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Sumpong **Spirit Beliefs, Murder, and Religious Change among Eighteenth- Century Aeta and Ilongot in Eastern Central Luzon**

In common usage and in psychology *sumpong* is considered a deviant and irrational behavior. This article makes sense of *sumpong* by putting it in the historical context of animism, specifically that of the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot of eastern Central Luzon. As a form of perception, feeling, and action, *sumpong* was temporally flat since past, present, and future did not succeed one another in linear fashion. Based on historical dictionaries and usage, this article explores the role of *sumpong* as an affective and culturally intelligible way of understanding and acting in the animist world as seen in cases of murder and religious change.

KEYWORDS: ANIMISM • EMOTIONS • HEADHUNTING • CHRISTIANITY • CONVERSION

The Tagalog word *sumpong* is difficult to translate to English. Tagalog–English dictionaries usually translate it either as being moody (Pinoy Dictionary [n.d.]; Santos and Santos 2001, 798; Tagalog Dictionary [n.d.]), volatile or capricious (Pinoy Dictionary [n.d.]), or having a temper or tantrum (*Pocket Filipino dictionary* 2002, 38). *Sumpong* is also translated as a fit in the sense of “a sudden, sharp attack of illness” (Tagalog Dictionary [n.d.]) or “an attack of intense pain” (Santos and Santos 2001, 69) or “a fit of coughing” (ibid., 445). It is also described as a “mild mania” (Pinoy Dictionary [n.d.]). *Sumpong* implies a sudden change of behavior or well-being and encompasses a wide range of conditions from pain and illness to frustration and insanity (Almario 2001, 845). The numerous definitions found in twenty-first-century dictionaries show the richness of the word yet still convey a similar underlying idea of ill-being.

This article takes a historical approach in describing *sumpong* through a study of Spanish colonial dictionaries and actual usage of the word in the context of the early–eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot communities, particularly their spirit beliefs. The first section of the article tackles present-day definitions that ascribe irrationality to *sumpong*, while the second and third present the various scholarly attempts to overcome the typical dismissiveness toward the seemingly irrational. The fourth section elaborates on the theoretical framework of the article. The fifth section explores how Spanish colonial dictionaries defined *sumpong* in ways that present-day definitions fail to capture. The sixth section explains how spirit beliefs could be tied to *sumpong* and its concomitant change of mind or behavior. The seventh section discusses how emotions like fear and anger could link *sumpong* and murder. The eighth section explores how *sumpong* in the form of dreams and visions might be regarded as a religious experience that led to Christian conversion and apostasy among the animist communities in eastern Central Luzon.

***Sumpong* in Philippine Psychology**

The only in-depth study of *sumpong* that I have found has been in the field of psychology since *sumpong* is usually classified as a distinctly Filipino personality trait or behavior. As part of the movement for the indigenization of psychology (Enriquez 1977; Mataragnon 1979), Rita Mataragnon (1977, 49) studied *sumpong*, which she defined as a “temporary and spontaneous

but often recurring and unexplainable deviation from what the norm is for an individual, object, or event.” In her very broad definition *sumpong* applied not only to persons but also to objects and events. For example, television sets and calculators that function erratically or the weather that changes from rainy to sunny in a heartbeat can be said to be undergoing *sumpong* (ibid., 46).

Applied to persons, Mataragnon’s (ibid., 46–48) definition can be broken down into its essential characteristics. First, *sumpong* is a deviation. A normally stingy person suddenly turning generous is considered to have a bout of *sumpong*. Second, *sumpong* is temporary and recurring; hence, the use of the words “fit” and “tantrum” to convey its meaning. Third, *sumpong* is unexplainable. In contrast to *tampo* (conveyed usually in the withdrawal of affection or cheerfulness), which according to Mataragnon (ibid., 47) has an immediate cause, *sumpong* is vague, and its cause is difficult to pinpoint. Fourth, *sumpong* involves irrelevant behavior. In the same way that a blurry television screen refuses to improve despite the appropriate tinkering, persons suffering from *sumpong* also manifest unexpected reactions that deviate from what is expected of them in particular situations. Fifth, *sumpong* is nondeliberate—it “just happens” (ibid., 48). Since the immediate cause of a *sumpong* is not very clear, a person who suddenly changes behavior temporarily is simply not himself or herself. The irrational aspect of *sumpong* suggests that the resulting behavior and actions are not premeditated at all.

Even though Mataragnon (ibid., 50–53) recognized *sumpong* as irrational and illogical, she sought to give it a psychological explanation. *Sumpong*, she said, is a coping strategy in a hostile environment, which releases and relieves tension effectively because it does not deliberately direct aggression to anyone or anything. For persons with a low tolerance level and no outlet to express aggression, *sumpong* is a less direct but acceptable way of channeling aggression (ibid., 52). As mentioned above, there is minimal control or deliberate thought in *sumpong*, so it is considered a trivial behavior that does not warrant any significant reaction from others. Nevertheless, by considering *sumpong* as a coping mechanism, Mataragnon undermined part of her original definition of *sumpong* as irrational and unexplainable.

A weakness in the dictionary definitions and the psychological analysis of *sumpong* is the neglect of a lesser-known but more formal use of the word, which is to find or encounter something. The chorus of the popular Tagalog song “Tanging Yaman,” which begins with the lines “Ikaw

ang aking tanging yaman / Na 'di lubusang masumpungan" (You are my special treasure / That cannot be fully found) is a famous example of this meaning of sumpong. Although this article is not based on a systematic study of all twenty-first-century dictionaries, it is interesting to note that, of the five I consulted, only two define sumpong as an encounter of something. Of these two dictionaries, one lists "to stumble at" and "to come upon by chance" (Pinoy Dictionary [n.d.]), and the other recognizes "an accidental finding or discovery" (Vicassan's 2009, 587) as valid meanings of sumpong. The other dictionaries mentioned above and Mataragnon's psychological analysis have conveniently overlooked this other definition and made the word appear simpler and less problematic than it really is. Mataragnon conveniently overlooked the second definition of sumpong found in the dictionary she used, that of Jose Villa Panganiban's (1972, 922), which states "to find something accidentally" as one meaning. Sumpung in the sense of an encounter or a discovery of something does not fit easily with the word's more popular meanings since it does not denote a sudden, unexplainable change in behavior.

Sumpung is thus reduced to irrationality, which to a certain extent makes sense since that is its most common use today. Yet this definition also unfairly corners the word to a one-dimensional meaning. The irony is that the championing of sumpong as part of an indigenous psychology (Church and Katigbak 2002; Mataragnon 1979), which purportedly captures the essence of Filipino behavior that foreign constructs cannot, relies on a framework that needs to label this behavior as irrational. Out of several meanings, this approach deliberately focuses on sumpong as a "sudden change of mind without any reason" (Vicassan's 2009, 587). In effect, in order to understand this aspect of Filipino personality, one has to enter the realm of the trivial, the illogical, and the irrational. Whenever scholars cannot explain a phenomenon or practice, an easy way out is to label it irrational. Besides sumpong other subjects such as *lanti*, *latah*, spirit possessions, popular movements, and headhunting are so different from the Western rationalism of academic scholarship that they can appear to be irrational.

"Irrational" Behavior in Southeast Asia

Mataragnon (1977, 49–50) claimed that Malayo-Polynesian languages have analogous terms for sumpong due to their shared heritage. Although not mentioned by Mataragnon, *lanti*, *latah*, and spirit possessions share

similarities with sumpong. In Samar Hart (1975, 1) noted that *lanti* was the sickness caused by fright that could result in death. Violent emotional experiences usually caused the youngest members of the family to get sick. While encounters with animals often caused *lanti* (ibid., 8), the sickness was usually traced to angry ancestral spirits (ibid., 11). *Lanti* as an illness partly resembled the definition of sumpong as an attack of illness, especially in their sudden, spontaneous nature.

Among twentieth-century Javanese, *latah* was a psychological disorder that manifested itself through the blurting out of obscenities, the imitation of words, and the compulsive obedience to commands (Geertz 1968, 93). Shock usually provoked the onset of *latah* reactions, especially in the presence of persons of a superior status. Like sumpong, *latah* was a temporary phenomenon in which the subject remained conscious but lost self-control (ibid., 94). Hildred Geertz (ibid., 98–101) analyzed *latah* as a flouting of behavioral standards especially in the context of the formality and elegance of Javanese politesse. Akin to Mataragnon's interpretation of sumpong, Geertz (ibid., 100–101) contended that *latah* was a culturally specific way of expressing social conflicts without incurring disapproval, as *latah* reactions were deemed involuntary and thus excusable.

Like tantrum in sumpong, fright in *lanti*, and shock in *latah*, a spate of spirit possessions and attacks among young female workers disrupted work in multinational factories in Malaysia in the 1970s–1980s. Female workers sobbed, screamed, and spoke in other voices during spirit possessions in factories (Ong 1988). In some cases they had visions of ancestral figures in the microscopes they used in their job. Aihwa Ong (ibid., 33–35) attributed the spirit attacks to the female workers' transition from their traditional rural village to the alien setting of the industrial workplace. Similar to Mataragnon's interpretation of sumpong as a tension release in a hostile environment and to Geertz's interpretation of *latah* as a parody of social relationships, Ong saw the spirit attacks as a form of protest against the violation of indigenous moral norms because these visitations were disruptions of the factory's harsh work discipline.

The strategy of scholars like Geertz and Ong has been to reinterpret these seemingly irrational behaviors not through the use of Western medical or psychological notions, but through the prism of local cultures and spirit beliefs. Reynaldo Ileto (1979a) employed a similar strategy in his studies of popular Tagalog movements in history. Ileto (ibid., 1–2) recalled that

in 1967 Valentin de los Santos led an uprising of the Lapiang Malaya in Manila, armed only with knives and amulets. Like *sumpong*, *lanti*, *latah*, and spirit possession, the Lapiang Malaya movement seemed out of place in the modern world and was deemed fanatical. The Philippine government declared De los Santos insane and confined him in a mental ward. Although officially De los Santos was clinically insane, Iletto viewed Lapiang Malaya and similar popular movements from a historically and culturally informed perspective. He used the Southeast Asian notion of spiritual potency as a key concept in making sense of these seemingly irrational popular movements. By employing nonlinear approaches to history, he was able to understand the “inner logic” (Iletto 1988, 149) of these movements without labeling them primitive, fanatical, or irrational. He did not rely on prepackaged, linear conceptions of history that measured everything in terms of their position in a series of stages of progress and rationality. One could not dismiss popular Tagalog movements like Apolinario de la Cruz’s *Cofradía de San Jose* and Felipe Salvador’s *Santa Iglesia* (Iletto 1979a) by simply claiming that they formed part of the early stages of a universal path toward secular rationality. Iletto (ibid.; 1979b) used popular literature such as Tagalog poetry and the *pasyon* to show how ordinary people understood the changes they were experiencing and even the emotions, such as *damay* (empathy), that they felt while undergoing these changes. Local notions of power, spirits, and emotions acted as a counterpoint to the generally linear narratives of history.

Emotions in History and Ethnography

While there is a tendency to categorize or associate *sumpong*, *latah*, spirit possessions, and popular movements with psychological disorders based on Western definitions of rationality, traditional historical studies also have a tendency to discard emotions as irrational and irrelevant to objective, rational scholarship (Rosenwein 2002, 821–22). Typically histories situate emotions in a grand, linear narrative that charts the rise of rationality and emotional restraint (ibid., 821, 826–28). In Western history this narrative takes the form of the medieval period being portrayed as a time of unrestrained emotions and the modern period as one of civility and restraint. One of the most famous examples of this type of emplotment is Norbert Elias’s (1993) book on the civilizing process, which focuses on the history of manners (Rosenwein 2002, 826–28; 2010, 21).

Using a Freudian framework, Elias saw the emotionally impulsive medieval people as undergoing a civilizing process, by which institutions like the modern state emerged and acted as a superego that restrained the people’s unbridled emotions. In regarding civilization as the work of the Freudian superego, Elias deemed medieval society as the id or ego that needed emotional control. In this vision of modernity Elias considered emotions as irrational. This linear emplotment of the evolution of emotions relied on the hydraulic model that viewed emotions as bodily liquids wanting to burst out (Rosenwein 2002, 834, 836; 2010, 19). Emotions were either on or off. Without a superego providing restraint, emotions would let themselves out violently. From this perspective, a history of emotions was simply a “narrative based on the progress of (self-)control” (Rosenwein 2002, 845). However, as we have seen in *lanti*, *latah*, and spirit possessions, seemingly irrational, emotional behavior could be recast in an intelligible light when viewed from a local cultural perspective that does not necessarily follow a linear emplotment.

Emotions played a critical role in Renato and Michelle Rosaldo’s explanation of twentieth-century Ilongot headhunting. They avoided the trap of dismissing the practice as a vestige from a violent, primitive past and located headhunting in the context of local culture and experiences. Their ethnographic studies did not rely on spirit beliefs, unlike the anthropological studies discussed above. For the Rosaldos anger and rage resulting from the grief of losing one’s relative were the dominant emotions that could explain Ilongot headhunting (M. Rosaldo 1980, 31–60, 137–76; Rosaldo 1977; 1989). Renato Rosaldo (1989) refused to use the classic concepts of exchange theory or mystical soul stuff. Using notions that corresponded with how the Ilongot themselves described headhunting practices, he went against the traditionally dismissive scholarly attitude toward emotions and used the Ilongot’s emotional experience as the basis of his analysis. For him youth’s anger and older men’s rage were better explanations for Ilongot headhunting than exchange theory or soul stuff. The loss of loved ones, which caused grief and rage among the surviving kin, impelled the Ilongot to kill others. The Ilongot would toss away the victim’s head in order to release their grief and rage, an act that signified the end of mourning prohibitions.

Michelle Rosaldo (1980, 1977) adapted the same approach of studying the emotions involved in headhunting. Several reasons—insult, grief, humiliation, or envy—could make the Ilongot heart heavy and sad. To cast

off their heavyheartedness and to lighten their cloudy thoughts, Ilongot men took heads and tossed them into the air. Michelle Rosaldo (ibid., 137–76) also related headhunting to the coming of age of young Ilongot men, who underwent a period of turmoil and passionate energy that expressed itself in a desire to work hard, kill, marry, and reproduce (Rosaldo 1989, 17–18). She saw this process in the context of a cyclical pattern where the loss of a kin resulted in a renewal of vitality and social continuity. Through headhunting young men emulated their fathers and proved themselves worthy bachelors for marriage. The loss of a kin and the consequent head taking led the young men to transition into married status, which continued the life cycle in the community. However, Renato Rosaldo (ibid., 18) was quick to point out that even this youthful anger was tied to the older men's rage because the older men were the ones who organized the headhunting expeditions. While young Ilongot men headhunted to alleviate the passionate anger of their adolescence, older Ilongot men hunted heads largely in response to the severe rage and agony they felt at a kin's passing. It was usually a kin's death rather than an adolescent's coming of age that prompted headhunting expeditions.

On the surface Mataragnon's psychological analysis of sumpong is strikingly similar to the Rosaldos' anthropological explanation of Ilongot headhunting. Both look into the relationship between a person's emotions and well-being. For Mataragnon, people with low tolerance levels who found themselves in frustrating situations needed an outlet to express their aggression. If they could not express aggression, they needed to displace this frustration in the form of aggressive sumpong, a type of general anger with no direct target. For the Rosaldos the death of a relative caused intense feelings of grief and anger that needed to be cast off by tossing a victim's head. Emotions played a central role in both Mataragnon's and the Rosaldos' explanation of sumpong and headhunting, respectively. For both, persons who had experienced frustration and grief needed an aggressive outlet in order to reach a catharsis. But the main difference between the two approaches lay in the result of the overwhelming emotion. Mataragnon in a way treated sumpong as a dead-end emotion: sumpong displaced and dissipated aggression. In contrast the Rosaldos considered grief or rage as the basis of direct aggression, even to the point of driving people to murder.

Sumpong Approached Historically and Culturally

An alternative perspective on sumpong can be obtained from a historical and cultural approach, which I intend to demonstrate by focusing on how the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot in eastern Central Luzon experienced sumpong. As we have seen, the seemingly strange phenomena of the Samareño lanti, Javanese latak, Malay spirit possessions, and Tagalog popular movements could be understood by analyzing local culture. In a similar vein this article explores sumpong in the context of local culture, specifically in relation to spirit beliefs. Sumpong was related to how the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot perceived, felt, and acted upon the animist spirits and signs in their surroundings. Unlike the Rosaldos, who did not see the relevance of Ilongot spirit beliefs to headhunting in the 1970s, I emphasize the connections between animism and headhunting simply because the eighteenth-century historical descriptions of these two practices coincided with one another. A historical notion of sumpong can encompass and explain such disparate elements as animist beliefs, headhunting practices, and religious conversion. Unlike Iletto's approach, this study does not use the concept of spiritual potency because the idea of a soul substance fails to explain headhunting in Southeast Asia (Hoskin 1996, 9–10, 28; Needham 1976; Rosaldo 1977). The notion that headhunting is one way of taking the victim's power or vitality concentrated in the head is based on a scientific conception of causality that does not exist among Southeast Asian headhunters. If the notion of sumpong is to make sense of headhunting, it has to rely on local spirit beliefs rather than on the idea of a soul substance captured in the victim's head.

Similar to the strategy employed by the Rosaldos, I recognize the important role played by emotions not only in headhunting but also in sumpong. In the spirit of Iletto's nonlinear emplotment of history and Rosenwein's history of emotions, this article removes sumpong from a developmental narrative of emotions that moves from stagnation, ignorance, and primitiveness toward greater levels of progress, enlightenment, and modernity. A historical approach to sumpong cannot simply depend on a linear narrative of increasing rationality and social restraint. In the context of the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot, sumpong as an emotion was not irrational but rather a form of understanding. It was the way the Aeta and Ilongot processed, experienced, and shaped the world around them through

emotions. Even violent manifestations of *sumpong* were not primitive, irrational outbursts that needed to be contained by a civilizing Freudian superego, but rather local expressions of culturally intelligible emotions.

Historical dictionaries and actual historical usage of the word *sumpong* comprise the primary sources for this study. While the Spanish colonial dictionaries provide the older meanings of *sumpong* that can be placed in the context of animism, an eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary's actual uses of *sumpong* from change of mind to murder to religious change provide further clues as to how *sumpong* worked in action. However, it is not my intention to trace the evolution of the term *sumpong* throughout the centuries; my main purpose is simply to show its older meanings in the context of eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot beliefs.

As a caveat the terms Aeta and Ilongot used in this article refer to inhabitants in the provinces of old Tayabas and old Pampanga who occupied a contiguous area in eastern Central Luzon and shared certain practices such as headhunting, a key element in understanding historical *sumpong*. Eighteenth-century missionaries from different religious orders were consistent in their naming of these ethnic groups. To avoid ethnographic presentism and confusion, this article uses these ethnic terms in the eighteenth-century manner.

A further caveat: *sumpong* is a Tagalog word; the primary sources are in Spanish; and the subjects of this article are the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot of eastern Central Luzon, most of whom did not speak much Tagalog or Spanish. Because I have found no evidence that this Tagalog word was ever used or even known by the eighteenth-century Ilongot or Aeta, who spoke mainly Ilongot or Casigurano, the notion of *sumpong* in this article cannot be deemed a purely indigenous concept among these ethnic groups. In a twentieth-century Casiguran Dumagat–English dictionary, the closest words to *sumpong* that I could find are *tampo* and *subeng*, both meaning to sulk or to complain of a lack of attention (Headland and Headland 1972, 604, 628). These two words closely capture the sense of moodiness in *sumpong*. But even if the present-day Aeta and Ilongot use the word *sumpong*, it would still not prove that they used it in the eighteenth century. At the end of the day, an eighteenth-century participant-observer deemed it necessary to use the term to describe his neighbors. In this article, I base the notion of *sumpong* on my interpretation of the missionaries' understanding of the Ilongot and Aeta notions of their world. This method, which evidently traverses several

interpretative levels, may seem a questionable way to gain access to these communities' worldview, but under present circumstances there is no other way to access this past. It also conforms to the realization in standard scholarly practice that the search for a purely, self-contained indigenous perspective is an illusory endeavor.

Scholars have pushed for an approach that eschews the classic view of culture as a self-contained whole. They have emphasized the relational aspects of social analysis rather than its classificatory aspect, which boxes peoples into predetermined, separate groups (Imízcoz Beunza 2009, 79–81). Different processes that intersect with one another define a culture and even extend beyond recognized cultural boundaries (Rosaldo 1989, 20). It is in the communication among different cultures that one gains insight and understanding into each one. In fact the interstices or margins where cultures interact and overlap offer a better vantage point for cultural analysis rather than the walled-in space of a hermetically isolated culture (Thongchai 2003). However, working at the interstices requires a certain sensitivity, especially to language, to understand the transcultural processes (ibid., 22–24).

It can be argued that some Spanish missionaries possessed this language sensitivity to take advantage of their position at these cultural interstices as evinced by how they compiled dictionaries and adopted and incorporated local words into their way of writing and thinking. Philippine history tends to focus on how natives assimilated foreign elements; however, Spanish friars also developed the habit of using native concepts and words (Paredes 2013, 121–50). They must have found that certain local terms captured and designated local realities accurately but were untranslatable to Spanish, leading them to appropriate these local words in Spanish documents. In doing so they must have glimpsed at the very least an approximation of how locals understood their world. One of those words that some Spanish missionaries learned to use was *sumpong*.

If indeed *sumpong* can be explained in the context of animism as this study contends, then it would provide the context for a Spanish observer to use this Tagalog word to describe Aeta and Ilongot practices. Since the prevalence of animism in Southeast Asia in general and in eastern Central Luzon in particular is indubitable, it should not be difficult to find analogous notions of *sumpong* in different animist cultures. Mataragnon (1977, 49) has claimed that “all the major Philippine languages have some equivalent for *sumpong*.” In Bikol, for example, *nasabat* has similar connotations to

sumpong in terms of both encounter and unusual behavior (Aguilar 2014). In Cebu and Bohol *kabuhi* is defined as an affliction brought by a shocking experience such as seeing a ferocious animal, learning of a relative's death, or encountering environmental spirits (Hart 1975, 13). In Ilocos *nakablaáwan*, which means to be greeted, is a sickness that befalls one who meets a dead relative's soul whose greeting causes one's ill-being (Vanoverbergh 1938, 159). These phenomena share aspects of sumpong as a fit. If some of these afflictions can be attributed to spirit encounters, perhaps the same can be said about historical sumpong.

Sumpong in Historical Dictionaries

A weakness in definitions of sumpong in twenty-first-century dictionaries, which focus on its temperamental aspects, is its neglect of a lesser-known but more formal use of the word, which is to find or encounter something. The early-seventeenth-century Tagalog dictionary of Pedro de San Buenaventura (1994) contains several definitions of sumpong without the temperamental aspects. All the definitions—*topar*, *encontrón*, *calabazada*, *poner*, and *punta con punta* (ibid., 135, 277, 490, 503, 579, 653, 696)—have something to do with physical contact, in particular, two things colliding with each other whether deliberately or by chance. The late-seventeenth-century dictionary of Domingo de los Santos (1794) similarly lists almost the same definitions for sumpong: *topar*, *encontrón*, *poner*, *punta con punta*, and *atropellar* (ibid., 185, 405, 665, 684, 801). Synonymous with the Tagalog words *bongo*, *banga*, and *dongo* (ibid., 801), *topar* refers to two things encountering one another, like the prow of a vessel hitting something, or two persons bumping into each other (De los Santos 1794, 801; San Buenaventura 1994, 579). *Encontrón* denotes a meeting between two persons or a collision between two things. *Calabazada* is hitting one's head. Although *poner* has many definitions in Spanish, sumpong as *poner* refers specifically to the putting of two things, like sticks, together end to end (De los Santos 1794, 665; San Buenaventura 1994, 490). This definition is similar to that of sumpong as *punta con punta*. Sumpong as *atropellar* denotes someone being trampled on by a horse (De los Santos 1794, 185).

The eighteenth-century Tagalog dictionary of Juan de Noceda and Pedro de Sanlucar (1860, 303, 466, 594) also contains definitions pertaining to physical contact. Sumpong can mean *topar*, *encontrar*, *chocar*, or *reencuentro*. The Tagalog synonyms of physical sumpong are *bongo*,

ompog, *banga*, and *sacdal* (ibid., 466, 594). Like in San Buenaventura and Domingo de los Santos's earlier dictionaries, the definitions refer to two things coming together physically and in some cases being stopped in their tracks and unable to move further. Noceda and Sanlucar (ibid., 127, 527–29) also offer definitions of sumpong that do not revolve strictly around physical contact.

Among the other Tagalog synonyms of sumpong is *quita* (ibid., 527–29), which refers to physically seeing something but where physical contact is unnecessary. *Quita* is defined as *haber a las manos* or *hallar lo que buscaba* (ibid., 527, 529), and both Spanish expressions translate to see or find what one has been looking for. Another Tagalog synonym of sumpong is *gunita* (ibid., 127), which means to remember something. In De los Santos's (1794, 604) dictionary, sumpong is effectively the opposite of forgetting: “Ualing bahalain comay, sungmosompong din sa loob co. Aunque procuro desecharlo de mi, y que se me olvide; no deja de llamar de quando en quando” (As much as I ignore it, it still wells up inside me. Although I push it aside and try to forget it, it keeps coming back every so often). Although they do not denote physical contact, *quita* and *gunita* still evoke an encounter between two things but through visual contact (between the finder and the found object) or memory recall (by the person of a specific memory).

Other synonyms of sumpong that involve thought processes are *saguimsim* and *salamisim*. *Saguimsim* refers to a thought that does not last very long (Noceda and Sanlucar 1860, 273), and *salamisim* to an imagining of something in passing (ibid., 276). Even though these two definitions are further away from the definitions that revolve around physical contact, they still connote an encounter in the sense of coming upon a fleeting memory, thought, or idea.

A final definition of sumpong found in Noceda and Sanlucar (ibid., 303, 425) is *acometer como las tentaciones* (to be overcome by temptation). This definition is closest to the notion of an unexplainable sudden change of behavior described in Filipino psychology. One definition of the Spanish verb *acometer* is to be suddenly overcome by illness, sleep, desire, or, as in the definition above, temptation. The phrase *acometer la enfermedad* is translated as *sungmosompong ang saquit* (ibid., 361). Definitions of sumpong so far can denote either active or passive action, like the deliberate smashing of two objects together or unintentional bumping of one object into another. Sumpong as *acometer* denotes the passive type since an emotion, illness,

or desire overcomes a person; but this definition is not far off from that of *quita*, *gunita*, *saguimsim*, and *salamisim* since it still suggests an encounter between two things. Instead of an encounter between two persons, two objects, or a person and an idea, it is an encounter between a person and an overwhelming feeling such as temptation or pain.

In the early twentieth century, besides using the definition of *sumpong* as *acometer*, Lorenzo Pérez (1928, 89) added another meaning, that of presentiment (*presentimiento*). This, too, is still related to the previous definitions when viewed in the context of animism. Similar to *sumpong* as *quita*, animist presentiments are usually derived from the signs, omens, and spirits one sees. Instead of just seeing what one is looking for, one sees in the surrounding environment messages that guide future actions and events. In the end the notion of an encounter between two things remains. A person experiencing *sumpong* as being overcome by a feeling or a desire can also be said to be moved by a premonition to act in a particular way. Three actual uses of the word *sumpong* by an eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary in eastern Central Luzon offer glimpses of this relationship between *sumpong* and animist beliefs.

***Sumpong* and an Elderly Aeta: Spirit Beliefs and Change of Mind**

Even though Tagalog and Spanish synonyms and sample sentences help in understanding the varied definitions of *sumpong*, there are limits to what dictionaries can offer. One way around this situation is to analyze the different uses of the word in an actual text. In 1747 the Franciscan Bernardo de Santa Rosa, a veteran missionary of twenty years in Casiguran, wrote an account of his missionary experience. Although written in Spanish, the account contains a smattering of Tagalog words. One such word is *sumpong*, which he used in three different contexts that do not merely repeat the dictionary definitions discussed earlier but provide elaboration that enables us to see the word in action. Santa Rosa used *sumpong* in the context of reading the situation and changing one's mind, chopping off someone's head, and changing one's religious belief. These three examples might seem to deviate from the dictionary definitions discussed earlier, but they are all interconnected, as this article will show and explore from here onward.

In one use of *sumpong* Santa Rosa (1928, 90–91) recounted how he and his *indio* parishioners rescued a blind, crippled, deaf, barely clothed, old

Aeta woman whom they found tied to a raft floating downriver and dying of hunger. According to Santa Rosa, the highland Aeta had a custom of killing their elders who were too decrepit and presumed to not live for long. They had various ways of killing these unwanted members of their communities. One way was to leave them in an isolated area to die of hunger. Another was to poison them, wrap them up, and bury them alive in a hole. Santa Rosa (*ibid.*, 90) did not explain the reason behind this so-called diabolical custom, but it might have had to do with the Aeta being mainly nomadic hunter-gatherers. Once members of a hamlet, especially the elderly, lost the physical ability to be on the move constantly, they found themselves abandoned by their community.

While there are hardly any studies of geronticide in Philippine history, the incidence of infanticide is well established (Pedrosa 1983). Infanticides were carried out using two common methods, that of burying children alive in a hole and of letting them float downriver (*ibid.*, 22, 29–30, 34–36). The eighteenth-century Igorot put the infant inside a small basket, which in turn was placed in a hole in the ground (Herosa 1904, 242); on the third day, they returned to the hole and finally filled it up with earth. In 1592 the child Pedro Bukaneg was found in a tributary of the Abra River floating in a small basket, apparently abandoned by his parents because of his blindness (Hill 1931, 32, 42; Pedrosa 1983, 22)—reminiscent of the story of the old Aeta woman. In the context of historical infanticide in the Philippines, Santa Rosa's description of the attempted murder of the old Aeta woman does not seem surprising. Blindness, lameness, and other deformities were sufficient reasons for carrying out infanticide and geronticide. Historical and anthropological accounts have affirmed that in some communities in the Philippines elders past their prime lost part of their social status (Arcilla 2012, 8; Pigafetta 1975, 57; M. Rosaldo 1980, 148–58; Vanoverbergh 1938, 135) so that geronticide might be considered to be a further step in this glide path.

In the case of the old Aeta woman the original plan was for her to be left alone for a couple of nights to die, but she survived. After members of her hamlet came back and discovered that she was still alive, they decided to bury her alive instead. But before they could carry out their plan, they suffered another attack of *sumpong* (*les dio otro sompong*), resulting in another change of mind, because they had not yet dug up a hole (Santa Rosa 1928, 91). They finally decided to tie her up, put her on a raft, and let her float downriver, which would lead to her unexpected rescue by the

Christian community. Twentieth-century descriptions of Dumagat burial customs confirm certain elements found in Santa Rosa's account such as the dead being wrapped up in a mat and buried at a random location (Turnbull 1930b, 38; Vanoverbergh 1938, 148).

Having heard the story from the indio rescuers, Santa Rosa interpreted the sumpong that allowed the old Aeta woman to float downriver as the intervention of the Aeta's conscience, without which the old woman surely would have died instead of being saved and baptized. Although Santa Rosa used the word sumpong only once in this particular story, he used the phrase "otro sompong." Each change of mind—the first to bury her and the second to send her downriver—was deemed a sumpong.

The sudden changing of one's mind could be understood in the context of animism, which regarded the world as full of signs and spirits that needed to be seen, assessed, and acted upon. The behavior of animals like birds and reptiles was important in everyday human decisions. In the Visayas people deemed a snake or a lizard crossing one's path as a sign to turn back (Scott 1994, 84). Among the Tagalog, when a group of men went on an expedition, the flight trajectory of a bird called the *tigmamanukan* determined whether the expedition would be a success or failure (ibid., 237). A similar type of augury was the singing of a bird called *batala* (Mozo 1763, 123–24). When members of a war expedition encountered this bird in their path, they would assess whether its song assured them victory or was an omen of defeat. It was common for Spanish missionaries to feel frustration when local guides refused to continue the planned journey due to bad omens from animals (Scott 1994, 84). In the late-nineteenth-century Cordillera the "anito" bird was a bringer of bad luck that locals avoided (Guillermo and Agabin 2013, 531, 548, 550–51). Similarly, as Santa Rosa (1928, 94) observed, the Aeta had "pointless observances" like listening to a bird's song or touching a pig's tusks to find out whether they were going to have a successful hunt, become sick, or die. Among the twentieth-century Dumagat of northeastern Luzon, the appearance in camp of a small bird called *bugwak* was a sure sign that a visitor would be arriving soon (Turnbull 1929b, 209).

In addition to signs conveyed through animals, animists in general had to watch out for powerful spirits who inhabited different places, ranging from trees and mounds of dirt to rivers and forests (Mozo 1763, 119–20). These spirits were not abstract nature spirits but concrete, identifiable divinities (Macdonald 2004, 90–92). In certain communities they were called *nono*,

which meant grandparent (Mozo 1763, 120), and these spirits dictated whether the living would have good or bad fortune. For example, sickness could be attributed to a person's lack of courtesy to the spirit inhabiting a termite mound. A good harvest, a successful raiding expedition, and a bout of sickness could be pinned on the whim of these ancestor spirits.

The view of sumpong in the animist context as an abrupt change of mind conforms to the various definitions of the word found in historical dictionaries. One only needed to find, see, or stumble upon (sumpong as *encontrar*, *quita*, and *topar*) animist signs in everyday things. One's future fortune was already in the present since sumpong was a presentiment based on one's changing surroundings. Sumpong was a whole process of perception, feeling, and action that was embedded in this animist world of spirits and signs, which was made manifest in illness evaded, contracted, and cured. First, one had to find or see (sumpong as *quita* or *presentimiento*) the signs and spirits in order to act accordingly. One who failed to do so might fall ill (sumpong as *acometer la enfermedad*) and have to perform propitiating acts to appease the spirits (sumpong as *gunita* in the sense of remembering one's neglected ancestors). The past in the form of ancestor spirits was still in the present through chance encounters and remembrances.

When the group of Aeta returned to the site where they had left the old woman to die, they made noise from afar to determine whether she had died or not (Santa Rosa 1928, 91), an act intended to prevent the potentially dead woman's spirit from causing their death or illness. Their sumpong was related to their awareness of the spirit world. This use of sumpong as a change of mind is reminiscent of several of the colonial Spanish dictionary definitions of sumpong as *quita*, *saguimsim*, *salamisim*, and *presentimiento*. Something in the environment caused one to read the situation and have a change of mind. This reaction was no different from that of suspending a journey because of the sight of a particular bird. Even Spanish definitions of sumpong as succumbing to temptation recognized an external stimulus that brought about a particular change of mind or action.

A twentieth-century description of the Negrito of eastern Luzon claimed that they were all fickle. They abandoned their fields for the smallest reason even when the crops were already maturing (Vanoverbergh 1937, 927). Negrito girls pounding and winnowing rice would abandon their task midway, leaving the rice to be destroyed by chickens (Vanoverbergh 1938, 122). The Negrito made promises but had no qualms about breaking them,

such as the guide who was supposed to accompany the visiting missionary but failed to do so because of a violent headache (ibid., 121–23). Although the Negrito's sudden change of mind or action at times had specific reasons, the reasons were deemed too trivial, hence the label of fickleness. This labeling of the twentieth-century Negrito as fickle has close similarities to the moodiness of sumpong. Perhaps some of the fickleness was attributable to their spirit beliefs.

In the case of Santa Rosa's Aeta neighbors, sumpong as change of mind designated neither random moodiness nor action without any reason because it was still geared toward an objective, which was to dispose of their elderly kin. They changed their mind in the methods to use, but they never wavered in the final objective. Although quite a number of the historical definitions viewed sumpong as passive in the sense that they involved notions of being overcome by certain sights, feelings, illnesses, ideas, and memories, Santa Rosa's use of the word showed that it had an active aspect. Remembering that they did not have a hole to bury her in (sumpong as gunita, saguimsim or salamisim), the frustrated killers of the old Aeta woman had to make a new plan (sumpong as change of mind). Sumpong could lead to purposeful action.

Although Santa Rosa's use of sumpong in this story might be associated with temptation, sumpong was not strictly limited to sinful acts because even Santa Rosa himself acknowledged the unwitting motions of the Aeta's conscience in their sumpong to let the old woman float downriver and end up being saved. The link between sumpong and conscience once again confirmed the conscious, directed action inherent in Santa Rosa's use of sumpong, as opposed to the irrational, nondeliberate release of tension in Mataragnon's sumpong. Although Santa Rosa might be seen as incorporating a Christian notion of conscience in his use of sumpong, at the very least his long residence in Tayabas could give us an approximation of the flexibility with which Tagalog speakers in the eighteenth century actually used the word.

Fearing that the spirit of the potentially dead Aeta woman might make them sick, her Aeta kin's attempts to evade a sumpong of illness are reminiscent of one of the most common present-day definitions of sumpong. Among animists it made sense to attribute sickness to ancestor spirits; however, in Mataragnon's informal survey none of her informants associated sumpong with spirit beliefs or even hinted at such an association. In the case of lanti, people in eastern Samar used to attribute illness to spirits in the old days but not anymore (Hart 1975, 3), while people in southern Negros decreasingly

blamed spirits for their illness because the noise from the expanding population supposedly had been driving local spirits to the isolated parts of town (ibid., 16). A general decline in spirit beliefs that blamed sickness on animist signs and spirits may explain why sumpong today is associated with irrationality. When the animist context is removed, sumpong as quita (the ability to read the spirit world) loses meaning, and so does sumpong as gunita (the appeasement of ancestor spirits). In a relatively nonanimist world, all that is left is sumpong as an attack of illness. Separated from its animist cause and remedy, sumpong becomes associated mainly with unexplainable fits.

Sumpong to Kill

Santa Rosa also employed sumpong in the context of killing. As part of the negotiations with the missionary, an Aeta hamlet promised that they would not kill anyone from a particular town, except those who had offended them (Santa Rosa 1928, 97–98). If they saw anyone from the offending party, inevitably they would experience sumpong and kill that person (*les daria su sompong, y le matarian*) (ibid., 98). Like the decision to leave the old Aeta woman to die downriver, this sumpong was inseparable from its consequent action of killing because perceiving, feeling, and acting were intricately tied to one another. The sight of people who had offended them without having exacted vengeance provoked them to carry out revenge.

Other historical sources confirm the role of emotions—like anger, humiliation, and grief—in sumpong. The Italon who got sick after a visit to the lowlands would blame their illness on the lowlanders' witchcraft, and inevitably there would be endless disturbances with threats of war and burning of Christian churches (Alzaga 1904, 295). A group of Ilongot who had not yet avenged the death of one of their kin did not want to enter town in front of so many people because they believed that doing so would be a grave insult and humiliation for them (Relacion 1756, 11). The Negrito were known to express anger whenever they were slighted (Vanoverbergh 1938, 125). Santa Rosa's Aeta could contain their sumpong to kill as long as they did not see the offending party. Among the twentieth-century Negrito in Casiguran, a person not weeping at the death of a relative was a sure sign that that person would kill someone (ibid., 148). Strong emotions like grief were the basis for the sumpong to kill.

Although he was not explicit about the actual offense, Santa Rosa (1928, 97) mentioned in his account the most common reasons for the Aeta

to commit murder: a relative dying, a bachelor wanting to get married, a woman getting knocked up, the feeling of dizziness after eating potentially poisoned food, someone passing by just after a burial, and stealing from someone else's field. In some Central Luzon communities the death of a member obliged the surviving kin to kill someone from a different group (Mozo 1763, 32), whether or not the targeted group had anything to do with the original death. The *sumpong* to kill, usually in the form of headhunting, had to be carried out after a relative's death.

The desire to murder after the death of someone in the community was tied to beliefs about the fate of the spirit of the deceased. In Southeast Asia many believed that the spirit separated from the body after death and inhabited sites where they could influence the good or bad fortune of the living (Diaz 1745, 44r; Metcalf 1996, 262). In the nineteenth century the Igorot believed that spirits of the dead did not immediately go to their final destination, but first roamed around nearby places to try to bring along the spirit of their still-living loved ones (Scott 1974, 327–28). Illness meant the sick person's spirit temporarily left the body, so that sickness among surviving family members was taken as a sign that the deceased relative was trying to take them away with him or her.

In two twentieth-century headhunting communities the spirits of the recently departed also posed a particular problem to which killing offered a solution. The Berawan of northwestern Borneo believed that the recently dead were caught in a transition between the lands of the living and of the dead and were miserable due to their jealousy of and malice toward the living (Metcalf 1996, 262). The Berawan explained that headhunting assuaged the anger of the deceased or provided the deceased with a slave or company (ibid., 262–63). From one perspective, headhunting displaced the problem of death because “the recently dead becomes someone else's problem. For it is not the murderer's kin who feel the victim's resentment, but the victim's own relatives” (ibid., 263). Among the Ilongot in Nueva Vizcaya “spirits of dead kin . . . burden hearts, bring sickening dreams, and threaten illness” (M. Rosaldo 1980, 158). These dangerous and lonely spirits were called *bēteng*, and headhunting provided a way to cast off the heavy feelings of their saddened hearts (ibid., 19). These examples show how murder was connected to notions of death and illness.

Not enough sources give detailed explanations for the *sumpong* to kill among the eighteenth-century Aeta of eastern Central Luzon. But striking

similarities can be seen in their reactions to their recently departed kin. In the story of the elderly Aeta woman left alone to die of hunger, the group of Aeta did not approach her immediately to find out if she had died, but simply made noise from afar (Santa Rosa 1928, 91). They acted this way because, had she died, her spirit would have been roaming the area. If they had followed their other *sumpong* to bury her alive, once she had been buried they would not have bothered to wait for her to die since they would have been running away from the burial site as fast as they could, shouting with torches in their hands (ibid., 90). The logic of running away was that, if they waited and confirmed the victim's death, her spirit would have followed them. Putting as much distance between them and their victim and shouting and wielding fire were methods to prevent the victim's spirit from catching up with them. Their final *sumpong* to let her float downriver on a raft also solved the problem of her spirit reaching them in the event of her death, as the river current would have brought the woman as far away as possible from the Aeta settlement.

Twentieth-century accounts about the Dumagat and Negrito of eastern Luzon coincided with Santa Rosa's description of eighteenth-century Aeta beliefs. The accounts described the Dumagat's “fear of the spirit world” (Turnbull 1929a, 132). Immediately after a death, spirits were said to gather around the recently dead; these spirits became visible at night, and whoever saw them would die (Turnbull 1929b, 208). The Negrito were similarly afraid of the *belet* or spirit of the dead; consequently, they avoided graves at all costs because encountering these spirits would make them sick (Vanoverbergh 1938, 148, 159). Harkening to Santa Rosa's Aeta who made noise from afar, the Negrito shouted in order to drive out the spirits who haunted the sick (ibid., 159).

Metcalf's explanation of Berawan headhunting as an attempt either to assuage the spirit of the dead or to displace the problem of death seems applicable to the Dumagat and Ilongot. In 1911 Casiguran, a Dumagat chief was accused of killing several Christian Tagalog (Turnbull 1930a, 782). The chief supposedly killed people whenever he had any misfortune because it was his way of appeasing the *belet* and improving his own situation. After a successful headhunting raid, the Ilongot in Nueva Vizcaya immediately left the scene, not because they feared retaliation from the victim's kin but because they feared the victim's own spirit catching them (Turnbull 1929c, 338). In both cases the Dumagat and Ilongot could evade misfortune through

headhunting either by appeasing their own ancestor spirits or by making malicious spirits the problem of the victim's kin instead of their own.

The Aeta believed that the recently dead lurked and caused harm among the living. In an eighteenth-century Aeta hamlet the chief who had died from illness haunted his living followers, as any spirit of the recently dead would have done (Santa Rosa 1928, 96). The living were overcome by so much fear (*sumpong as acometer*) of their dead chief following them that they abandoned their hamlet and moved to another site that was quite a distance away. At one point several Aeta reported that the dead chief's spirit managed to spray them with water and sand, making them so afraid that some went for a swim while others sought refuge by a tree. Even the mere mention of their dead chief's name was enough to make them tremble. The twentieth-century Dumagat had a similar custom of not mentioning the name of the recently dead to avoid the wrath of the spirits (Turnbull 1929b, 208). Santa Rosa, who witnessed the Aeta's fear of their dead chief in the eighteenth century, explained it as a result of their belief that the recently departed returned as a spirit or devil that could potentially cause their death. Besides running away physically, the Aeta escaped the spirit of the recently dead also by changing their name (Santa Rosa 1928, 94). They effectively changed names every year, believing that with their new names the spirit of their recently deceased kin would not be able to recognize them.

This same fear of the recently dead kin also prevailed among the Ilongot who lived in the same century (Relacion 1756, 16). As in other headhunting communities, the Ilongot had to kill someone after a kin's death in their belief that "Bueteng the devil" walked among them. Interestingly the Ilongot of the 1970s still used roughly the same word (*bēteng*) to refer to the dangerous, lonely spirits of the departed, who caused disruption and harm by longing for their still-living kin (M. Rosaldo 1980, 158, 174). Like the Aeta, the Ilongot of the eighteenth century wielded torches as a form of protection against the spirit of the recently dead (Relacion 1756, 16).

In the case of bad death, anger and grief were the key emotions involved. Those who died in unpleasant ways—like women in childbirth, casualties of war, or victims of headhunting raids—were caught between the worlds of the living and the dead and remained spiteful indefinitely (Metcalf 1996, 268). They would not receive a proper funeral. Unfortunately eighteenth-century historical sources on the Aeta and Ilongot did not mention any distinction between violent and nonviolent deaths. On the one hand, among the

Berawan of twentieth-century northwestern Borneo, being a headhunting victim was not considered to be a bad death. On the other hand, the nineteenth-century Igorot distinguished between ordinary and violent death (Scott 1974, 326–27). The latter type was abrupt and involved turmoil, like dying in childbirth or by spear. The two types of death led to two separate destinations in the afterlife and required different mortuary rituals, with the violent death entailing a simpler funeral.

Although historical sources were not explicit on whether the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot had a concept of bad or violent death, an eighteenth-century account provides a general description of the emotions Philippine islanders felt when relatives died at the hands of enemies or animals (Diaz 1745, 44r–44v). In the case of headhunting victims, the first task of the surviving relatives was to recover the head. A headless cadaver was an omen of great misfortune, and the kin would not even bother to hold a proper, solemn funeral. If a crocodile had victimized someone, the relatives would get whole towns to help look for the cadaver and its head. They would search for days, the relatives shouting, lamenting, and crying (*todos son gritos, ayes, y clamores de los parientes*) (ibid., 44v) until they found the body with its head. If the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot known for their headhunting practices had this same concept of bad death, one could imagine the emotional turmoil of grief and anger experienced by the victim's kin who were trying to recover the severed head.

The most explicit example of anger could be seen in what the Italon headhunters did with the teeth and skulls of their victims (Mozo 1763, 32–33). They would take the molars and other teeth of their victims and embed them in the handles of their cutlasses. They would also decorate their huts with their victims' skulls. This practice of reusing their victim's teeth and skull mutually exacerbated the rage during confrontations. When they saw the enemy's cutlass decorated with the teeth of their relative, they threw themselves into battle like rabid dogs (ibid., 33). If the death of their kin was bad enough, the memory of their kin in their enemies' weapons (*sumpong as gunita*) made them more enraged (*sumpong as acometer*) and the fights even more ferocious and brutal.

Santa Rosa's use of *sumpong* to describe the feelings and actions of his Aeta neighbors was an inspired choice. The nuances of the Tagalog word captured how the Aeta and Ilongot in the eighteenth century understood their world in terms of fear, anger, and grief. *Sumpong* was not only an

emotion, but it was also part of a process of perception, feeling, and action. The sight of the spirit of their kin roaming around (sumpong as perception or *quita*) made them angry or fearful (sumpong as feeling or *acometer*) enough to kill others (sumpong as deliberate action).

However, due to their Christian perspective Spanish missionaries partly defined sumpong as being overcome by temptation and in effect considered it a sin. In Santa Rosa's usages discussed so far, sumpong potentially led to murder. One group of Aeta tried to kill the old woman by abandoning her and burying her alive. Another group of Aeta had warned that they would kill those who had offended them if the latter showed their faces. In both instances, Santa Rosa used sumpong in the context of murder and violence. Sumpong could thus acquire a very negative connotation.

Are we thus unintentionally falling into the grand, linear narrative where the primitive Aeta are seen to epitomize unrestrained violence while civilized Christian indios exemplify restraint? Are we using a hydraulic model of emotion where sumpong is an overflowing violence from within that needs to be expressed through headhunting? Are we succumbing to a linear history of sumpong that moves from violent outbursts in headhunting in the past (the Rosaldos) to the Freudian suppression of direct aggression in the present (Mataragnon)?

While there is indeed a danger to always associate violence with passion and rage (Metcalf 1996, 272; Rosenwein 2010, 19), this article has tried to show that other emotions like fear and grief were associated with the death of a kin. The violent taking of heads was not the only option in the Aeta's attempts to escape the clutches of the spirits of the recently dead. In their animist conception of the world, running away, making noises, taking a swim, wielding torches, and changing names were viable alternatives. The practice of taking heads has not been continuous throughout the years, with the Ilongot stopping and resuming headhunting several times since the late nineteenth century (R. Rosaldo 1980; 1989, 17). Even in the 1990s some Christian Ilongot slid back into their headhunting practice (Yang 2011). Evidently there is no simple linear movement toward progressive Freudian emotional restraint. Even the type of headhunting differed, with twentieth-century Ilongot simply throwing the severed head up in the air as opposed to the eighteenth-century practice of keeping the head as some form of trophy.

Through this article's strategy of situating sumpong in the context of animism, emotion could be seen to be much more than impulsive outbursts

of headhunting violence; sumpong as an emotion was a form of cognition that was not at all unique to the Aeta and Ilongot in the sense that all communities had their own emotional styles in different times and places (Rosenwein 2002, 845).

Sumpong as Religious Conversion and Apostasy

Even Santa Rosa recognized that sumpong was not solely tied to killing. Although his first two uses focused on it, his final usage of sumpong had nothing to do with violence, murder, or temptation. Santa Rosa (1928, 88–89) wrote that, when he asked a hamlet of Aeta in Casiguran if they wanted to become Christians, they all flatly rejected his offer. Suddenly one day more than twenty of these Aeta together with ten of their infants came to him, stating that they had a sumpong to become Christians and wanted the infants to be baptized (*dijeron que no sabian cómo les avia dado sompong de ser christianos, y assi que les bautizase los niños, y que ellos irian, poco a poco, aprendiendo con los indios en sus sementeras*) (ibid., 89). Following baptismal protocol the infants could be baptized at once, while the older Aeta candidates had to learn catechism first before being baptized.

Santa Rosa reported that the Aeta themselves could not explain their sumpong to become Christians. Nevertheless another part of his account gave a possible explanation for certain conversions. The Aeta believed that baptism at an early age would result in healthy, long lives (ibid., 91). This belief could have arisen from Santa Rosa's instruction to have dying children brought to him for baptism because he did not want them to die unbaptized and go to limbo. If the sick children recovered, their recovery would be attributed to the healing powers of the Spanish priest. This interpretation of the miraculous curing power of baptism has been a classic explanation for the conversion of natives to Christianity (Phelan 1959, 55). However, an emotional explanation tied to animist belief might also be possible, one that was difficult for its participants to verbalize but was no less real, deeply felt, and culturally intelligible.

As has already been discussed, the Aeta used name changing (Santa Rosa 1928, 94) and taking a swim (ibid., 96) as strategies to cope with the roaming spirits of their recently dead kin. These two customs were a normal part of Aeta life, especially as reactions to death within the community. But these practices were also very similar to certain aspects of baptism in which the newly baptized was given a new Christian name and bathed in holy

water. Aeta postmortem strategies found alternative outlets in Christian baptism. The similarities between the two were coincidental but striking. A description of how islanders of the Philippines took baths with coconut shells to avoid illness wrought by their dead relatives even used the term “baptism” to depict the animist practice (Diaz 1745, 44v). Strictly speaking, baptism was not a direct cure to illness or death, but was an intermediary method to keep these spirits away. Even though Santa Rosa’s account did not mention whether or not there had been a recent death within the Aeta community, the sumpong to convert might be the result of their animist fear of these spirits. Becoming Christian was one way of dealing with this fear.

Renato Rosaldo (1989, 4–5) observed that when the Ilongot converted to evangelical Christianity in the twentieth century it was not because they believed conversion would prevent further illness and death in their family. They were under no such illusion; their decision to convert was a way of coping with their grief since headhunting was no longer a viable option. A similar situation was plausible with the eighteenth-century Aeta. The sight of their dead kin roaming around potentially causing illness and death (sumpong as *quita* or *encontrar*) could have brought them the emotion of fear (sumpong as *acometer*); but rather than resort to headhunting (sumpong to kill) they decided to convert to the new religion, which gave them new Christian names and sprinkled them with holy water (sumpong to become Christian), allaying their fear.

But why did they decide on this particular option and not headhunting? Why did they adopt new Christian names when new animal names and place names had worked in similar fashion in times past? A variety of options were open to them, but why they opted for one and not the other is difficult for us, and perhaps for the Aeta themselves, to explain. Different circumstances would likely lead to different explanations. But whatever the exact case may be, the Aeta mostly likely based their sumpong to kill or to convert on their spirit beliefs and emotions, and made their decision at an intuitive yet rational level.

As mentioned earlier, sumpong was also a presentiment based on one’s perception; similarly the sumpong to be Christian was most likely a presentiment based on the perception of social, spiritual, emotional, and other factors. In the case of the Aeta, they had a custom of not naming their children until they felt it was the right time for a proper name (Santa Rosa 1928, 94). The baptism of and giving of Christian names to Aeta children

at a very early age might have been a strategy to make them completely unrecognizable to their ancestor spirits. Baptized early on and raised as Christians, this new generation of Aeta in theory would no longer believe in the old ancestor spirits, never develop any relations with them, and never fear them. Recognition would be mutually impossible, and they would be immune to these spirits’ attempts to bring illness and misfortune. In the case of the adult Aeta, conversion was probably more a temporary means to evade the malicious presence of their dead ancestors, since growing up they already had established relationships with these spirits. Conversion was simply a variation on their frequent name changing and bathing to escape spirits, hence the greater effectiveness of baptism among the young. The decision to opt for one course over another might not be entirely clear in our very bare examples, but if a detailed case-by-case study were possible it would probably show that the subjective desire had some form of objective, animist basis. At least in the frontier setting of eighteenth-century eastern Central Luzon, sumpong as conversion was an option open to the Aeta and not taken lightly.

The sumpong to convert can also be explained through the experience of dreams and visions. Although Santa Rosa did not mention this type of religious change, other missionary accounts showed that it was common for natives to have dreams telling them to get baptized (Cacho 1997, 358). In one missionary account, the speech attributed to an Ilongot who wanted to convert followed the same sense of sumpong as *acometer* (*haverme venido tal deseo de ser Christiano*) (Relacion 1756, 7). It might just be a linguistic quirk of Spanish, but replacing the word desire (*deseo*) with the Tagalog sumpong would have worked just as well, since sumpong captured a similar affective sense of wanting to become Christian. The Franciscan missionary Olivencia witnessed two visions among the eighteenth-century Ilongot, which showed how animist apparitions (sumpong as *quita*, *gunita* or *salamisim*) could lead to a sumpong toward religious change. The first vision resulted in an old Ilongot man becoming a catechumen, the second one in Olivencia’s Christian catechist becoming an apostate.

An old Ilongot animist, who was considered insane by his community, had a vision that neither he nor his community could understand (Olivencia 1755, 3–4). Even before the arrival of the first missionary in their place, the old Ilongot man ostensibly saw a priest accompanied by a few men dressed in the Christian fashion. The priest had stigmata on his hands. The old Ilongot

man was terrified by what he saw; he thought the priest was a bueteng. Several apparitions of the priest tormented him emotionally, hurt his heart, and made him cry out of fear, grief, and sorrow. In one of his visions, a crucified man appeared and threatened to submerge their land in the sea for their misdeeds. Later on, once he arrived in this community, Olivencia tried to verify the identity of the priest or crucified man in the visions. He showed a statue of Jesus Christ to the old Ilongot man, who then confirmed that it was indeed Jesus whom he saw.

Although some scholars have tackled the reality and importance of visions and dreams to explain the conversion of natives to Christianity in the Philippines (Aguilar 1998; Paredes 2006), there is still a general tendency among historians to ignore this aspect of Christian conversion. It would be easy to dismiss the visions as the imaginings of a crazy, old Ilongot man. After all, even his own community initially thought he was crazy. Despite the old Ilongot man's confirmation that he saw Jesus in his visions, the note at the end of Olivencia's (1755, 17) account dismissed the visions as the mere imaginings of an indio. From a certain perspective, the incredulity over these visions was warranted. How could the old Ilongot man have seen Jesus even before the arrival of the very first missionary there? Considering that a bueteng was the malicious spirit of a recently dead kin, how was it possible for the old Ilongot man to take Jesus for his dead relative? Although they initially dismissed the old Ilongot man's visions, the participants eventually believed the mysterious visions. Despite the disclaimer at the end of his account, Olivencia still used the visions to convince his animist Ilongot audience to convert. Even the Ilongot themselves believed the old man's visions, which in fact aided their conversion. For us today, the visions make more sense when these are viewed from the perspective of a nonlinear emplotment of history in which events are temporally flat, where past and present are interchangeable, and where meaning and feeling are the same (Errington 1979, 35–39).

Whatever their source or origin, the visions made sense in the particular situation in which the different Ilongot communities in the region found themselves. Olivencia was traveling all over the region not only to evangelize the different Ilongot hamlets but also to establish peace among the warring groups. To a certain extent, the old Ilongot man's visions gained traction because they conveyed the grief and sorrow that everyone felt from the loss of loved ones in the reciprocal headhunting raids. The *sumpong* to convert emerged from these emotions, which were addressed by Olivencia's

evangelization and peace making. The message of the crucified man in the vision was interpreted as a sign to stop their headhunting practice and convert to Christianity, which aided the establishment of peace among the different Ilongot communities. In effect a *sumpong* to become a Christian was an alternative way of burying the hatchet and addressing their grief. It was even sanctioned by the visions of Jesus interpreted as an ancestral spirit or bueteng, so the decision gained greater credibility. Similar to the life cycle discussed by Michelle Rosaldo in which the passion of headhunting led to social reproduction, the emotional loss of kin experienced by the eighteenth-century Ilongot was compensated by the creation of new kinship relations (Dizon 2011) since Ilongot converts gained a common father in the Franciscan missionary, became the siblings of their enemies in Christian brotherhood, and incorporated Jesus as an ancestral spirit (Olivencia 1755, 3–4). The initial dismissal of the old Ilongot man's visions and their subsequent acceptance by the community made sense in this larger context. Although the word "*sumpong*" was never used by Olivencia in his account, the whole process of perceiving spirits, experiencing emotions of sorrow and fear, and then changing one's mind and acting to address the situation is consistent with our earlier sketch of *sumpong*.

Another set of visions in Olivencia's account traced the opposite *sumpong* toward apostasy (ibid., 17). While Olivencia was away evangelizing in the mountains, the catechist in the mission center kept on seeing his mother's spirit. These terrifying visions followed the catechist everywhere. Although the account did not explicitly say so, the most plausible reason why the Ilongot community became so frightened by these visions was their belief that the figure was a bueteng, the malicious spirit of the catechist's dead mother, who was trying to convince her son to go back to their home village. Despite the spirit's violent attempts to physically drag him back and punch some sense into him, the catechist resisted. At one point, he even threw a rock at the spirit. Although physical interaction with spirits might seem strange, this account is akin to that of the spirit that threw water and sand at a few Aeta and sent them running away. It was not only the catechist who saw the mother's spirit. During a catechism session, the spirit entered and sat on Olivencia's seat puffing on a tobacco. Everyone who was there, Christians and animists alike, saw the spirit and got scared. Since Olivencia was not there, another missionary was called to do an exorcism, but the spirit

simply left and subsequently returned when the missionary had departed. Finally what made the catechist succumb to apostasy was the change in strategy by his mother's spirit, who started to show him affection by offering him food.

The old Ilongot man and the catechist's visions were similar; both were terrifying, evoked fear in their hearts, and caused religious change albeit in opposite directions. One could say that the catechist experienced a sumpong to apostatize, evident in the hallmarks of sumpong in the process of perception, feeling, and action. Fear and grief over one's dead kin imbued his thought process: seeing the spirit of the mother (sumpong as *quita* or *encontrar*), being overcome by fear (sumpong as *acometer*), and deciding to return home and leave Christianity (sumpong as change of mind). Especially in the context of religious change where kinship relations were paramount (Dizon 2011), receiving instructions from visions of ancestor spirits impacted the natives' decisions. It was no different from seeing animist signs and omens that gave one a presentiment of the future and influenced one's present decisions.

Like the other examples of sumpong, sumpong as religious change was a form of understanding and action that involved a flattening of time where ancestor spirits manifested themselves in the present and influenced the future. While animist signs and visions in the present had to be seen and interpreted properly to know the future, the old Ilongot man's future action of conversion and the catechist's future action of apostasy depended on their affective and culturally rational interpretation of spirit-world manifestations. In the case of the old Ilongot man, his future of becoming Christian was already in his past with his preconversion visions of Jesus; in the case of the catechist, his future of apostasy was determined by the past in the form of the ancestral spirit of his mother appearing to him in the present. In this intertwining of past, present, and future—of seeing, feeling, and changing—sumpong was the lived experience that underpinned the whole process.

Conclusion

The historical definitions and uses of sumpong showed a different side to the present-day notion of sumpong. Although certain aspects of present-day sumpong can be found in historical sumpong, such as a change of behavior and an attack of illness, historical sumpong had a wider range of applicability that included murder and religious change. The foundation that united these

varied uses of sumpong was spirit belief, in this case, the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot's sensitivity to the constantly changing spirit world around them and the ensuing emotions that drove them into action.

The sumpong that led one to change his or her mind, kill, and convert was tied to the emotions of fear, anger, and grief that the Aeta and Ilongot felt in response to the spirit world. In sumpong as change of mind, the numerous attempts of an Aeta community to kill off their infirm female kin showed their fear of the spirit of the recently dead. In sumpong to kill, the offended Aeta group would have been incensed at their inability to carry out their revenge killing. Headhunting also offered the Aeta and Ilongot the opportunity to address their fear by propitiating their recently dead kin and perhaps by displacing the problem of death. In sumpong as religious change, the grief over the dead and the fear of their spirits contributed to the conversion of some Ilongot and the apostasy of the catechist.

Explanations of the natives' conversion to Christianity that have relied on local spirit beliefs generally have resorted to the idea of a confrontation in spiritual power between the new Hispanic spirits and the old animist spirits (Aguilar 1998). Whichever side had more spiritual prowess garnered more converts and believers. The arrival of the new religion did not eliminate spirit beliefs; it simply gave converts in Southeast Asia access to more powerful spiritual forces to tame the traditional spirits (Reid 1993, 161). Christian missionaries used the popular strategy of emphasizing the superiority of the Christian God over ancestral spirits (Paredes 2006, 544–46). For example, Christian baptism and prayer were portrayed as more powerful means to address sickness than ancestral worship.

While these explanations may be valid in many circumstances, they do not seem to apply to the sumpong of the Aeta and Ilongot, whose spirit beliefs as described in eighteenth-century primary sources did not suggest any sense of attempting to overcome malicious spirits through the aid of more powerful spiritual allies. Aeta strategies of dealing with malevolent spirits—shouting, running away, hiding, relocating, taking a swim, changing name, and headhunting—were nonconfrontational. Even in the cases of Christian conversion and apostasy, there was no evidence of an explicit comparison between the spiritual power of Jesus Christ and that of animist spirits. If the Aeta interpreted baptism as more or less a continuation of their name-changing and bathing strategies to avoid malicious spirits, then it would not be necessary for them to believe in the spiritual superiority of Christianity.

The Aeta belief that baptism worked best on the young would imply that the spiritual power of baptism did not work as well on adults, which undermines the scholarly assumption about the new religion's spiritual superiority. When the catechist of the Ilongot community apostatized, there was no direct clash between the Franciscan missionaries and the ancestral spirit of his mother. The mother's spirit only appeared when the missionaries were away, and disappeared with the missionaries' presence, potentially implying a stronger spiritual power on the part of the missionaries—and yet the catechist still apostatized. Of course, notions of spiritual prowess might have been at work here but simply not mentioned in the historical sources. But based on how the sources described local strategies for dealing with ancestral spirits, the notion of a confrontation between the Christian God and animist spirits seems to be more conceptual rather than representative of the experience of the Aeta and Ilongot.

Relations rather than power seemed to be more at work in the eighteenth-century Aeta and Ilongot's sumpong. Maintaining good relations with the spirits formed part of the emotions and actions involved in sumpong. The objective in the various types of sumpong explored in this article was not to overpower spirits but rather to create a harmonious relationship among the spirit world, one's emotions, and one's actions.

Note

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