

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

---

## **Folk Catholicism and Pre-Spanish Religions in the Philippines**

Charles J-H Macdonald

*Philippine Studies* vol. 52, no. 1 (2004): 78–93

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

## Folk Catholicism and Pre-Spanish Religions in the Philippines

Charles J-H Macdonald

*Given the profound and sweeping influence of Christianity in the Philippines, what has survived from preconquest belief systems in the archipelago to the present? This paper's hypothesis is that a continuity is provided by the folk belief in divinities or spirits that are organized in structured pantheons. Saints in Philippine folk Catholicism form such a pantheon and can be seen as a reproduction of previous pantheons of diwata. This argument is premised on the idea that folk Catholicism tended and still tends toward a kind of polytheism. The paper suggests, however, that the real contribution of Catholicism is the introduction of a code of ethics. The argument here provokes the questions: Who were the agents of christianization? Did they tolerate, or even deliberately propagate, a polytheistic version of Christianity?*

*KEYWORDS: polytheism, paganism, Christianity, pre-Spanish Philippines, missionaries*

Of all the countries in Asia, the Philippines is the one where Christianity counts the most, not only for the sheer number of its faithful but also for social and cultural reasons. Whenever asked by someone, who does not know much about the Philippines, the question "What is Philippine culture?," I always answer "Christianity."

In spite of Christianity's overwhelming importance and pervasive influence in the Filipino psyche, there are lingering questions about what in the national identity remains from a pre-Spanish, pre-Christian past and, particularly, from old preconquest belief systems. Were old reli-

gious ideas and beliefs systems entirely eradicated by the intolerant zeal and proselytizing ardor of the early missionaries? Or did some of it persist and remain in some form or other?

### **Catholicism and Polytheism**

When we think of the opposition between Christianity and “paganism”—if we can use this word with enough ironical caution—we are confronted with an apparently insuperable disparity, a gap so wide that nothing seems capable of bridging it. In its essentially monotheistic definition, Catholicism (more generally, Christianity) must have eradicated previous beliefs in a variety of supernatural beings, gods, or spirits. The fundamentally monotheistic nature of the religion brought by Spain must have clashed with the idea of divinity in its pluralistic form—that is, its polytheistic nature—among the inhabitants of the archipelago. From other points of view as well—like rituals involving trance or animal sacrifices conducted by local priests or priestesses—nothing could seem farther apart than these two religious worlds.

In this essay, which I present with a certain boldness and irreverence since I am neither a theologian nor an historian, I intend to make some remarks on Christian monotheism as opposed to polytheism, and on folk Catholicism as opposed to pre- or non-Christian beliefs. The first point is that, in its Mediterranean folk version, Catholicism, as Max Weber said (1963, 138), tends toward a polytheistic kind of belief system. My second assertion is that the Spanish missionaries, who were the real active agents of conversion in the countryside, taught or shared with their converts their own brand of Spanish peasant folk Catholicism. In many ways, their beliefs (including the idea of God) were not so different from those of the people they were indoctrinating in the new faith. Others have argued, myself included, that a somewhat monotheistic concept was present in some of the native religions (Scott 1969, 142; Bernad 1972, 128; Macdonald 1993, 17). The idea of a supreme being, presiding over the universe and above other deities or spirits, was very much part of some pre-Spanish belief systems. Conversely, with a well-developed angelology, demonology, and cult of the saints, Catholicism had developed its own brand of polytheism. In

other words, local polytheistic religions with a belief in a supreme deity, on the one hand, and a monotheistic religion including many lively cults to minor deities, on the other hand, could readily agree with each other.

As an anthropologist, let me define polytheism thus: a belief system in a number of clearly identified supernatural beings having their own characteristics, names, and personalities; and having some effect or influence on human affairs; and a religious system that is also characterized by specific cults or rituals for those various supernatural beings. From an anthropological perspective, the cult of the saints fits the definition of a polytheistic religion.

### **Absence of Ethics in Preconquest Beliefs**

Christianity differed from indigenous religions from an entirely different perspective altogether. Probably because we have been so used to see ethics and a moral code of conduct expressed in religious idiom, we have not paid enough attention to the fact that ethics was essentially of a nonreligious nature. People obey commandments like “Thou shall not kill thy neighbor” because they are members of human communities, and human evolution required collective behavior to be ordered in such a way as to permit better communication, cooperation, and survival. My acquaintance with one such non-Christian (or non-Muslim) religion supports the idea that pre-Spanish religions in the Philippines, as elsewhere, were not primarily interested in ethics. Interpersonal codes of conduct were not part or, at least, not an essential part of religion. People were ethical beings and behaved accordingly, but not because they believed in particular spirits or deities, and practiced trance, séances, possession, animal sacrifices, or any other form of ritual activity.

Let me clarify the above statement, since it can be argued differently and since some facts might seem to support an opposite view of the situation. For instance, the indigenous community whose religious ideas I have studied at length—the Palawan people living in the southern part of Palawan island—see the major crime, incest, as punished by supernatural beings who would cause the entire community to suffer from cataclysmic sanctions, floods, and the like. A ceremony called *panggaris*,

intended to cleanse the earth, is performed annually in a section of this ethnic group (Macdonald 1997). They quote ancestors and the Supreme Being, Ampuq (meaning the Lord, the Master), when they outline a course of action, and they say that ancestors (or the dead) and Ampuq approve or disapprove of certain human acts. They also refer to the afterlife destiny of people who have committed crimes or sins, and they say they undergo punishment in a kind of hell.<sup>1</sup> In spite of such practices, they, like the Visayans described by Alcina (Bernad 1972, 131), pay very little attention to the afterlife. Eschatology is of little significance to them and behavior, in general, is dominated by rules that have no religious connotations. Let me give an example.

One of the most important rules in this society is to respect one's elders and particularly those who are one's parents and parents-in-law. As a sign of respect, their personal names should not be uttered by their children or children-in-law. If one pronounces the forbidden name, that of one's parents-in-law, for instance, one is afflicted by a swelling of the stomach that can be lethal. This is called *kebusung*. Now this could be seen as a typically supernatural intervention of some ethics-controlling, morality-conscious deity, and therefore part of a religious framework. Actually, it is not the case. When asked, informants say the kebusung-induced affliction comes from the parent-in-law himself, not from any supernatural entity. I take this as supporting the view that the Palawan people hold a secular—and not religion-based—morality and code of ethics. One could say that, in such a case, ethics are justified by societal immanence, not by any transcendental principle. Another example would be the marriage ceremony, a completely secular affair among the Palawan people, which includes a lengthy discussion led by specialists in customary law. It is a contract, not a sacrament, as the Christians would have it.

Catholicism brought many new ideas and concepts: the sacraments, confessions, penance, the idea of original sin, and the idea of salvation. These were all new. These put religious meaning to activities or concerns that had no previous religious implications. If I trust my observation of a "pagan people" for the past thirty years, I believe it is wrong to say that "the pagan religion permeated all phases of life" (Phelan 1959, 72). Generalizations of this kind proceed, firstly, from an

oversimplified view of a great variety of belief systems and, secondly, from an ethnocentric preconception. In world religions, like Islam and Christianity, all or most aspects of life, especially ethics and law, relate to religious concepts. But in many polytheistic belief systems, the supernatural is confined to limited sectors of human concern, like health and sickness, renewal of life energy, and success in one's productive endeavors.

What Christianity brought to the Philippines was a religious code of ethics, an entirely nonsecular way to look at the good versus the bad, a new concept of evil, and an ideology of salvation. These represented, in my view, what was new and completely different from the previous belief system. Once apprised of this, the Filipinos in a real sense "appropriated" the Christian message and used it to suit their pleas for justice and freedom. This observation has not escaped historians like Iletto (1979) who has demonstrated that a theory of mass social action was derived from a reading of the Bible. The story of Christ, as depicted in the Pasyon play, was used to define a certain type of action in the world—revolutionary action. My point is that pre-Christian religions were not interested in defining human or social action, that is, ethics. Preconquest belief systems were basically interested in maintaining life, gaining prosperity and, above all, avoiding sickness through an exchange system with supernatural beings, or by placating earthly forces as in the panggaris ceremony mentioned earlier. This goal was achieved through various symbolic means, through rituals and ceremonies, offerings, sacrifices, etc., rather than by a display of personal good behavior. The involvement of preconquest religions with sickness and healing was crucial; thus, aspects of Catholicism that reminded people of healing ceremonies—especially the rituals using water, ointments, and the like—elicited an immediate interest (Phelan 1959, 55).

### **Survival, Syncretism, and Transformative Continuity**

When we speak of religious transformation—of the survival of old elements in modern forms, of syncretism, of superstitions as opposed to the true faith—what are we talking about? Let me outline briefly

some basic patterns in which religious forms can be combined, can survive, or transform themselves.

The first possibility is for two different belief systems to coexist, openly or secretly. As the Spanish missionaries did not tolerate any open expression of “pagan” faith, all forms of pre-Christian rituals were suppressed. Maybe in the early phases, at the end of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth century, some survived surreptitiously, in the manner of clandestine rituals conducted by early Christians in Rome or by Japanese Christians after the sixteenth century. Old religious forms, however, did not survive in this manner for long or to any great extent. The other way for two or more religions to coexist is to tolerate each other and even complement each other as is the case generally in East Asia, with Buddhism and Shinto in Japan, or Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in China. As we know, of course, the Catholic Church could not tolerate such a state of affairs.

The other possibility is syncretism, a term covering different phenomena. Think of this possibility: elements of religious system A had merged into religious system B. Similarly, we could theorize it as the survival of ancient ideas in the guise of so-called superstitions—peripheral beliefs in such things as spirits, ghosts, *aswang*, and creatures of a “lower mythology.” To a certain extent, this is the case with folk Catholicism, but it is not necessarily the major form of syncretism and survival. Another type of syncretism is shown by new sects or religions—like Cao Dai or millenarian movements—which combine elements from two or more religions into a new cult. The New Jerusalem or Ciudad Mística sects could probably fit, more or less, this type of syncretism (Pesigan 1992).

More important is “transformative continuity,” which is accomplished by using the same belief structure within a new framework or by simply transposing a preexisting structure into a new idiom. This is what could have happened with the cult of the saints in folk Catholicism. It could have been a simple and straightforward transposition of the polytheistic structure of native belief systems into the polytheistic structure of folk Christianity. Such a process may or may not result in a declaration of independence on the part of the institution itself, as

was the case with the Iglesia ni Cristo and the Aglipayan Church (Steinberg 1994, 83–84, 93–94).

Religious transformation and a mixing of various elements in Philippine folk Catholicism, in essence, did fit the pattern of transformative continuity. Elements that were pre-Christian and similar in structure to the new religion were the basis for a Filipinization of Catholicism, as much or even more than a simple survival of peripheral and heretical elements.

### **Pre-Christian Religious Belief Systems**

In a comprehensive and well-documented study of pre-Christian native religions, using major sources of information and early witnesses like Loarca, Chirino and others, W. H. Scott said of Loarca's description of the Tagal people's ancient religion that it held a striking resemblance to present-day folk Catholicism (Scott 1994, 233). The Tagal had a concept of a supreme God creator of the world (Bathala) who could be petitioned only through intermediaries, lesser gods or spirits (*anito*), or ancestors who were worshiped in the form of idols. This system indeed is similar in structure to a Supreme God surrounded by saints, angels, and archangels, and organized into a pantheon of lesser divinities, some being separately worshiped as in the cult of patron saints. The indigenous cults themselves were very different from those of Catholicism, since these were based on trance and spirit possession. The religious specialists called *katulunan* were both mediums and healers. The prevailing belief system among the sixteenth-century Visayans is somewhat similarly described. Above a host of spiritual beings called *diyata* was a Godhead, creator of the world. The ritual specialists (*babaylan*) were both men and women conducting séances, during which possession and trance took place.

Chirino, Loarca, Alcina, and others depicted beliefs and practices strikingly similar to those that can still be witnessed today in some remote parts of the archipelago. The Palawan people, with their great variety of religious forms of expression, are probably offering us a glimpse of what then were the many different belief systems of prequest religions in the central part of the archipelago (see

Macdonald 1973, 1974, 1979, 1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1997, and forthcoming). Similarly, links between theodicy, eschatology, and ethics were not firmly established.

To what extent can we rely on present-day ethnography to interpret sixteenth- or seventeenth-century belief and ritual systems? Clearly, such belief and ritual systems must have changed and evolved through time. However, what we learn from early missionaries and chronicles seems to indicate that important similarities exist between the old and modern forms of indigenous religions. Moreover, some of the ideas and notions that were present among indigenous belief systems could prove adequate to interpret the teaching of the missionaries. I shall give two examples.

Among the many descriptions of early forms of religious life in the Philippine islands, one is from the late sixteenth century (Blair and Robertson 1903, 164). Entitled "Relation of the Conquest of the Island of Luzon," the author of the document provides us with a few details of a ritual feast (*manganito*) dedicated to Batala and diwata ("Diobata" in the original). The elements present in this ritual are: a communal meal, offerings of food and "wine" to an idol, prayers, and the presence of a baylan. The whole ceremony is described as a "drunken revel" that lasts "seven or eight days." Another element is interesting. It is described thus: "In the midst of the feast . . . they put the idol called Batala and certain aged women who are considered as priestesses, and some aged Indians . . ." (ibid., 164). Of course, this is not a terribly accurate and complete ethnographic description, but for someone who has witnessed many contemporary Palawan rituals, this sounds extraordinarily familiar. Except for the "idol" (a wooden image?) and the "aged Indians," every aspect mentioned in this document applies to the *sinsin* ceremonies I have described elsewhere (Macdonald 1992). In the Punang-Irarey area (now in the municipality of Española in southern Palawan), large ceremonies are conducted by female specialists. These rituals are meant to bring prosperity, health, and peace to the community. These ceremonies are staged in two cycles of five months and five years, respectively. They are more specifically meant as an initiation or apprenticeship, during which a young woman learns the "art" of a female ritual specialist (*ugan*). This expertise encompasses a large

repertory of chants, melodies, and dances. The performer is an artist and her performance is judged according to aesthetic criteria. In a literal sense, the main performer (the novice) and the choir of “aged female priestesses” are placed at center stage, similar to what the sixteenth-century chronicler had described. As the female specialists chant and conduct the ritual, following a complex and lengthy liturgy, everybody shares in the rice-wine contained in big jars; unquestionably, the whole affair is—from the male point of view, at least—a “drunken revel” lasting for several days and nights.

On the pantheon of divinities worshiped during this ritual cycle, it can be said that the entire ceremonial cycle is structured around the idea that individual divinities visit the human community. Each section of the cycle is dedicated to a divinity or group of divinities. There are twenty-one major divinities (*diwata*)—each has a personal name and individual attributes in dress, behavior, character, and the like. These divinities are accompanied by thirty-four minor characters (*lumelsa*), described as “servants” or “companions” of the *diwata*. Thus, the pantheon of divinities, in this case, is highly structured; these figures are not vague entities, nature spirits, or ancestors. Like the Catholic saints, they have clearly defined personalities, with names and biographies.

My second example comes from the upland area near Brooke’s Point (not in Punang), another section of the same culture. In the early 1970s, one of my informants had been baptized and exposed to Christian teachings. Not a convinced convert however, he said that the Palawans are quite familiar with a figure like Jesus Christ and that it matched the vernacular category of *tungkul*. Such a figure could be glossed as a “super shaman,” a human being of inordinate powers, accomplishing miracles and extraordinary feats, able to contact divinities and act as an intercessor between divinities, *diwata*, and humans. Such a shaman would not die in an ordinary manner, but “disappear” and continue to live at a higher level of the cosmos, helping people to petition the *diwata*, and the supreme spirit, *Ampuq*. To cast Jesus Christ in the role of a *tungkul* is not so much off the mark as far as a layman’s grasp of theology is concerned. It would not be too surprising if the Visayan people, whom Alcina observed, held a similar view.

To a certain extent, indigenous concepts were used to interpret and assimilate Christian notions, not just because indigenous concepts were mistakenly applied to Christian notions, but because there was a similarity in structure between some Christian beliefs and some indigenous beliefs. This similarity did not only concern the existence of a supreme being, thus presumably predisposing early Filipinos to adhere to monotheism, but also a belief in a variety of deities and supernatural beings, thus comforting the converts in the soundness of their polytheistic creed.

### **Missionaries and the Survival of Preconquest Beliefs**

If we follow Onofre D. Corpuz, the history of colonization in the Philippines is characterized by the role of the *doctrina* (Corpuz 1989, 161). The result of this situation was that the teaching of the Christian faith was always, with a few exceptions at the end of the eighteenth century, left to members of regular orders. As the *doctrina* was meant to be a community of pagans being indoctrinated, not a parish of confirmed Christians, evangelization was an ongoing process, a never-ending battle against paganism, in the spirit defined by the phrase “en viva conquista espiritual” (Phelan 1959, 34). The regular clergy, being independent from the Church hierarchy and largely trespassing over civil administration, wielded an enormous role in the life of the masses. Whether the alleged tyranny of the regular clergy was an established fact or not, the relationship that existed between the friars and the converts must have been a determining factor because it was reaching into many areas of the daily life of the latter. If the relationship between friars and converts was close, it meant also that the identity of the friars was a determining factor in shaping the beliefs of those whom they were teaching. Who then were these missionaries?

It is difficult to generalize and make all friars and members of the regular clergy fit into one type. Early missionaries, like Francisco Blancas de San Jose, were unquestionably scholars and theologians of the highest order. But the next waves of friars and missionaries, who came mostly from monasteries in Spain, were probably simple peasants or

people with no higher education (Phelan 1959, 42). Also missionaries should be qualified according to the religious corporations to which they belonged. The teaching of the Augustinians differed from that of the Jesuits. One should also include the *fiscales* in the picture, especially for the seventeenth century; they came from Mexico and also bore heavily on the minds of the people (Phelan 1959, 59).

In most cases, the missionaries were probably not learned theologians. Besides the manuals and instructions, which they used for catechism and confessions, they brought with them—most certainly, they shared these with their parishioners—their own brand of folk Christianity, including the veneration of the saints, and a host of “superstitions” (in ghosts, evil spirits, and the like). The folk beliefs of missionaries probably matched some native beliefs, thus bringing the two religious worlds closer together. The Christian doctrine that was taught was reduced to its essential elements as these were spelled out in the *Doctrina*. These elements were prayers, a list of articles of faith, and prescriptions regarding morality, most notably, the Ten Commandments. The bulk of the doctrinal teaching was of an ethical character. It left out a great many aspects and beliefs in supernatural things such as the cult of the saints, a wide area where the friars and the ordinary people could feel at home with each other’s representations.

Let me outline the situation. First, there was a great deal of constraints; the converts were closely monitored so that they could not continue with their old ways. They had to conform to what the missionaries taught were acceptable forms of worship. Second, the teaching of the missionaries concerned essentially a field that was of little concern to pre-Christian religious beliefs, i.e., ethics. Third, the Spanish and Mexican missionaries brought with them a host of beliefs that were polytheistic in their structure and entirely congenial to the natives’ belief systems. As a result, cults that respected customs of Hispanic Catholicism—thus, acceptable to Catholic priests, such as the cult of the saints or funerary rituals—could prosper with the blessing of the clergy, while retaining their polytheistic structure and fulfilling pre-Christian religious needs, which were quite simple and basically concerned with prosperity and health. Therefore, the question of “survival” of old non-Christian elements in folk Catholicism has to be

turned around. A number of elements in Spanish Catholicism were and still are to some extent pre-Christian.

Evidence gathered by anthropologists today shows this to be the case in the most conspicuous aspects of folk Catholic devotions. Zialcita (1998, 287–88) shows how saints are worshiped as if they were ancestors, thus displaying a pattern of transformative continuity between old religious rituals and present-day Catholicism. Cannell (1999, 172–82) describes aspects of the cult of the “Dead Christ”—Amang Hinulid of Bicol—that display characteristics of a purely “polytheistic” belief system. In this cult, the object of veneration is a statue, a wooden image endowed with a life of its own. Just as the Black Nazarene of Quiapo is not just any other representation of Christ but a particular entity and personality with its own worshippers, so is the Amang Hinulid of Bicol an individual entity with an existence of its own. It is a saint, but more powerful than the others, a super *santo*. Also in Bicol, santos (that is, individual wooden figures of saints) become members of kinship groups and, as such, own land! This illustrates polytheism, in which individual wooden idols proliferate and are organized hierarchically at various levels of the community—from the family to the town, lesser santos at a lower social-structural level, bigger santos, like the Amang Hinulid, at the higher social-structural level. Many preconquest belief systems were organized along the same pattern.

Mount Banahaw and the cult of national heroes provide another interesting case. Since it has been studied in historical perspective (see Iletto 1979) and by anthropologists (Pesigan 1992, 2000), and since we have many descriptions of Mount Banahaw (see Gorospe 1992), I will dwell on this question briefly. One of the most important local sects in Mount Banahaw, Ciudad Mística, says that the sacred mountain is the abode of the spirits of national heroes: Rizal, Bonifacio, and others who are being worshiped by the members of the sect. Cults are organized to honor these new saints, which are explicitly defined as the Filipino substitutes for foreign saints previously imposed by the Catholic Church (Gorospe 1992, 54).

My point is this: the pantheon of national heroes on which these new cults are being based is structurally identical to the previous pantheon of saints, which probably had a similar structure as the

pre-Spanish pantheons of anitos and diwata. This polytheistic aspect of folk religion can thus be seen as a continuum from preconquest belief systems to present-day sectarian movements. It is the structure of the belief system—a ranked set of supernatural beings which can function as a celestial blueprint of society itself—that has endured, with name changes and under various disguises, since the beginning of Christianity in the Philippines.

### **Divinities as Opposed to Nature Spirits**

A common misconception on indigenous belief systems is that they consist of an indiscriminate worshiping of nature spirits and forces, and of various other anthropomorphic natural phenomena, such as the sun and moon, the thunder, and similar objects. This misconception is promoted by the use of a vague and potentially misleading term, “animism.”<sup>2</sup> Ancient Filipinos are often described as worshiping spirits of ancestors together with nature spirits. Such a view ignores the fact that pre- and non-Christian religions were and are based on firmly organized pantheons of often clearly identified supernatural beings, which are not at all vague notions coming from the perceived natural forces, but are clearly identified figures, with names and identities, to which specific or nonspecific functions are attached. The main cults were probably not essentially addressing nature spirits (who were placated and petitioned by various other means, including invocations, offerings, and the like) but sets of humanlike divinities largely independent of natural forces.

Two examples from Palawan ethnography easily come to mind. In the central highland area, around Brooke’s Point, people believe in the existence of diwata who live at various levels of the cosmic structure (Macdonald 1993). These celestial beings act as intercessors between humans and the highest divinities. They are supplemented at a lower level by a category of spirits living on mountaintops. The identity of these divinities and spirits is not always made clear. Some appear as characters playing major roles in chanted epics, some as super shamans (*tungkul*); but they are individual spirits either from divine or human

origin, and are ranked in a spiritual and cosmic structure. They are not conceptual by-products of natural phenomena.

The individual identity of spirits, worshiped in an elaborate ceremonial cycle, is even more developed among the Palawan people in the Punang-Irarey area, which we have examined above (see also Macdonald 1990). Each of these spirits or divinities has distinctive characteristics. Some are married; others have brothers and sisters. Each has its own dress and accoutrement. Although some are said to live in the mountains and others on islands off the coast, in no way are they functionally identified either with the mountains or the sea. The whole point of ceremonies dedicated to these spirits or divinities is to invite them and ask for their protection.

In the first example, we see a vertical organization of spirits; in the other, we have a population of genii living at the same level as the humans. But, in both examples, we see pantheons of humanlike divinities, ranked and organized in some fashion. This has nothing to do with an unstructured collection of nature spirits. It is, in more ways than one, quite similar to legions of angels, archangels, and saints—all submitting to one higher divinity, the creator of all things. The notion of a pantheon of subordinate divinities—sometimes of human origin—was proposed by Christianity to people who were accustomed to recognize and worship the same kind of pantheons.

## Notes

1. Actually, the word is *narka* and of Sanskrit origin. I believe it is clearly one of the influences of Islam.

2. The word “animism” became current in anthropological writings after the British anthropologist E. B. Tylor introduced it in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871). The word comes from the Latin *anima* meaning “soul.” Tylor’s theory was that the most primitive forms of religion included a basic belief in a spiritual principle inherent in humans. From there evolved all other forms of religious beliefs, including those present in more developed polytheistic creeds. Many anthropologists today use the word “animism” but discard its Tylorian evolutionist implications and are careful to explicitly define this notion (see, for instance, Benjamin 1979, 9–11). However, some do not take such precautions and use it in a loose sense, referring to any tribal belief system, not belonging to a world religion, and

based on the belief in a host of spirits (human and ancestors spirits, nature spirits, animal spirits, spirits of places and things). For instance, one can find this sort of statement: "Filipinos were mostly *animistic* in their religious beliefs and practices prior to Spanish intervention. In most areas they revered the departed spirits of their ancestors through ritual offerings, and also believed in a variety of nature spirits" (S. Russell n.d.).

## References

- Barton, Roy Franklin. 1946. The religion of the Ifugaos. *American Anthropologist New Series*. Vol. 48, no. 2. Memoir Series No. 65.
- Benjamin, Geoffrey. 1979. Indigenous religious systems of the Malay peninsula. In *The imagination of reality*, ed. A. L. Becker and A. A. Yengoyan, 9–27. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing.
- Bernad, Miguel A., S.J. 1972. *The christianization of the Philippines: Problems and perspectives*. Manila: The Filipiniana Book Guild.
- Blair, Emma Helen and James Alexander Robertson, eds. 1903. *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898*. Vol. 3. Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Co.
- Cannell, Fenella. 1999. *Power and intimacy in the Christian Philippines*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Corpuz, Onofre D. 1989. *The roots of the Filipino nation*. 2 vols. Quezon City: Aklahi Foundation.
- Cushner, Nicholas P. 1971. *Spain in the Philippines: From conquest to revolution*. Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila.
- Gorospe, Vitaliano R., S.J. 1992. *Banahaw: Conversations with a pilgrim to the power mountain*. Makati City: Bookmark.
- Ileto, Reynaldo C. 1979. *Pasyon and revolution: Popular movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Macdonald, Charles J-H. 1973. De quelques manifestations chamanistiques à Palawan. *ASEMI* 4 (3): 11–18.
- . 1974. Mythes de création Palawan: Analyse structurale d'un mythe et de ses rapports avec le chamanisme. *Archipel* 8: 91–118.
- . 1979. Un mythe Palawan: Lali et le chemin du ciel. *ASEMI* 10 (2–4): 59–85.
- . 1987. Le champ, le ciel, la mer et la maison. *De la voûte céleste au terroir, et du jardin au foyer, mosaïque sociographique*, 65–79. Paris: Editions de l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.
- . 1988a. *L'éloignement du ciel: Invention et mémoire des mythes chez les Palawan du sud des Philippines*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

- . 1988b. Bons et mauvais coups de Tonnerre. *L'Homme* 28 (106–7): 58–74.
- . 1990. *Sinsin*, le théâtre des génies. Paris: Editions du CNRS.
- . 1992. Invoking the spirits in Palawan: Ethnography and pragmatics. In *Sociolinguistics today: International perspectives*, ed. K. Bolton and H. Kwok, 244–60. London and New York: Routledge.
- . 1993. Philosophes ou artistes? Comparaison des formes rituelles à Palawan. *L'Homme* 125 (1): 7–29.
- . 1997. Cleansing the earth: The *panggaris* ceremony in Kulbi-Kanipaqaan, southern Palawan. *Philippine Studies* 45:408–22.
- . n.d. The spiritual world of the Kulbi people. *Uncultural behavior: An anthropological investigation on suicide*. Forthcoming.
- Phelan, John L. 1959. *The hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish aims and Filipino responses, 1565–1700*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Pesigan, Guillermo. 1992. *Dulang-buhay ng bundok: Banabaw: Karanasan ng Ciudad Mistica*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines.
- . 2000. Women folk religious leaders: Discourse on salvation and development. In *Old ties and new solidarities*, ed. C. Macdonald and G. Pesigan, 146–58. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Rafael, Vicente L. 1993. *Contracting colonialism: Translation and Christian conversion in Tagalog society under early Spanish rule*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Russell, Susan. n.d. Christianity in the Philippines. <http://www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/christianity.htm>. Consulted March 2004.
- Scott, William Henry. 1969. *On the Cordillera: A look at the peoples and cultures of the Mountain Province*. Manila: MCS Enterprises.
- . 1994. *Barangay: Sixteenth-century Philippine culture and society*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Steinberg, David Joel. 1994. *The Philippines: A singular and a plural place*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Weber, Max. 1963. *The sociology of religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Zialcita, Fernando N. 1986. Popular interpretations of the passion of Christ. *Philippine Sociological Review* 34:56–62.
- . 1998. Survivances préchrétiennes dans le culte de la Sainte Sépulture aux Philippines. *Dialogue France-Insulinde*. In *Yayason ober Indonesia*, ed. C. Pelras. Jakarta: CNRS-LASEMA.