirit down to the ritual. Sound is thus a path between the spirit-dimension and the human one.

There are three *genres* of *dikei* spirit songs. The first is the *de'o* songs (*lagu de'o*) which call the *de'o* (from *deva*) spirits of the sky. The second genre is *lagu bayu*. Songs of this genre call on the more powerful *de'o* spirits of the mountains such as the *mambak* spirits and these spirits' associates. The third is *lagu dikei*. These songs call on river and earth spirits.

The *lagu de'o* is a genre most commonly sung in *dikei* healing performances. They are melodious and make use of *pantun* that are directed to the patient and audience (see below). *Bayu* songs are melismatic, have a serious and even melancholic melody and the Sakai regard the accompanying drumming as more sophisticated in style than the *de'o* type. The *bayu* lyrics usually depict the spirit in narrative rather than just depicting an ironic image of it. Songs of the last genre, *lagu dikei*, are monologues that shamans sing at particular moments.

People who are enthusiastic about *bayu* contend that anybody can sing the *de'o* songs, but only real and powerful shamans can sing *bayu*. The average shaman does not make these distinctions and may even consider *bayu* as a Sakai Malay (local Sakai Malayu) *dikei* style. Shamans who do not follow the genre's classification may also sing songs from different genres. A shaman who sometimes calls a spirit with a *de'o* song might call the same *de'o* spirit with a *bayu*-style song.

The songs I provide below are *de'o* songs. Each *de'o* song names a spirit and illustrates the spirit's character. There is much repetition and redundancy of song phrases. In any extemporisation singers can juxtapose song phrases in various orders or omit them. Each time the shaman extemporises the song, the lyrics vary slightly. In each extemporisation though, the spirit's image remains fairly constant. In performance, the shaman can improvise by adding other verses and rhyming quatrains (*pantun*). Sometimes shamans falter too, and repeat verses or fill the tune with nonsensical words or sounds. To know how to sing a song, the singer has to be familiar not only with lyrics, but also to know how to weave the song artistically with stock verses and *pantun* for the moment and purpose of its extemporisation.

Physicalising the spirits through word-sounds

Shamans embody spirit-songs, which when extemporised, are characterised by Sakai as rising from their liver-heart (*'ati*) or inner (*batin*), up to their mouths, and out to form an image to be dispersed in the physical-world. This 'raising up from the inner' and its projection through word-sounds 'out through the mouth' to be evaporated in the physical world is seen as a total process of song extemporisation.

Each spirit-song depicts a spirit character. These characters vary: they can be birds and animals or trees. They can also be characters of the old royal Malay consumer cult of glory, objects that came with the culture of modernity, or kin characters and their activities. Finally, there are spirit characters that represent the powers that affected the area's past political economy (e.g., Mad-King-Dutchman,

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King Chinaman). The song consists of a melody and opening words that name and characterise the spirit stressing their strengths and weaknesses in a few verses. This produces an ironic image of the spirit's activity, movements and power. Further, songs utilise various tropes as well as idiophones such as onomatopoeic as well as figurative idiophones that represent 'the impression of a certain non-acoustic sensation'.[17] Such word-sounds provide the spirit-image with the poetic imagery's animated presence.

The following is *Pelanduk Putih* (White Mouse Deer).

Pelanduk kato Pelanduk	Mouse deer, Mouse deer
Pinte meminte di Tanjung Leko	Taking short-cuts over Cape Leko
Tekiel Nial	(Its leg is trapped)
Pelanduk makan di Kulam Bungo	Mouse deer eating in the flower pool
Makan kankuk ambo	Eating my *kankuk* flowers
Kato sa'ah abang ku ngimbau	My older brother calls me
Pelanduk kato pelanduk	Mouse deer Mouse deer
Menan Joeh di Tanjung Betan	Set a trap in Cape Betan
Dapet Siko pelanduk sebosa kambing	I caught a Mouse deer the size of a goat

This deer that is about 30 centimetres long and not much more in height is a wily, cunning and agile animal. It outwits the other animals with its guile and therefore is capable of surviving in the forest, somewhat like the fox in European folklore. In this song the pygmy deer takes a short cut across the Cape of Leko. *Pinte* means to take a 'short cut' or 'cut across'. The syntactic coupling of *pinte* with *meminte* (intersect) means moving through intersections or 'cross and to cut across' suggesting continuous intersecting 'short-cuts'. It also poeticises the verb into a rhythmic sounding phrase that evokes the image of the animal's little feet 'tip tapping' as it scurries (*pinte meminteh, pinte meminteh, pinteh meminteh* ….) across the Cape of Leko. The song then portrays the animal stopping for a moment to eat the *kankun* flowers by the flower pool. The irony of this agile animal-spirit is that its leg is trapped. Sakais snare their game with noosed strings that latch on to the leg of the unsuspecting animal. The phrase *tekiel nial* provides the moving image of the deer trying to free its leg from the snare's tight noose.

Another animating feature of spirit songs is the juxtaposition of rapid movement with stasis. In 'White Mouse Deer' the animal is portrayed as scampering hurriedly across the cape, and then stopping by the flower pool to eat the *kankun* leaves. There is a certain silent intimacy in this idyllic image with the animal, which its entrapment disturbs. In the next song *Gadja Puti* (White Elephant) the imagery is clearer.

Gaja' Puti' dae	White Elephant, friend
Sunsung di angin	Breasting the winds
Gaja' ku datak susong talak susong	My Elephant comes from Talang Susong
Gaja' ku makat, semantung bulan	My Elephant eats (under) a moonlit thunderous storm

17 James Kawada, 'Human dimensions of sound', in *Redefining nature: Ecology, culture and domestication*, ed. Roy Ellen and Katsuyoshi Fukui (London: Berg, 1996), pp. 39–60.

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Gaja' putih angin sunsung di angin	White Elephant breasting the winds
Gaja' ku datak di talak Be'ingin	My Elephant arrives from Talang Beringin
Olah menciap gaja' putih dae	My friend the White Elephant is already whizzing

The song conveys the elephant's strength as it pushes forward steadily against the prevailing wind towards the singer who is calling it. The word *munciap* is onomatopoeic for whizzing and one even gets the impression that it is the elephant itself that creates the thunderous wind with its powerful forward-marching strides. In contrast to this image the second image portrays the elephant as stopping to eat a banana under a moonlit thunderous storm. The contrasting image of turbulent movement and stasis again has the effect of drawing the listener into the sensual presence of the animal's image.

Another phonic icon that materialises the spirit through poetic animation is syntactic iconicity or the relationship which exists between the rules governing the arrangements of a sentence's main and subsidiary clauses and other grammatical features with semantics and sentence meaning.[18] The following is an example from the song *Bo'uk Kocik* (Baby or Little Macaque). These simians are vivacious creatures and their naughtiness is captured in the song.

Anak Bouk lembai di angin, Mak Inang	Baby Macaque waving (swinging) in the wind, Mother-Wet-Nurse
Bouk ku di ate pulai tuju' mak inang	My macaque is on top of the seven-tiered pulai tree, Mother-Wet-Nurse
Gabi ado, gabai ado, cubi ado, gogon ado	There is a wave, a touch, a pinch and a scratch
Tepak ado, Tepai ado, tobu pisak	Scattered hither and thither are sugar-beet and bananas
Ula' anak bouk lembai di angin, mak inang	Because Baby Macaque is waving (swinging) in the winds, Mother-Wet-Nurse.

Here we have an image of a small monkey playing on the seven-tiered *Pulai* tree relayed to the spirit called Mother-Wet-Nurse. The Macaque's smallness is already provided in the adjective *kocik*, which in its very sound conveys the image of something 'little' and 'cute'. The phrase '*gabi ado, gabai ado, cubi ado, gogan ado*' ('there is a wave, there is a touch, there is a pinch and there is a scratch') provides hand-movements that only humans and monkeys can make and they suggest fidgety and socially uncontrollable hand movements. The rhythm of the sentence leads to the archetypal representation of monkey-scratching. The following sentence, which depicts a mess of bananas and sugar-beet foliage, '*tepak ado, tepai ado, tobu pisak*' continues the rhythm of the previous sentence by splitting the expression *tepak tepai* (hither thither) with the word *ado* (there is). Thus the meaning is 'there is hither and there is thither suger-beet and bananas'. The phrases provide the moving image

18 Alfred Gell, *The art of anthropology: Essays and diagrams* (London: Athlone, 1999).

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of the naughty monkey creating a mess hither and thither (*tepak tepai*) as it playfully jumps around.

The song also provides the invisible spirits with imaginal form through colour adjectives or by naming objects that imply their colour. Colour provides the non-physical with the contours of shape. The main colours are black, white, green, yellow (gold) and red. Mouse Deer and Elephant are White (i.e. albino) animals portrayed standing within a backdrop of colourful objects. For example, in White Mouse Deer the *kankun* leaves suggest greenness. In White Elephant we have the image of the animal under a moonlit thunderous sky, which suggests shades of light and darkness. The tree in Baby Macaque provides background colour imagery of green foliage.

In the following extracts of the song *Ajo Olak Kesum'o* (King Red Eagle) the redness of the image is paramount:

Olak kesum'o dae	Red Eagle friend
Olak kesum'o panjak amai	Long feather-tailed red eagle
Olak Kesum'o agak tolunyo tolu kesum'o	Red Eagle with red eggs
Olak ku tidu, Olak Kesum'o	My Red Eagle is still sleeping
Muandam paoh kesum'o	Shave your red beak
Bolut pornah munei janji kesum'o	You have not broken a promise yet oh, red one
Olak ku tidak ku pangil tu'ut	My Eagle, I do not call you to descend now
Isuk buleh tu'ut	Tomorrow you may come down
Olak tinggal di im'o	Eagle, stay in the forest
Muintai di manuk kunik kesum'o	Peep through the yellow rattan tree, oh red one
Olak put'i su'ibu	Eagle of a thousand princesses

Here the spirit-bird is given form through 'redness'. However, the penultimate sentence makes reference to the yellow rattan tree. The contrasting colours of red and yellow fill in the shape of the physical presence of the red bird peeping through the yellow rattan. Exhorting the bird to 'peep through' also suggests that the singer gains a momentary glimpse of the red bird as it appears.

Anomalous size and speed are other attributes that physicalise the non-physical beings. In 'White Mouse Deer' the pygmy deer is said to be 'the size of a goat'. In another extemporisation, Baby Macaque is the size of the speaker's lower arm. The Red Eagle has a long tail feather which in other extemporisations is said to be '190 in length'.

The songs also animate the spirits by suggesting that they are interlocutors as well as by anticipating their movements in the song. Spirits are exhorted 'to descend' and heal (*tu'un bu'ubet*) or 'to enter' a named country (*masuk lenego'i*) thus making their movements ever the more so imaginable by mapping their journeys through the known landscape — similar to other descriptions of shamanic landscapes.[19] The singer sometimes reports the spirit's travels and activities to the listeners or to another spirit as in the Baby Macaque song sung to Mother-Wet-Nurse (*Mak Inang*). Sometimes the singer tells the spirit what the healer sees it doing. The healer might

19 See also Robert Desjarlais, 'Healing through images: The magical flight and healing geography of Nepali shamans', *Ethos* 17, 3 (1989): 289–302; Marina Roseman, 'Singers of the landscape: Song history and property rights in the Malaysian rainforest', *American Anthropologist* 100, 1 (1989): 106–21.

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add to the description 'I see you' (*ku like, ku nengot*) or 'I note' (*ku tando*). By directing his descriptions to the spirit-other the singer impresses on the listeners' imagination that what he is describing at that moment is what he is seeing with his inner-eye.

Although spirits do not talk, songs can characterise them as speaking momentarily, hence a song might include the mimetic phrase 'thus says' (*itu bilak*). What is important is not what the spirit says, but the image of the spirit saying it. What the spirits say is usually a phrase that adds to their own imagery or which creates a second image within the imagery of the song.

The following are extracts from an extemporisation of the *Kudo Sembilat Mayo* (Horse-of-Nine-Images).

Kudo sembilat, da'e kuda Sembilat	Horse-of-Nine (Images), friend
Olah munciap, kudo sembilat,	The Horse-of-Nine-Images is already whizzing
Kudo ku siko, kudo ku pacu	My one Horse is galloping
Kuda ku pacu nan tongah malap	My Horse gallops in the middle of the night
Golak tusenyum, gadih ciayo bulat	The maiden of the moon laughs and smiles
Di gadung intan	in the house of diamonds

Then after a few verses:

Lito kan tulak, ponik ku mato	My bones are weak, my eyes are dazzled
Bukat o'ak bu'main kudo	No one is riding the horse
Tobit polak poluh, tu padap poluh	The sweat rises and the sweat decreases
Itu bilak *kudo sembilat*	**Thus says** the Horse-of-Nine-Images
Kudo ku, datak, onak lengo'i Paoh	My arriving horse wants to go to the Paoh country
Dolu lah kudo di tanjung paoh	My horse has already arrived at the plains of Paoh
Lopeh nan nego'i di sungai dalap	Sprints from the country to the inner-river
Kudo ku main gadih ciayo tuju	The maiden with the seven-radiance plays (rides) my horse
Eh, bisiket dolu, minyak dolu	First oil and comb your hair
O'ak di dalap gadung intan	People inside the house of diamonds
Mano di gadih tu soi bulat	Where is the maiden of the moon?
Jawet la Salam	Greetings of peace
Lito kan Tula. Ponik ku mato	My bones are weak and my eyes are dazzled
Itu bilak *kudo sembilat*	**Thus says** the Horse-of-Nine-Images
Kudo ku siko tinggal di namo	My horse leaves its title
Kudo lah siko samo sambat semiat	The horse with the crossing stripes (bridal)
kudo sembilat da'e	Horse-of-Nine-Images, friend
Punibo 'ati	Sensitive of heart
Itu bilak *kudo sembilat*	**Thus says** the Horse-of-Nine-Images
copet tapak, ingan tanganyo	Swift of foot and light of hand
Itu bilak *sembilat, kudo sembilat*	**Thus says** the Horse-of-Nine-Images

The phrases that are mimetically and authoritatively attributed to the horse with the expression 'thus says' (*itu bilak*) provide very strong and en-framed imagery of the

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horse's sensuous presence. The descriptive expressions, 'rising/decreasing sweat', 'sensitivity of heart' and 'swiftness of hands and feet' suggests equine temperamentality and enervated movement. One can even sense the galloping hooves of the horse with 'the crossing stripes' (bridle) and feel its energy as it gallops in the middle of the night across the plains of Paoh, in search of the 'maiden of the moon'. It gallops until it reaches the 'house of diamonds' where people in the 'house of diamonds' are awaiting its arrival. They are exhorted to prepare themselves for the horse's arrival like they would for a nobleman's visit. They offer the horse 'the maiden of the moon' who, as she smiles (*tusenyum*) and laughs (*golak*), and one might even imaginatively hear her laugher at this stage, rides him pleasurably in the night. In turn and similar to a visiting nobleman of the past exercising his 'right' to a 'gift' of a maiden, the horse leaves her its title.[20]

Rhetorical questions in songs, e.g. *apo tando*? (what is the sign?) can also help reify the image and create a sense of anticipation for the answers that follow in the next line. The following is an example from the song Mad-King-Crocodile. The verses describe the movements of the crocodile with the onomatopoeic *ketimbung* (the thumping sound an object makes when it hits the water causing the 'splash').

Ketimbung kaki muadok ile	Splashing feet (swimming) upriver
Ketimbung tangan muadok mudik	Splashing feet (swimming) downstream.

Than the singer asks:

apo pu tando buayo am'o	What is the sign of my crocodile's presence?

and the sign is:

bu'golu 'ili	ripples of downstream water
Budoeh mudik	(forcefully) currents upriver

Physicalising spirits through kinaesthetics

Spirits are also physicalised through dance. As shamans' *semanget* move with the spirit their bodies dance this movement out. The song phrases shamans sing in *dikei* provide them with aesthetic guidelines, with which dance improvisation can be developed. Although most performances resemble each other, shamans also create dance scenarios in their own styles. A bird circling a centre-point is the central imagery of *dikei*, and it is reflected by the shaman's main dance, which resembles a bird in flight. For bird-spirit scenarios shamans dance in figures of eight holding the appropriate bird puppet in both hands. The shaman's cloth covers the head or shoulders and drapes over the arms, evoking wings. Sometimes the shaman vocalises bird sounds: 'brrpbrrp'. In *kelonkap* when many shamans sometimes dance together, they move in circles of eight like a flock of birds in flight circling an imaginary pole running through the centre of the house. One important dance form is the Eagle Dance *(Ta'i Olak*; Mal. *Tari Elang*). The *kemantat* dons the red cloth on his head and shoulders and with the ends wrapping his arms, then circles gracefully as

20 She is usually represented by the multivalent *puat* (*puan*), here representing 'the maiden' given as a gift to the raja spirit. The gift of the maiden theme is also found in Sakai legend, reflecting the power relationship between the Orang Batin and the hierarchical Malay world.

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a flying eagle circles a centre-point. *Ta'i Olak* is also performed in non-shamanic contexts when Sakais are invited to a provincial cultural event. In such events they do not go into a trance, but simply dance in circles. However, as they dance, a number of them do enter the spirit-dimension (fall into a trance-like state) and usually there is an assistant present who shouts at them to snap them out of it. This dance is the choreographic metaphor of the embodied/disembodied experience of *semanget*. Its balance and grace is reminiscent of the commonly sung phrase in bird-spirit songs that characterise the bird's balanced flight as 'flying high, flying low, flying casually between the earth and the sky' — a metaphor of a normal balanced state of affairs for a healthy human being.

The performance of the spirit of *Bo'uk Kocik* mimics macaque behaviour and allows the shaman to really 'monkey around', sometimes at the expense of the audience's patience. Crawling on all fours the healer suddenly vocalises a high-pitched monkey hoot, 'ooooooowah' then scratches his waist and back like a monkey as in 'there is a wave, a touch, a pinch and a scratch'. This monkey spirit is very naughty and the song as we saw demonstrates its presence with a mess of sugar-beet and bananas 'scattered hither and thither'. Suddenly the 'macaque' leaps forward and grabs a cigarette packet lying on the floor and scampers away with it to a corner. He squats, holding the packet protectively in his hands close to his chin. He gives a scared and shielding monkey-look and tries to scamper away when an assistant tries to come close and take the packet from him. Some shamans who perform this lively monkey might suddenly break through to the audience, grab hold of someone's leg and try to scamper away with it pulling its owner along as well.

For four-legged spirits such as Mouse Deer shamans might go on all fours. When performing this spirit a shaman will drink the water from the flower-decorated bucket representing the cosmic flower-pool. For Mad-King-Crocodile a younger well-built healer pressed his body up and moved on all fours like a crocodile. An elderly healer lay on his belly, bent his legs backwards, and clapped his feet to the beat as in the song's description, 'splashing with its hands and splashing with its feet'. Yet another healer would clap his hands to the drumbeat and dance by wriggling his shoulders rigorously as he glided forward on his back, capturing the image of the angularity of a crocodile's neck. During a short visit a year-and-a-half later the same shaman improvised his crocodile performance spectacularly. During the performance he gave his cloth to two assistants (*dibalak*) and ordered them to hold it up like a canopy over the central dance space. As he danced the crocodile by wriggling on his back, the two men undulated the cloth over him, providing a brilliant image of the spirit's sign: 'creating ripples of downstream currents, currents upstream'.

The Horse-of-Nine-Images takes on its own spectacular performance. For this performance the shaman wears a braid around his neck which has a total of nine horse puppets dangling from its ends. The shaman holds the ends of the braids as he sprints swiftly from side to side. Also prepared is a long brush representing a rider's crop, which after a time the shaman takes to whip his feet, waist and back in time with the beat. After a while his self-flagellation becomes more frenzied and he falls out of rhythm. The cracking sound of the crop as it lashes the shaman's body competes with the more rapid drumbeat. He is now the horse galloping with speed 'swift of hand and light of foot' as the 'sweat rises and decreases'. The shaman

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then stands on all fours (not on his knees) like a horse and an assistant then takes up the whipping and lashes him all over his body except for his head. Even women shamans are not spared the whipping and any assistant who softens the strikes will be encouraged by others to 'whip' the horse harder. The shaman then goes down onto his belly stretching both arms out sideways and the whipping continues until the shaman signals them to stop; that is, the shaman's *semanget* has calmed down and has stopped galloping, and the scenario of Horse-of-Nine-Images ends.

In the last scenario we see that the horse puppets further physicalise the spirit and serve as an extension of the shaman's dance-trancing body. Bird and animal spirits are usually represented in puppet form and when a shaman wants to sing a particular song, an assistant finds the corresponding puppet. The shaman holds the appropriate bird-puppet; if it is a bird such as King Eagle, the shaman stretches out the long plaited tail with one hand whilst calling on the spirit's name. The flimsiness and shining smoothness of the puppet's long tail gives the effect of gliding movement. The spirit's descending path is visualised through the puppet's form, first moving down the puppet's back, then its tail, and onwards to appear as a flashing image (*mayo*) before the shaman's inner-eye (*mato batin*) just prior to him dancing in circles of eight. White Mouse Deer as well as Mad-King-Crocodile usually have their own puppets in a healing session. The crocodile is represented by two puppets — one male and the other female — and placed in the bucket representing the cosmic flower-pool with smaller puppets representing fish. The quadruped Mouse Deer puppet is left standing near the bucket as the spirit drinks from its water. Also in the bucket is a whisk with a small bird on one of its strands representing the important bird-spirit *Bu'uk Kunik Butimbo Tasik* (Golden-Bird-Bailing-Water). The act of dipping the strands of the whisk into the flower pool exemplifies the bird scooping water with its beak and spraying it over its back, or in the words of the song 'bailing water from the lake'. Through songs and other word-sounds, kinaesthetics, and puppets the material reality of the non-physical spirit-dimension is physicalised as a performed simulacrum, which in turn indexes its presence to the people.

Fakery and performing credulity

The relationship between performance and fakery is very specific among the Sakai. *Dikei* is about knowledge and the presentation of knowledge, which is mainly carried out through performing art forms. Fakery is not about the authenticity of a cultural performance, but about the source of knowledge and experience of the performance as it is being carried out. Like all knowledge systems and their representations deception and fakery is always of concern. In ordinary healing, fakery of performance (no matter how artistically good it is) can be of concern to people as it could suggest that the shaman is not really healing. A good artistic performance does not mean that it is a performance involving the presence of spirits and obtaining medicine. For a *dikei* performance to be a true performance the shaman has to be communing with spirits. This means he must not only be able to enter the spirit-dimension but also see spirits as well as have a relationship with spirits. He must have at least one spirit-familiar (*gu'u*).[21] Simply being in the spirit-dimension and not seeing spirits or not having a relationship with them, is to be in an empty trance

21 Another term is *akuan*.

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state (*telan'o*). Such shamans are called *kemantat gilo asok* (shamans who are 'mad-of-smoke' and who are intoxicated by the atmosphere). No one can really know whether a shaman is really a 'nucleated shaman' (*kemantat to'eh*) and has a spirit familiar, and neither can anyone be certain that the shaman is seeing spirits at any given moment. Established shamans claim that they can tell whether a second shaman has a spirit-familiar or not when they *dikei* together. For the audience who are usually members of the same settlement, the only real sign is the shaman's success rate in healing which by hearsay attracts people to him.

There are also recognisable physical attributes when the shaman performs. Shamans with spirit-familiars are less aware of the physical environment when their awareness is shifted; their eyes are not only glassed over, but seem somewhat sunken in their sockets, and they sweat profusely. Their performance is one that reveals that they are 'not here'. Indeed the more perfect a verbal performance, for example, a song sung too beautifully, or a shaman comically interacting too frequently with the *didayak* and *dibalak*, the more it suggests that the shaman is faking the interaction with the spirits and is too concerned with entertaining the audience. In ordinary healing sessions shamans have therefore to balance their state of shifted awareness with their performance.

There is one type of healing act that is allowed to be 'staged'. This is the 'extraction of the illness' scenario. In healing sessions 'extracting the illness' is performed in a variety of ways. When the shaman shows the patient a dirt dot on his finger a *dibalak* or *didayak* might come close to look at it to confirm that it is the illness. People suspend their knowledge that the physical object cannot be the actual illness extracted, which within the spirit/*semanget* reality of *dikei* can only be an invisible spirit-type object. The assistants 'perform credulity' suggesting that the physical object is the disease extracted and thus through group consensus help physically realise what should be occurring to the patient in the *semanget* dimension. Performing credulity is taken to its extreme in the 'sucking out of the illness' scenario. The shaman, while awareness is shifted and focused on the *semanget* reality, first sucks the illness from the ailing part of the patient's body. Then while still on all fours (unable to stand up because of the weight of the disease in his mouth) rids it from his own body by spitting it out through the slats of the house floor as he expresses his revulsion with the loudest and most disgusting vomiting sounds. He acts this out a few times and the performed acts are a physicalisation of events in the *semanget* dimension. The shaman moves to the side and looks like he is obliviously hovering above everybody; he is then followed by two members of the audience (*dibalak*/*didayak*) who are close to the patient. They also suck the illness out at the same spot, and perform the same revolting vomiting sounds. The assistants take the 'performance of credulity' to the extreme as they rush out of the house to spit the 'muck' in the bush. These assistants are not in trance and they do not enter the spirit-dimension and neither do they have any contacts with the spirits. The efficacy of their act is obtained through its association with the shaman's original act, which is related to the spirit-dimension. The assistants take this performance very seriously as they deliberately act it out, aesthetically performing the repulsiveness of the extracted illness. Yet they are performing it, 'faking' that they are sucking the illness out and experiencing revulsion. Everybody present knows that they are performing, but suspend disbelief precisely because their act is

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associated with the shaman's original act. Real healing is going on, but they are faking their performance. By performing the real through the fake (real healing through a 'faked' performance), the assistance sensually makes credible to the patient through group consensus that this extraction of filth is occurring in the *semanget* dimension; and that is what is important.

Comedy: Where fakery is allowed for fun

As already mentioned, in an ordinary *dikei* healing session, comedy is kept to a minimum if it is performed at all, as it can offend the patient and confuse the frame of the ritual. Sakai shamans do not seem to use comedy as a therapeutic technique for the particular patient's enjoyment. When it does appear in an ordinary healing session it is usually a momentary lewd gesture carried out by the shaman or a smutty comment made by the assistant. In the smutty comment the assistant makes reference to the *ajo kemantat* genitalia and/or his sexual prowess and the Indic symbolism of phallic power is momentarily brought into the healing session through lewd inversion.

During a *kelonkap* when healing of patients is not carried out and many shamans are invited to perform, fakery is less of an issue as even non-practising *kemantat* who are known to be mad-of-smoke are allowed to *dikei* for fun. Theatrical comedy can emerge out of fakery when everyone knows that there is a performance frame in place which allows for the momentary breaking of the spirit-related sincerity of the performance.

When shamans are in *dikei* they are in two worlds. As long as a shaman focuses on the spirit/*semanget* dimension he is like a heroic raja riskily interacting with forces for the benefit of the community. When he responds to the spirit world he is a human representative in spirit form, an *ajo* among *ajo*, a lord among lords in a dimension of refined substances. But once he lessens the intensity of his shifted awareness and redirects his attention to the *didayak* and *dibalak*, and interacts with them, he does so from across a dimensional divide. In the human-dimension he is 'not all there'. He is in reverse, back to front, and somewhat like a naughty child seeking attention he mischievously prods those around him for a response and tempts people to take up the *dibalak*/*didayak* role to engage him. In the human world the *ajo kemantat* is a fake raja and thus becomes a 'fool' among humans, a parvenu raja, and is treated likewise.

Similar to a clown the clowning shaman is a symbolic type with whom the assistants can only interact in limited ways.[22] Once a person responds to the shaman's own comic agitation and antics they enter into a performative role of *didayak* or *dibalak* in which quick and witty comments must be made and scenarios of inversions are performed while at the same time keeping the shaman within the physical space of the ritual. As he clowns with the *dibalak*/*didayak* assistants he is teasingly referred to as *jo* (short for *ajo*).

Male shamans make lewd phallic gestures only to be slapped by their wives, and although the *dibalak*/*didayak* are usually more controlled with women-shamans,

22 Don Handelman, *Models and mirrors: Towards an anthropology of public events* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998); Bruce Kapferer, *A celebration of demons: Exorcism and the aesthetics of healing in Sri Lanka* (Oxford: Berg; Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1991).

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dibalak sometimes do flirtatiously dance with them in public (in front of their husbands). Jokes are made between older shamans who might be challenged by their younger *dibalak*. Mock martial art contests displaying exaggerated movements between shamans and non-shamans sometimes can lead to hilarity, particularly when the foolish parvenu *ajo* is forced to concede defeat. Children can tease shamans as well. In *kelonkap* (but not in ordinary healing sessions) all categorical relations can be thrown into reversible comic relief, and the comedy can range from lewd to a wittier, sophisticated repartee between *ajo* and the *dibalak*/*didayak*.

Regardless of whether the shaman is 'nucleated' or 'mad-of-smoke', both types are somewhat intoxicated by the atmosphere and having a relationship with spirits is not important for the comic act. Not here and not there, they are like fake shamans in the spirit-dimension, and 'nutty' fools who might think they are *rajas* in the human one. It is this play-off of the 'fakery' within the real (spirit-dimension) that is important for comedy in *kelonkap* and can stretch the proceedings well into the early hours of the morning.

Conclusion

Webb Keane has argued that the performance of ritual is the materialisation of religious phenomena.[23] In this article I have used the word physicalisation rather than materialisation. Materialisation suggests a spiritual/material dualism which may be incompatible with the indigenous ontology of the non-physical world. Some animic traditions may not conceive of spirits and their dimension as spiritual in contrast to a material dimension, but conceive of these realities as materially non-physical or something other. If a tradition posits a *spiritual* other, then materialisation or manifestation might be an appropriate characterisation. But when spirit is ontologically understood to be a 'material substance other' rather than spiritual, it would be inappropriate to refer to the simulatory performance of what is happening in the physical-dimension as being a materialisation of the invisible dimension. The spirit-dimension might ontologically be conceived as a material dimension that only has to be physicalised. Characterising the ontological process is important to understanding the nature of the performance. *Dikei* performing art physicalises the spirit-other within the immediate context of the ritual for others to moderately experience them. Here, performance is therefore a technique of physicalisation rather than materialisation or manifestation.

The performance of physicalising spirits entails a complex decontextualisation process starting first with the images which the shaman sees in a state of shifted awareness. Word-sound is the first level of external physicalisation. Sakai songs produce moving images of spirits through the extemporisation of poetic expressions that decontextualises them from their own dimension. Poetic expressions are further taken out of context and creatively brought into different juxtapositions within extemporised songs as well as dialogically serving as guidelines for the physicalisation of spirits through movement and dance.

23 Webb Keane, 'The objects of evidence: Anthropological approaches to the production of knowledge', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14 (2008): 110–27.

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The state of shifted awareness is usually referred to as 'a state of trance' and many authors have pointed out how this state is important for understanding Indonesian performing arts.[24] The word trance is too general a category though. In the indigenous category what we call 'the trance' is rooted in a complicated phenomenological understanding of personhood and awareness (consciousness) that allows for the induction of particular bodily states suitable for interaction with numinous beings.[25] A more phenomenological understanding of selfhood, that is, bodily awareness (including ideas and experiences of dreams) and its relationship to spirits as well as to the art form, must enter an understanding of the performing arts.

Kathy Foley made a distinction between performers who dance and performers (such as those on Java) who are danced.[26] The latter produce a trance that makes their bodies passive puppet receptacles for the numinous being. I would like to add another category of performer — those who 'dance with' or 'move with' (numinous beings). This 'dance or movement with' is what Sakai shamans physicalise when they (their *semanget*) 'travel with' (*jalat*) the spirit, and which is then performed as the visible dance when they 'play the spirit' (*bumain 'antu*).

Dikei provides not only drama but theatricality as it enters the realm of comedy. But as a performance it is a simulation of an event happening now in the spirit-dimension. It therefore still remains within the realm of the telic and for this reason the relationship between performance and shamanic fakery can always be an issue of concern. The more dramatic side of *dikei* is serious and relates to matters of illness, life and death as well as re-instituting an order in the cosmos that prevents negative permeations that can affect people's health and well-being. The more theatrical side of *dikei* relates to comedy. In comedy fakery of performance is allowed.

In this article I have suggested three types of fakery; 'fakery as deception', the 'real in the fake', and the 'fake in the real'. The first type of fakery is an epistemological as well as moral concern; in healing it is exemplified by the possibility of a feigned performance of spirit interaction and healing power. It is always the concern of people seeking healing; 'is the healer faking it'? The second type of 'fakery' is a simulatory performance associated with the shaman's own prior act from which it gains its own therapeutic force. This exaggerated performance by assistants who are not in the spirit-dimension promotes a 'performance of credulity' for which the knowledge that the performance is a performance (faked) is suspended so that the real ulterior motive can be carried out. Westerners have usually seen in such performances a form of fakery of the worst sort. This type of fakery is always vulnerable to charges of falsehood, which can in turn challenge the honesty of the performers and even the belief system on which the practice rests. But in an indigenous context 'performance of credulity' depends on a complicated matrix of contextual experience and frames of knowledge that are taken to be real. It is a technique of suggestive persuasion with the aim of generating consensus and belief for the reality it promotes.

24 Jane Belo, *Trance in Bali* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Margaret Kartomi, 'Music and trance in Java', *Ethnomusicology* 17, 2 (1973): 163–208.

25 Porath, 'Not to be aware anymore'.

26 Kathy Foley, 'The dancer and the danced: Trance dance and theatrical performance in West Java', *Asian Theatre Journal* 2, 1 (1985): 28–49.

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Andrew Lang was the first European author to recognise this.[27] In the third type, we have a situation of fakery within a context in which all questions about deception are transparent and any negative effects of deception are neutralised and rendered null. At this point one recognises the 'descending incongruity' (a term I take from Herbert Spencer)[28] of the 'fake' in relation to the backdrop of the phenomenally real.[29] In this context the knowing interlocutor is not threatened by 'fakery' and in fact feels superior to it, and can even play along with the false act assured by their knowledge of the faker's fallibility within the real. This 'fakery in the real' can lead to a play-off between the faker and the knowing interlocutor, which then frames the 'descending incongruity' as comedy. In *dikei*, shamans are comically fallible in the reality of the human dimension when they interact with humans (rather than spirits) across the dimensional divide; they are inverted *rajas* intoxicated by the context and thus 'clowning fools' for the moment the inter-dimensional interaction takes place.

The Sakais of Riau have utilised rather elaborate performative genres of song, dance and comedy to physicalise the presence of spirits and their dimension, and express the interactions with them during healing and reconstitution of body/house/cosmos relationships. In their graceful and dramatic dances of birds and other spirit-animals Sakai shamans also perform the very metaphoric notions of human well-being in their environment, through the physicalisation of spirits, medicine and cosmic order.

27 Andrew Lang, *The making of religion* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1898).

28 Herbert Spencer, 'The physiology of laughter', in Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, political and speculative* (New York: D. Appleton, 1864).

29 For a fascinating account of the use of incongruity, superiority and descending incongruity within the play of therapeutic comedy, see Bruce Kapferer, 'Entertaining demons: Comedy, interaction and meaning in a Sinhalese healing ritual', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 1 (1979): 108–52.

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