THE JAMA MAPUN has an extensive list of constellations, such that some star patterns do not even have English counterparts. Those that have are interpreted or seen differently, such as the Big Dipper which, to the Jama Mapun is Bobo, a fish-trap with a string tied to it. When many stars are seen in the Bobo constellation, it is a good sign for fishing. Meanwhile, two stars from the constellation Centaur is called Anak datu, as it is imagined as the two sons of a datu trying to spear a blowfish. Near it is the constellation Southern Cross, which to the locals represent the body of the blowfish (Bunta) being speared by the Anak datu. Orion's belt, meanwhile, is Batik or Balatik or the shaft of the spear-trap. The Batik, in turn, is seen as aimed at the constellation Mopo (pig) or Pleides in English. The Mopo, aside from being related to hunting, also signals the start of the planting season (at dawn, when the Mopo is at the three-o’clock position in the sky). Common in Southeast Asia, the Milky Way is seen as a snake or dragon. The North Star is Siliksil, which is used for navigating; the Morning Star, Kahabatan and the Evening Star, Bintang Gauk.

Among the agriculture-associated constellations, the Tanggong is the only pattern that does not resemble a plant. However, it is closely linked to their origin of rice planting myth which involves three personages – one male and two females traveling in a single line across the sky. Aside from the Tanggong, the Niyu-niyu which is a group of stars resembling a coconut palm (niyu) and Niyu-niyu punggul, which is seen as a crown of coconut leaves without a trunk, are constellations associated with planting (of coconuts). Meanwhile, the Tendak are three stars arranged in a triangle associated with sailing and wind prediction, since to the locals, it resembles a small walking fish found in swamps and mangroves. The Lambu-lambu, on the other hand, is a pattern named after the dolphin and is associated with wind prediction.

The Jama Mapun also has the Sangat bawi, or pig jaw, as the V-shape pattern resembles this. It is also associated with the Batik in a hunting legend. Lastly, they have the Kabaw (crab) which they imagine as the body and pincers of a crab.

Cyrlin B. Loza

JAMA MAPUN, CAGAYAN DE SULU ISLAND, TAWI-TAWI ISLAND GROUP PROVINCE, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. It is common for many people to use stars and constellations as guides when traveling or to mark seasons, but to the Jama Mapun of Cagayan de Sulu in Tawi-tawi, these are also linked to local folklore and major economic activities such as planting, fishing and hunting. The following documentation of Jama Mapun constellations is based on Eric Casiño’s Jama Mapun ethnecology: Economic and symbolic (of grains, winds and stars).