

## PHILIPPINE SHAMANISM AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN PARALLELS

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SHAMANISM IS PREEMINENTLY A SIBERIAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN religious phenomenon for in these regions "the ecstatic experience is considered the religious experience par excellence (and) the shaman, and he alone, is the great master of ecstasy."<sup>1</sup> Still shamanism is also documented elsewhere in North and South America, Australia, Oceania and Southeast Asia. We shall see that it is also found in the Philippines.<sup>2</sup>

After some preliminary remarks, the paper will document the phenomenon of shamanism in the Philippines as found in the writings of Spanish chroniclers as well as those of others up to the present.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1964), p. 4. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Shamanism*).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 337 ff., and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Earlier Philippine writings used in preparing this paper include the following: Diego Aduarte, "Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores," Vol. 30, 1640 in *The Philippine Islands, 1593-1898*. Edited by Emma Blair and James Robertson. (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark and Company, 1903-1909), pp. 285-298. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Historia* and *Islands*, respectively); Francisco Alzina, *Historia de las Islas Bisayas*, 1668-1669. Muñoz text, part I, books 3 and 4; preliminary translation by Paul S. Lietz (Chicago: Philippine Studies Program) Mimeo. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Historia*); Pedro Chirino, "Relacion de las Islas Filipinas," Vol. 12, 1602-1604 in *Islands*. Edited by E. Blair and J. Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark and Company, 1903-1909), pp. 60-64; 65-68; (Henceforth to be referred to as *Relacion*); Francisco Colin, "Native Races and Their Customs," Vol. 40, 1690-1691 in *Islands*. Edited by E. Blair and J. Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark and Company, 1903-1909), pp. 69-82. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Native Races*); Miguel de Loarca, "Relacion de las Yslas Filipinas," Vol. 5, 1582-1583 in *Islands*. Edited by E. Blair and J. Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark and Company, 1903-1909), pp. 129 ff. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Relacion*); Antonio Pigafetta, "Primo Viaggio Interno al Mondo," Vol. 33, 1519-1522 in *Islands*. Edited by E. Blair and J. Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark and Company, 1903-1909), pp. 137-175. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Viaggio*); Juan de Plasencia, "Costumbre de los Tagalo(g)s," Vol. 7, 1588-1591 in *Islands*. Edited by E. Blair and J. Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark and Company, 1903-1909), pp. 173-196. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Costumbres*).

More recent writers include: Richard Arens, "The 'Tambalan' and His Medical Practices in Leyte and Samar," *Leyte-Samar Studies*, Vol. 5 (1 & 2), 1971, pp. 107-115. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Tambalan*); Laura Watson Benedict, *A Study of Bagobo Ceremonial, Magic and Myths* (New York: Academy of Science, 1916). (Henceforth to be referred to as *Bagobo*); Francisco R. Demetrio, *Dictionary of Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs*, 4 vols. (Cagayan de Oro: Xavier University, 1970). (Henceforth to be referred to as *Dictionary*); John M. Garvan, *The Manobos of Mindanao* (Washington: Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences, 1931). (Henceforth to be referred to as *Manobos*); Rudolph Rahmann, "Shamanistic and Related Phenomena in Northern and Middle India." *Anthropos*, Vol. LIV (1959), pp. 681-760. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Shamanistic Phenomena*); Morice Vanoverbergh, "Religion and Magic Among

In the second part of the paper we shall draw up some parallelisms between shamanism in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia. The author will feel satisfied if he shall have shown the extent of this correlation, hoping that in another essay he could point out the causal nexus that are responsible for these manifold coincidences. However, even before the second part, whenever opportunities come up for pointing up similarities these will not go by unnoticed.

#### *General Remarks on Shamanism: Antiquity and Universality*

Scholars tell us that shamanism as a religious phenomenon, that is, as a complex of beliefs and practices is a very ancient institution. Some would place it way back in the early paleolithic, in the period of the earliest hunters and food gatherers.<sup>4</sup> It is usually linked with a belief in supreme beings who dwell in the sky, the creators of the universe, the guardians of the moral order, the givers of life and everything that sustains life,<sup>5</sup> as well as the lords of death.<sup>6</sup> The ideology behind earliest shamanism seems to be that of a three-tiered world: an Upperworld, the abode of the supreme gods, and the spirits of the heavens and of the sky, as well as of the dead who have arisen to the ranks of the gods; an Underworld, the realm of the spirits of the dead who have not yet arisen to the ranks of the heavenly spirits, who ever so often come out of their world and mingle unseen with the men of the Middleworld. The Middleworld, however, also seems to expand into a region, well beyond the bounds of the space inhabited by men, now imaged as the rim of the universe, now as the islands of the blessed where they repose amid perpetual sunshine, shady glades, bountiful gardens, running streams of clear waters.<sup>7</sup> This place has been identified by the Greeks and others like them in the west as the Isles of Hesperides.

#### *Connexions with Moon, Animism and Worship of Dead*

Others, too, would connect shamanism with the mythology of the moon;<sup>8</sup> and the sacrifice of the pig which is very common in the Southeast Asian region seems to fall in line with this idea; the pig being considered to be a moon animal.<sup>9</sup> Still other attributes are given to shamanism, namely, that it is an offshoot of the worship

Isnegs," *Anthropos*, Vol. XLVIII (1953), pp. 557-568. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Isnegs*). Other writers consulted include Joseph Campbell. *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1959). (Henceforth to be referred to as *Mythology*).

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, *Mythology*, pp. 331, 339, 350 ff., 372 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 185 f.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Rahmann, *Shamanistic Phenomena*, p. 752.

<sup>9</sup> Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 183 f., 367, 426 f.

of the spirits and of the dead.<sup>10</sup> And throughout the world, there seems to be a close link between the shaman and the worship of the dead. In fact, the shaman is said to be a psychopomp, that is, the conductor of the soul of the dead man to the land of the dead.<sup>11</sup> And in some places, the shaman sometimes is possessed by the spirits of the dead.<sup>12</sup> Although this is quite incidental to his task as shaman which is to guide the soul or return it to its body. And it is claimed the shaman can do this because he is himself a very special person. He is one who even while still living in the flesh has already stepped into the spirit-world, himself having died and then come to life again.

#### *Shamanism as Religious Phenomenon*

As a religious phenomenon, I take shamanism to focus around man's ultimate concerns, that is to say, with man's life or existence, as well as the meaning of that existence.<sup>14</sup> It must necessarily then touch upon the problem of disease, on the mystery of recovery, as well as on the mystery of death and of the possibility or fact of life after death. A shaman has been called, and rightly, the specialist of the holy or the sacred, or as the guardian of the psychic equilibrium of the community.<sup>15</sup> I think these characterizations have something to do with the ultimate concerns of man; preoccupation with the sacred or the holy touches the reality which undergirds man in his total nature, his whole being as contingent and limited;<sup>16</sup> anything that touches the psyche borders on the innermost life of man: for it seizes him where he is most sensitive to the influences that can reach down to his very depths: the psyche is the region where his materiality and his spirituality are most merged, his two aspects united although distinct. It is the seat of his personality.<sup>17</sup>

#### *The Shaman and the Philippine Religious Functionaries*

Like most primitive peoples, the early Bisayans, Tagalogs, Bikolanos and Cagayanos as well as the modern survivals of the proto-Malays and others now dwelling in the hills of Luzon, Bisayas and Mindanao — all have their religious functionaries. These functionaries

<sup>10</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 748 f., and 752.

<sup>11</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 182, 205 ff, 208 f, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 366, 507 n.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85 f.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254.

<sup>15</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 237, 508. Cf. also his Recent Works on Shamanism. *History of Religions*. I, pp. 184-186.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254.

<sup>17</sup> C. G. Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), pp. 77, 116, 101, 208.

roughly may be grouped under three categories: 1) the shaman variously called *catalonian*<sup>18</sup> or *anitera*<sup>19</sup> (Tagalog and northern Luzon), *bailan*,<sup>20</sup> *daetan*,<sup>21</sup> *catooran*,<sup>22</sup> *balian*,<sup>23</sup> *mamumuhat*, *diwatero* (Bisayas, especially Samar, Leyte, Cebu, Bohol and northern Mindanao), *dorarakit*<sup>24</sup> or *anitowan*<sup>25</sup> (Isnegs), *alopogan*<sup>26</sup> (Tinguians), *balian* (Pygmies of Palawan),<sup>27</sup> *babalian* (Negros and elsewhere),<sup>28</sup> and *ballyan*<sup>29</sup> among the Mandayas of Mindanao. The shaman is at once priest-sacrificer, healer, intermediary with the spirit world, prophet and seer; 2) the magician or sorcerer who can be either a white magician or medicine-man, *mananambal*, *mamumuhat*, *diwatero*, *arbolaryo*,<sup>30</sup> *herbolaryo*,<sup>31</sup> *makinaadmanon* whose actions are generally for the good of others, or the black magician or witch-doctors who can either do good or harm to people, but mostly harm for a fee. Then they are generally called *mamalarang*,<sup>32</sup> *barangan*, *usikan*, *paktolan*,<sup>33</sup> *sigbinan*, etc. This is by no means an exhaustive enumeration; the *mancocolam* of the Tagalogs described by Plasencia as a medicine-man who would emit flames which could not be put out from his body once or oftener during a month beneath the house of someone belongs to this group. And (3) the witch or *balbal*, or *aswang*; men and women, mostly women who, in the mind of the folk, are people with a particular kind of sickness which in turn they can give to others: their weakness for the blood of women just delivered of their babies, for the foetus inside the womb of a pregnant woman, for the liver of infants, for the blood of infants, for the liver and flesh of dead people, for the phlegm voided from the lungs

<sup>18</sup> Plasencia, *Costumbres*, p. 190.

<sup>19</sup> Aduarte, *Historia*, p. 286.

<sup>20</sup> Loarca, *Relacion*, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> Alzina, *Historia*, p. 212.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>24</sup> Vanoverbergh, *Isnegs*, p. 558.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> James Fay-Cooper Cole, *The Tinguians: Social, Religious and Economic Life of a Philippine Tribe*, Field Museum of National History-Anthropological Series (Chicago: n.p., 1922), p. 301. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Tinguians*).

<sup>27</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-341.

<sup>28</sup> Emerson Brewer Christie, *The Subanuns of Sindangan Bay* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1909), p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> James Fay-Cooper Cole, *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1913). (Henceforth to be referred to as *Wild Tribes*).

<sup>30</sup> *Arbolaryo* is an indigenized form of the original Spanish *arbolarío*: someone who handles tree roots and barks and leaves for medicinal purposes.

<sup>31</sup> *Herbolaryo* is another indigenized form of perhaps an original Spanish *herborario* (from *herba*), i.e., someone expert in the use of plants and herbs for medicinal purposes.

<sup>32</sup> Richard W. Lieban, *Cebuano Sorcery: Malign Magic in the Philippines* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-58.

and respiratory organs of tubercular people.<sup>34</sup> Those people have powers of sense and sight which are fantastic, they can transform themselves into birds, cats, dogs, etc., they can fly through the air, can detach themselves from their torsos which they leave behind a post or beneath a window sill, while their upper parts from the head and shoulders, along with the entrails, go travelling through the air in search of prey. The witch carries a flask of oil which it uses to empower itself to fly. If you get hold of this oil you render the witch powerless. If you strike the witch's body when it is under an animal form, the marks will be left on the man's body next morning. To become a witch something like a chicken's egg begins to germinate inside his stomach.<sup>35</sup> This "thing" eventually develops into a chick then into a full grown bird. If you make a person vomit this "thing" before it grows wings inside, he can still be saved from becoming a witch. Once the creature has grown wings, the witch's lot is sealed.<sup>36</sup> A witch cannot die until he has transferred the witch-being to someone else.

This study will limit itself only to the religious functionary known elsewhere by the general name shaman and which is variously termed by the various groups in the Philippines. The paper will discover the various elements which make for shamanism in the Philippines and then see parallels in other Southeast Asian peoples. By way of conclusion we shall see how closely or how distantly are our Philippine shamans linked with their counterparts in the lands south of us.

#### *The Shamanic Call and Consecration*

All over the world the shaman has been recognized to be a person whose office is somehow or other linked with a call or a vocation. And the call is understood to come from the gods or the spirits. Even when a future shaman of his own volition seeks out the first experiences which eventually credit him with being a shaman, still his personal quest has to be validated as it were by the spirits who will appear to him in a dream or vision.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Bisayans*

In the Philippines, the call to shamanism must come directly through a sudden fit of trembling and insanity, as was the case of the shamans among the early *Bisayans* as we read in Francisco

<sup>34</sup> Francis X. Lynch, "Ang Mga Asuwang: a Bicol Belief," *The Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, Vol. 14 (December, 1949), p. 413.

<sup>35</sup> Demetrio, *Dictionary, under aswangs and witches: restoration of*, IV, R, p. 846; cf. also Lynch, *loc. cit.*, p. 410.

<sup>36</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 414.

<sup>37</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 13 f and *passim*.

Alzina's *History of the Bisayan Islands*, 1668-1669. Writing about the women priestesses or *balianas*, he says:

They were accustomed to go to the *nonoc* (*ficus closiodes*) covered with gold and ornaments made by them. There the *diwata* lived and there he selected them at his pleasure holding his unions with them . . . . Then those selected were initiated. The exterior sign was that he communicated to them a kind of madness, or they pretended that he did, making many grimaces, rolling their eyes and becoming enraged at times, as we find some of the ancient Sibyls and Vestals. With this it was understood that she was now possessed by the *diwata*. She began to relate fables and to say that the *diwata* was talking to her and giving her knowledge about future things to happen. "Gintitingan ako," which means "the *diwata* has just talked to me." With these demonstrations, some pretended, some really caused by the devil, these women are considered *catooran*, and begin to perform their functions.<sup>38</sup>

Or the call could come during a long period of sickness and depression when a *diwata*, *anito* or spirit would call on them offering himself as a friend, promising to be a familiar; or it could come by a vision, as was the case of a Subanon who, having been in the forest a number of days, and finding himself without food, suddenly "saw" a *diwata*, riding in a boat, who promised to become his guardian spirit.<sup>39</sup>

### Isnegs

In other cases, the call was more indirect, as for instance among the Isnegs. An older shaman would pick out a young girl as candidate for the office; she was made to undergo the ritual of consecration called *ipuwan*. The elder woman pours sweet-scented oil on the head of the candidate. She presses the *xaranait* beads on her forehead and blows over it through her cupped hands. The spirit is believed to be transmitted this way. The girl begins to tremble and shake all over. This is the first consecration. It entitles the girl to assist at the seances of her mistress, to act as assistant during the seances. But she may not conduct them herself. After the girl's marriage, the same identical consecration is gone through again; only afterwards may she hold her own seances.<sup>40</sup>

### Tinguians

Among the Tinguians, once a candidate is sure that a spirit is calling him, he approaches an older shaman and undergoes a kind of apprenticeship. He learns the details of the craft, the gifts suitable for each spirit, the chants and *diams* (myths) to be recited in each

<sup>38</sup> Alzina, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>39</sup> Christie, *op. cit.*, p. 70 f.

<sup>40</sup> Vanoverbergh, *op. cit.*, pp. 558-559.

specific sacrifice. The candidate must learn all this by rote; for the ceremonies must be conducted as perfectly as possible according to the teachings of the spirits of "the people of the first times." After several months of training, the candidate receives her *piling*. The *piling* which may be considered the badge of her shamanic office is a collection of large sea-shells, attached to a cord and kept inside a small basket, together with a Chinese plate and a hundred fathoms of thread. The *piling* of a dead shaman is much preferred to shells just freshly gathered. It is in striking her plate with the sea-shells that the shaman summons the spirits.<sup>41</sup>

#### Remarks:

From the above instances we realize that the shaman-candidate owes her vocation to some spirit or god; that the candidate undergoes an experience of initiation, that the initiation is but the beginning of a series of other experiences during her period of instruction under the guidance of a mistress, human or spiritual. It is only through repeated experiences like unto those of her first calling that a shaman is finally inducted into the company and craftsmanship of other shamans.

A word is needed on the sickness of the shaman during her initiatory paces. We are told that this comes in the form of insanity, usually following upon the candidate's disappearance for two or three days, sometimes even longer.

#### *Shamanic Illness*

About the Yakuts of North Asia, N. V. Pripuzov writes: "One destined to shamanism begins by becoming frenzied, then suddenly loses consciousness, withdraws to the forests, feeds on tree bark, flings himself into water and fire, wounds himself with knives. The family then appeals to an old shaman, who undertakes to teach the distraught young man the various kinds of spirits and how to summon and control them. This is only the beginning of the initiation proper. Among the Niassans of Sumatra, a man destined to become a prophet-priest suddenly disappears, carried off by the spirits . . . he returns to the village 3 or 4 days later. If he does not return a search is made for him, and he is usually found on the top of a tree, conversing with spirits. He seems to have lost his mind and sacrifices must be offered to restore him to sanity. The initiation also includes a ritual procession to the graves, to a watercourse, and to a mountain.<sup>42</sup>

This "madness" is in reality the first experience of ecstasy or trance. The candidate is carried out of himself; his body may be present, but his spirit is away communing with the spirits who have

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<sup>41</sup> Cole, *Wild Tribes*, p. 302.

<sup>42</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

invited him and who have made him undergo the first steps of his training. The bodily disappearance and the state of being abstracted are part of the same initiatory syndrome: departure from his wonted and usual ways into a new state or condition: the condition of one who is beginning to become a spirit. That is why he can "see" and "hear" spirits, while oblivious to the words and cries of his own relatives who are worried and anxious with his "madness."

One thing sure about this madness, however, is that it is temporary. The would-be shaman gets cured. How? it is most often mysterious. And his cure has always a connection with his especial relationship with a god or spirit. The cure is effected precisely through the initiation.

In this connection it is well to recall that psychopathic phenomena are found almost throughout the world. And such maladies nearly always appear in relation to the vocation of a shaman or medicine man. Eliade remarks that this should be no cause for surprise since "like the sick man, the religious man is projected into a vital plane that shows him the fundamental data of human existence, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world." But the primitive magician, the medicine man, the shaman is not only a sick man; he is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself. Often when the shaman's or a medicine man's vocation is revealed through an illness or an epileptoid attack, the initiation of the candidate is equivalent to a cure.<sup>43</sup> We shall discuss this at greater length below.

#### *Ritual Tree Climbing*

Common all over the world where shamanism has appeared is the connection of the shaman's initiation with a tree. Sometimes it is up a mountain that the candidate climbs, or up a rope or a vine like the liana. Ascent by boat is also reported.<sup>44</sup> The ideology behind this ritual of climbing seems to be the ascension motif. The ascension motif in turn seems to be linked with the belief in the World Tree which serves as the Axis Mundi, the Center of the World, for it is at the Center of the World that a break through is possible between the 3-tiers of the cosmos: to the Upper as well as to the Lower World.

Although this particular mythic view might no longer have been alive among the natives of the Philippines by the time the Spanish

<sup>43</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. Trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), pp. 81-102.

<sup>44</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 264 ff.; cf. also *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Trans. by Rosemary Ward (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 379 ff., also *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Trans. by Willard R. Trask. (Bollingen Series XLVI), 1954, p. 76 ff. Also London, 1954, p. 76 ff.

chroniclers wrote their observations, yet it is fascinating to note that the behavior of the shaman candidate still ran along the patterns traced by this ancient world view. We know from Alzina that the Bisayan priestesses used to go to the *nonoc* or *balite* tree and there, were initiated by the spirits; we know too that even at present, a so-called *engkanto* victim whom I take to be a shaman candidate, after having disappeared for a couple of days is found oftentimes on top of a tree, or else up the *kisame* or awning of a house, oblivious of the danger he is in. The same is true of the Yakuts of North Asia and the Niassans of Sumatra.<sup>45</sup>

An Igorot myth tells how Banggilit of Hinagangan while hunting was transported to the sky and there lived for sometime until the time for him to return to the earth came. He brought with him a couple of jars from the skyworld in return for his four years' labors there. He was let down to earth by means of a ladder whose foot stood on top of a tree. He slid down the smooth tree trunk, and descended into his own frontyard very early one morning as the cocks were just beginning to crow. His disappearance, his being oblivious of the length of time he had spent in the skyworld, his being let down upon a tree — seem to have shamanic connotations. However these elements were worked into the frame of a folktale.<sup>46</sup>

#### *Phenomenology of Philippine Shamans*

The following pages will present documentary evidence of actual observations by early and modern travellers of shamanism in action in the Philippines. A general analysis will be supplied towards the end.

Miguel de Loarca informs us that sacrifices among the early Filipinos were held only during sickness, during planting season or war. He reports: "The priestesses dress very gaily, with garlands on their heads, and are resplendent with gold. They bring to the place of sacrifice some pitarillas (a kind of earthen jar) full of rice-wine, besides a live hog and a quantity of prepared food. Then the priestess chants her songs and invokes the demon, who appears to her all glistening in gold. Then he enters her body and hurls her to the ground, foaming at the mouth as one possessed. In this state she declares whether the sick person is to recover or not. In regard to other matters she foretells the future. All this takes place to the sound of bells and kettle-drums. Then she rises and taking a spear, she pierces the heart of the hog. They dress it and prepare a dish

<sup>45</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 140; cf. also Francisco Demetrio, "The Engkanto Belief: An Essay in Interpretation," *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 1, 24, 89. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Engkanto*).

<sup>46</sup> Otley Beyer, "Origin of Myths Among the Mountain Peoples of the Philippines," *Philippine Journal of Science*, Vol. VIII (1913), pp. 114-115.

for the demons. Upon an altar erected there, they place the dressed hog, rice, bananas, wine and all the other articles of food that they have brought. All this is done in behalf of sick persons, or to redeem those who are confined in the infernal regions. When they go to war or on a plundering expedition, they offer prayers to Varangao, who is the rainbow, and to their gods, Ynaguinid and Macanduc. For the redemption of the souls detained in the inferno above mentioned, they invoke also their ancestors, and the dead, claiming to see them and receive answers to their questions.”<sup>47</sup>

The same Loarca reports about the Tagalogs: “. . . . the mode of sacrifice was like that of the Pintados. They summoned the catalonan, which is the same as the baylan among the Pintados, that is, a priest. He offered the sacrifice, requesting from the anito whatever the people desired him to ask, and heaping up great quantities of rice, meat, and fish. His invocations lasted until the demon entered his body, when the catalonan fell into a swoon, foaming at the mouth. The Indians sang, drank, and feasted until the catalonan came to himself, and told them the answer that the anito had given to him. If the sacrifice was in behalf of a sick person, they offered many golden chains and ornaments, saying that they were paying a ransom for the sick person's health.”<sup>48</sup>

Colin describes a sacrifice for a sick person. “The sick person was taken to the new lodging (built especially for the purpose of this sacrifice). Then preparing the intended sacrifice — a slave (which was their custom at times), a turtle, a large shellfish, or a hog — without an altar or anything resembling one, they place it near the sick person, who was stretched out on the floor of the house on a palm mat (which they use as a mattress). They also set many small tables there, laden with various viands. The catalonan stepped out, and, dancing to the sound of gongs, wounded the animal, and anointed with the blood the sick person, as well as some of the bystanders. The animal was then drawn slightly to one side and skinned and cleaned. After that it was taken back to its first location, and the catalonan there before them all, spoke some words between her teeth while she opened it, and took out and examined the entrails, in the manner of the ancient soothsayers. Besides that the devil became incarnate in her, or the catalonan feigned to be him by grimaces, and shaking of the feet and hands, and foaming at the mouth, acting as if out of her senses. After she had returned to her senses, she prophesied to the sick person what would happen to him. If the prophecy was one of life, the people ate and drank, chanted the histories of the ancestors of the sick person and of the anito to which

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<sup>47</sup> Loarca, *op. cit.*, p. 129 ff.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

the sacrifice was being made, and danced until they fell through sheer exhaustion. If the prophecy was one of death, the priestess bolstered up her bad news with praises of the sick person, for whose virtues and prowess she said the anitos had chosen him to become one of them. From that time she commended herself with him and all his family, begging him to remember her in the other life. She added other flatteries and lies, with which she made the poor sick person swallow his death; and obliged his friends and relatives to treat him from that time as an anito, and make feasts to him. The end was eating and drinking, for that marked the termination of their sacrifices.”<sup>49</sup>

Fr. Diego Aduarte describes the sacrifices in the north of Luzon: “The peoples employed more priestesses or aniteras, than priests, though they had some of the latter a wretched class of people, and with reason despised because of their foul manner of life. The devil entered these aniteras or sorceresses, and through them, and by their agency, he gave his answers. By these priestesses the Indians performed their superstitious rites and sacrifices, when they wished to placate their anitos or obtain anything from them. If anyone fell sick, the aniteras immediately came, and with oils and a thousand performances they persuaded him that, if he would believe in what they did, they would cure him. Then in his sight they performed and displayed a thousand fantastic things; and the devil so earnestly strove to give them credit that at times he made the people believe that the soul had left the body, and that the anitera had restored it by the power of her prayers and her medicines. Whenever the sick person recovered, they attributed the recovery to their own efforts; while, if he died, they were plentifully supplied with excuses and reasons to avoid the blame and to throw the responsibility upon someone else. . . . Before sowing their fields they used to celebrate their solemn feast-days, during which all the men gave themselves up to dancing, eating and drinking until they were unable to stand; and after this came that which commonly follows — namely, giving loose rein to the flesh. The women did not drink, for this was very contrary to their customs as they are very laborious; but they made up for it as well as they could, and in the dances and all the rest they did as well as the men.”<sup>50</sup>

Chirino describes a sacrifice thus: “The house is the usual place for the sacrifice, and the victim is . . . a fine hog, or a cock. The mode of sacrifice is to slay the victim with certain ceremonies, and with dance movements which are performed by the priest to the accompaniment of a bell or kettle-drum. It is at this time that the devil takes possession of them, or they pretend that he does. They

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<sup>49</sup> Colin, *Native Races*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>50</sup> Aduarte, *op. cit.*, pp. 286-287.

now make their strange grimaces, and fall into a state of ecstasy; after that has passed, they announce what they have seen and heard. On this day a grand feast is prepared; they eat, drink and become intoxicated, the priest or priestess more than the rest. . . ."<sup>51</sup>

And even much earlier in the first quarter of the 16th century, we have Pigafetta's account of how the early Bisayans consecrated the swine before feasting on it. "They first sound these large gongs. Then three large dishes are brought in; two with roses and with cakes of rice and millet, baked and wrapped in leaves, and roast fish; the other with cloth of Cambaia and two standards made of palm-tree cloth. One bit of cloth of Cambaia is spread on the ground. Then two very old women come, each of whom has a bamboo trumpet in her hand. When they have stepped upon the cloth they make obeisance to the sun. They then wrap the clothes about themselves. One of them puts a kerchief with two horns on her forehead, and take another kerchief in her hands, and dancing and blowing upon her trumpet, she thereby calls out to the sun. The other takes one of the standards and dances and blows on her trumpet. They dance and call out thus for a little space, saying many things between themselves to the sun. She with the kerchief takes the other standard, and lets the kerchief drop, and both blowing of their trumpets for a long time, dance about the bound hog. She with the horns always speaks covertly to the sun, and the other answers her. A cup of wine is presented to her of the horns, and she dancing and repeating certain words, while the other answers her, and making pretense four or five times of drinking the wine, sprinkles it upon the heart of the hog. Then she immediately begins to dance again. A lance is given to the same woman. She shaking it and repeating certain words, while both of them continue to dance, and making motion four or five times of thrusting the lance through the heart of the pig, with a sudden and quick stroke, thrusts it through from one side to the other. The wound is quickly stopped with grass. The one who has killed the hog, taking in her mouth a lighted torch, which has been lighted throughout that ceremony, extinguishes it. The other one dipping the end of her trumpet in the blood of the hog, goes around marking with blood with her finger first the foreheads of their husbands, and then the others; but they never came to us. Then they divest themselves and go to eat the contents of those dishes, and they invite only women (to eat with them). The hair is removed from the hog by means of fire. Thus no one but women consecrate the flesh of the hog, and they do not eat it unless it is killed in this way."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Chirino, *Relacion*, p. 270.

<sup>52</sup> Pigafetta, *Viaggio*, pp. 167, 169, 171.

Fr. Richard Arens, S.V.D., in the 1950's observed a curing ceremony in sitio Tubig-ginoo of Kawayan in Leyte. The features of this curing ceremony are still very much like those of the rites observed by the Spanish chroniclers we have mentioned above. The only difference here is that the ceremony, instead of being gone through only once, had to be straddled for 2 successive weeks, and had 2 parts. The first part is called *Pa-Apong* (i.e., the ceremony "to let the spirits come.") The family of the sick man gather round him in the sala. Four *tambalans* are invited, the chief of whom is said to be more powerful because he can contact the spirits. He meets the spirits and welcome them. Then for the space of an hour, he and his companions keep quiet in the presence of the spirits. Afterwards the chief *tambalan* speaks with the spirits and inquires what kind of sickness he has. An assistant *tambalan* will interpret to the audience the answer of the spirits. Afterwards the head *tambalan* will inform the audience what the spirits had told him. These are the things usually asked for:

chicken with red feathers and black legs  
black pig with white feet  
additional chicken — all white for other invited spirits  
seven glasses of wine  
seven glasses of tuba  
seven biscuits  
seven sticks of cigarettes  
seven pieces of rolled tobacco  
one dozen eggs  
betel nut chew quids or *tilad*.

Afterwards, the chief *tambalan* lets out a loud sigh — an expression of thanks to the spirit.

The second part of the ceremony is called the *pana-ad* (or performing the promise.) It takes 7 days to gather all the materials required by the spirits. After the 7 days the *pana-ad* is performed. This time the site is not the sala but the yard of the house. There are tables laden with the unseasoned foods required by the spirits. The patient is there with his family. The four *tambalans* are around. But they have their own specific roles to play: the chief converses with the spirit; the assistant is interpreter; the third is entertainer for spirits who are only visitors; and the fourth is the comforter of the patient. A big fire is built in the yard. Bamboo musical instruments and a rusty piece of iron are in readiness. Suddenly the chief *tambalan* will let go a loud shout, welcoming the spirits. After 5 minutes he covers his head with a red handkerchief and begins to dance. This dance symbolizes the welcoming of the chief spirit. All

present bow their heads, close their eyes and move lips silently in deep respect.

Then women with red kerchiefs round their heads dance around the fire. The men dance a kind of tinikling. The assistant *tambalan*, the interpreter, dances a saucer dance whereby he holds a saucer on top of one of his fingernails as he dances. After this the community together sings a very sad and sentimental song.

After the singing, the patient is laid on a table. The assistant holds a sharp bolo in his hand. Meantime the chief *tambalan* has worked himself into a trance and the patient is in a similar condition. It is believed that both are "magnified" by the spirit. Suddenly the *tambalan* will command his assistant to stab the patient. He does so with the bolo. Everyone is quiet; for should one speak, the patient would be wounded. Then the chief *tambalan* goes 7 times around the patient mumbling words which are said to be dictates of the spirit who has entered the *tambalan*. Then he blesses the patient and then the feasting begins. Seven days afterwards, the patient takes his first bath. At this time another banquet is prepared in thanksgiving to the spirit who was responsible for curing him.<sup>53</sup>

#### Analysis of the Shamanic Function in These Various Ceremonies.

##### *Sex of Shamans*

It seems that in the Philippines, especially in the early days, the female shamans were more numerous than the males. In fact, among the Bisayans, Alcina tells us, men who aspired to become shaman had to ape the ways and dress of women. These men were generally called *asog* (*bayog* in Tagalog).<sup>54</sup>

##### *Number Performing*

Generally a shaman would be assisted by one or two others who would answer her questions, playing the role of spirits.

##### *Relationship with Gods or Spirits*

The god or spirits with whom they had relationship were generally the *divatas* or the *anitos*. These could be spirits of dead shaman and ancestors, or natural spirits, or deities and gods of the sky or underworld. All over the world, Eliade tells us, wherever you have shamans of the ecstatic or meditative types, then there is generally linked with the practise of shamanism, a belief in the supreme gods. Among the Filipinos the supreme god was variously named: *Bathala*

<sup>53</sup> Arens, *Tambalan*, pp. 114-116.

<sup>54</sup> Alzina, *op. cit.*, p. 213; Plasencia, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

*Meykapal*,<sup>55</sup> *Malaon*, *Badadum*, etc. Loarca tells us that when he asked the natives why they offered sacrifices to the anitos and not to Bathala their answer was that "Bathala was a great Lord, and no one could speak to him. He lived in the sky; but the anito, who was of such a nature that he came down here to talk with men, was to Bathala as a minister, and interceded for them." The anitos were therefore the tutelary spirits of these shamans. They also seem to be sun-worshippers, at least the Bisayans.

### *Possession*

In general it could be said that the special relationship of the shaman with the tutelary spirit was through possession. But it was not mere possession, for between the shaman and the spirit there was a strong bond of familiarity, especially of friendship. The shaman allowed himself to become one with the spirit, to be used by him, to become fully identified with him.<sup>56</sup> We are told that shamans under the spell of the spirit would be sometimes hurled to the ground, would shake all over, make grimaces, swoon and foam at the mouth, and speak in a language and a voice not their own. This possession especially happened when the sacrifice was in behalf of a sick person or some other petition of importance. At other times, there is no possession that follows, even though the dancing and the singing and the playing of musical instruments are there.<sup>57</sup>

### *Instruments*

The instruments used by the shamans were generally bells, kettle-drums, large gongs, bamboo trumpets; we also know that Chinese plates were used along with the piling or sea-shells for striking the plates.

### *Dancing*

Dancing, singing, invocation, conversing with the spirits as well as greetings to the sun, and conversation between the chief shaman and her assistants are common occurrences. In some cases, too, mastery over fire has been reported.<sup>58</sup> Pigafetta tells us that the chief priestess in the rite for consecrating the swine, after the hog has been speared, took a lighted torch and extinguished it in her mouth. Plasencia tells of a catalan who, when under the possession of the

<sup>55</sup> Chirino, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>56</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 506 n.

<sup>57</sup> Plasencia, *op. cit.*, p. 18 f.

<sup>58</sup> Loc. cit., pp. 372-378.

spirit, was filled with arrogance "that she seemed to shoot flames from her eyes; her hair stood on end." We know that the *mancocolam* of the Tagalog would emit flames which were inextinguishable from his body as he lay under a man's house at night. The curing ceremony in sitio Tubig-ginoo is accomplished besides a huge fire built in the yard at the order of the chief shaman or tambalan.

#### *Animal Sacrifice*

Although other animals may be offered during sacrifices like the turtle, a goat, large shellfish, and a cock, yet the most important animal and one which was consumed fully was the hog or the pig.

#### *Other Sacrificial Items*

The use of rice-wine, tuba, roses, aromatic herbs could be to induce a certain transport or ecstatic condition on the part of the catalunan or the bailan. Certainly the song, the dancing, the beating of the gongs, the kettle-drum, the bells — all are means to induce the state of trance, during which the spirit is said to come and possess the shaman. It is then that information regarding the cause of the disease, or the cure for it, who the thief was of a lost animal or article, what course of action to take in order to avoid defeat or calamity, etc., — all these are known and seen and heard during the period of possession. However, it could be that even in the past there was in the Philippines some vestige of the techniques of ecstasy such as Eliade postulates as the most essential characteristic of shamanism. In modern times, however, there has been found among the Aetas of the Philippines the type of meditation-shamanism, one which is closely linked with the belief in a Supreme Being.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mircea Eliade in his above mentioned article "Recent Works on Shamanism," *History of Religions*, Vol. I (1961-1962), pp. 168-169, studies the works of writers on shamanism in Oceania and Southeast Asia. He refers with satisfaction to an article by Engelbert Stiglmayr, "Schamanismus in Austrakien," *Wiener Volkerkundliche Mitteilungen*, Vol. V, No. 2 (1957), pp. 161-190. For this study corroborates his own findings reported in his books *Shamanism and Birth and Rebirth*, *passim*. Stiglmayr discovered 3 kinds of medicine-men among the Kurnai, the oldest tribe of Australia: the *bira-ark* (bard, singer and seer), the *malic mullung* (healer), and the *bunjil* (actual wizard). The *bira-ark*, through his tutelary spirits is able to ascend to heaven. He is distinguished from the other two kinds by his relation to a higher being called Baukan. His seances are held at night, and these are preceded by meditation. Analyzing the myth of Baukan, Stiglmayr concludes: "The truly Supreme Being of the Kurnai is Baukan who has later been replaced by Mungan ngaua. Hence the connections of the shaman of the ecstatic type with a celestial Supreme Being seem to be attested to even at the most archaic stage of Australian religion. (This confirms our hypothesis on the antiquity of the techniques of ecstasy which are altogether in accordance with a belief in celestial High Beings"). *Ibid.*, p. 168.

## PART II

PARALLELS BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND SOME  
SOUTHEAST ASIAN SHAMANS1. *The Shamanic Call and Consecration*

Among the Andaman Islanders, the future medicine man (*oko-jumu*, i.e., a "dreamer" or "one who speaks from dreams") becomes one through contact with the spirits, either in the jungle or in dreams, or by dying and coming to life again.<sup>60</sup> In Car Nicobar, a youth who has a sickly temperament is set aside to become a shaman; it is the spirits of recently dead relatives or friends who thus choose him. If he refuses, the youth dies. Among the northern Batak the *sibaso* (shaman, literally, "the word," usually a woman) receives the call directly from the spirits. Under their instruction he is able to "see" and prophesy, or to be "possessed" by the spirits. Her seances take place at night. She drums and dances around the fire in order to invoke the spirits.<sup>61</sup> Among the Menangkabau of Sumatra, the *dukun* is at once a healer and a medium. Through his initiation he becomes invisible and can see spirits at night. The *dukun* can be either a man or woman. Among the Sea Dyak the shaman is called *manang*. The profession among them is usually hereditary even as it is among the Batak and the Menangkabau of Sumatra, as among the Isneg of the Philippines. Among the Sea Dyak, however, the *manang* could also be a sexless (impotent) man called the *manang bali*. The same class is also attested to among the early Tagalogs (*bayog* or *bayoguin*<sup>62</sup>), and the early Bisayans (*asog*<sup>63</sup>). We shall say more of this below. The Ngadju Dyak of southern Borneo also have the *balian* (priestess-shamaness) and the *basir* (an asexual priest-shaman). These, too, must have a special summons from the spirit before they can perform their function as intermediary between the world of the gods and spirits and the world of men. The *basir* also has his counterpart in the *tadu* or *bajasa* of the Bare'e Toradja of Celebes. These are usually women or men who pose as women (literally, "deceiver"). Both the *basir* and the *balian* of the Ngadju Dyak and the Bare'e Toradja are ecstatics, that is, they journey to the sky or the underworld either in spirit or *in concreto*. The *bajasa*, for instance, climbs the rainbow to the house of Pue di Songe, Supreme God, and brings back the patient's soul; or she goes and seeks to bring back the "soul of the rice" when it leaves the crops and these

<sup>60</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 342.<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 346-347.<sup>62</sup> Plasencia, *op. cit.*<sup>63</sup> Alzina, *op. cit.*

wither and die. Besides this, the *bajasa* during the great funerary festival, the *mompemate*, leads the souls of the dead to the beyond.<sup>64</sup>

We see then that both in the Philippines and some Southeast Asian peoples, the shaman always has a special relationship with the spirits or the gods, particularly with the supreme beings who dwell in the sky. We have seen, too, that the shamans could be either men or women.

### *Ritual Transformation of Sex*

But there is a special class of shamans who, although males, try to behave and function like females. They assume the tone of voice, mannerisms and dress of females. Some even go so far as to "marry" and live with young men in the village. We are told that this life and the changes it involves is assumed only after a direct command from the spirits. In many cases it is said that young men so chosen and commanded and who refuse to follow the call would kill themselves. For the penalty of refusal is death for the candidate.

In this regard, it is well to recall what Eliade has written on this peculiar phenomenon:

Ritual transformation into a woman also occurs among the Kamchadal, the Asiatic Eskimo, and the Koryak; . . . . Though rare, the phenomenon is not confined to northeastern Asia; transvestism and ritual change of sex are found, for example, in Indonesia (*manang bali* of the Sea Dyak, in South America (Patagonians and Araucanians), and among certain North American tribes (Arapaho, Cheyenne, Ute, etc.). Ritual and symbolic transformation into a woman is probably explained by an ideology derived from the archaic matriarchy; but . . . . it does not appear to indicate any priority of women in earliest shamanism. . . .<sup>65</sup>

One thing is sure, then. Ritual transformation of sex, whatever decadence it may historically have undergone, originally had a religious purpose: to reproduce in the person of the religious intermediary between the two levels of the cosmos: human and divine, the feminine element (earth) and the masculine element (the sky).<sup>66</sup>

## 2. *Magic Stones and Quartz Crystals*

Among Philippine magicians and shamans, we hear of stones or crystals being inserted into their arms or limbs, or being swallowed by them. These objects are said to render them "powerful," invisible, endowed with superhuman strength, invulnerable to bullets, impervious to attacks by evil spirits and evil magicians. The same phenomenon is attested to among the Dyak of Borneo. During the first

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 353-354.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

part of the *manang*'s initiation called the *besudi* (i.e., "to feel" or "touch"), the old shamans may introduce magical "power" into the body of the candidates in the form of pebbles and other objects.<sup>67</sup> The medicine man of the Semang, called the *hala* or *halak* cure the sick by the help of the *cenoi* or the "nephews of god." They are little celestial beings, servants of the divinity. They are intermediaries between man and Ta Pedn, and are regarded as ancestors of the Negritos. Quartz crystals are obtained from the *cenoi* who are said to live in these crystals and are at the *hala*'s beck and call. The healer is said to see the sickness in these crystals, i.e., the *cenoi* inside shows him the cause of the sickness and the treatment of it.<sup>68</sup>

Rock crystals are also important in Australian magic and religion as well as in Oceania. The beliefs, though complex, have the same fundamental structure: there are crystals or magic stones, detached from the sky, and though fallen to earth continue to dispense "uranian sacrality" enabling the possessor with magic powers of clairvoyance, wisdom, power of divination, ability to fly, etc. It matters not that many people are no longer aware of this ancient world view. As Eliade tells us:

Their uranian origin is not always distinctly attested in the respective beliefs, but forgetting original meanings is a common phenomenon in the history of religions.<sup>69</sup>

Let us also add that among the paraphernalia of the Dyak *manang* is a box containing magical objects, most important of which are the quartz crystals — the *batu ilau* ("stones of light"); by means of these stones, the shaman discovers the aberrant soul of the patient.

Filipinos use precious stones as protection against evil magicians and spirits. Arens mentions 2 kinds of diamonds: the *diamante* which is the element in its raw form, and the *brillante*, the refined form. It is believed that the *diamante* is more potent against the powers of the *barangans* and others. Another precious gem of supernatural power is the *mutya*. This can be obtained from a number of sources. The flower of a *kusul* plant<sup>70</sup> (*kisol* — Bukidnon, Bisaya; *kosol* — Pampango: a kind of ginger, *Kaempferia galanga Linn.*) has a shell-like gem which comes out of it as the moon rises. If the possessor buries this jewel in his body he becomes invulnerable;<sup>71</sup> a certain banana species is believed to yield a hard stone on Good Friday, at

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>70</sup> William Henry Brown, *Useful Plants of the Philippines* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1941), p. 429.

<sup>71</sup> Demetrio, *Dictionary*, Amulets and Talismans: Flower, II, F, p. 521; cf. also *Ibid.*, II, G. pp. 526, 527, 528, 529.

midnight. You swallow this stone and you become irresistible to women.<sup>72</sup> A *mutya* is also believed to be possessed by a rat. It approaches the person who is destined to obtain it. The rat vomits the stone, the person should pick it up quickly and swallow it. At the same moment giants will come and struggle with him for the possession of the *mutya*. But the possessor will be stronger than all of them. This type of amulet is called *anting-anting yatot*, greatly desired by thieves. It will make one rich by stealing. Like the rat, he will know who is rich and where the money is hidden.<sup>73</sup>

### 3. *Shamanic Madness, Ecstasy and Possession*

Wherever shamanism appears, the shaman begins his career with some kind of psychological crisis which borders on madness. We have said something about this subject above.<sup>74</sup> Among the Filipinos, this phenomenon is copiously documented both for the shamans among the lowland as well as the highland peoples. We have mentioned how the early Bisayans were selected by the spirits to become shamans precisely by this experience;<sup>75</sup> Loarca reports the same occurrence among the early peoples of Bisayas, Luzon and Mindanao. More recently, John Garvan, writing about the Manobos of Mindanao says that a bailan-elect "is not recognized by his fellow tribesmen until he falls into the condition of what is known as *dunaan*, a state of mental and physical exaltation, whis is considered to be an unmistakable proof of the presence and operation of some supernatural power within him. This exaltation manifests itself by a violent trembling, accompanied by loud belching, copious sweating, foaming at the mouth, protruding of eyeballs, and in some cases that I have seen, apparent temporary loss of sight and unconsciousness. These symptoms are considered to be an infallible sign of divine influence, and the novice is accordingly recognized as a full-fledged priest ready to begin his ministrations under the protection of his spiritual friends. . . ."<sup>76</sup>

Garvan also reports on the Great Religious Movement of 1908-1910 among the Manobos, Mandayas, Mangguangans, and Dababaons of Mindanao. It was called the Tungud Movement because the formula "*tungud, tungud, tagaan*" was on the lips of believers. Tungud was started by one Meskinan, a Manobo of Libaganon River, who was taken ill by cholera. His relatives abandoned him. But on the third day he recovered and searched out his people. He assured them that his appearance was not due to an evil, but a beneficent, spirit who had

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, II, L-C, p. 542; cf. also *ibid.*, II, B, pp. 497, 498, 499, 500.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Arens, "The Use of Amulets and Talismans," *Leyte-Samar Studies*, Vol. V, Nos. 1-2 (1971), pp. 125, 131.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Garvan, *Manobos*, p. 200.

given him medicine which he showed them. "They readily gave credence to his story in view of his marvelous recovery, and also because of the extraordinary state of trembling and of apparent divine possession into which he fell after recounting his story."<sup>77</sup> This movement had the ear-marks of a revival of shamanic religion. It was said that Meskinan had been changed into a deity, and that he was the only one to save the Manobos. For the ancient deities had abandoned the world in disgust and decreed its downfall. The Magbabaya of Libaganon had actually departed to the underworld and had taken up his abode near the pillars of the earth; he has been engaged in weaving a piece of cloth and had only one yard to finish; upon the completion of this, the world would be shaken to its foundations and destroyed. Meskinan had gone down there to negotiate with the Magbabayas. However, Meskinan and the new spirits he communicated to his followers could save their worshippers at the awful moment of the dissolution of the world. For these new spirits had marvelous powers to revive the dead, restore health to the sick, discern the future, make people safe from wounds, and, at the moment of the destruction of the world, could protect their worshippers from the wrath of the ancient tribal gods.

This religious movement followed in the track of the ancient sacrificial patterns ending in paroxysms. Garvan describes a sacrifice of a pig in honor of Meskinan. The point was reached when the high priest and his assistants killed the animal by plunging a dagger through its left side. Garvan describes it:

The scene that followed the killing of the pig was indescribable. The priests covered their heads and faces with their sacred kerchiefs and trembled with intense vehemence, some leaning against the posts of the sacrificial table, the high priest himself grovelling on the ground on all fours, unable to arise from sheer exhaustion. When the death blow had been dealt to the victim they broke into the mystic words, "*tungud, tungud, tagaan*," with loud coughs at the end. These words were taken up by the bystanders and shouted with vehemence. Many of them, especially the small girls, fell into paroxysms of trembling. Many of the men and adult women divested themselves of their property, such as necklaces, bracelets, and arms, and laid them near the sacrificial table. Others promised to make an offering as soon as they could procure one.<sup>78</sup> This movement fizzled out because it was discovered to be a racket. But much of the ancient religious motifs were built into their ritual by the organizers of the Tungud Movement.

Laura Watson Benedict in *A Study of Bagobo Ceremonial, Magic and Myth*, relates a trance or pseudo-trance, the chief actor of which was an old man, Datu Idal.<sup>79</sup> After a period of successive singing,

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>79</sup> Benedict, *Bagobos*, p. 156.

punctuated by the sharp cries from groups of men and women, the Datu fell on the floor. He was said to be dead, but would come to life again by and by. He gradually seemed to pass imperceptibly from his condition of stupor into natural slumber. After sunrise the next day, he stirred, opened his eyes, sat up and began to chew betel as though nothing had happened the night before. This took place towards the last day of the Ginum festival. She also reports a case of possession of a priestess, Singan by name, who officiated at the curing ceremony in favor of her son-in-law, Malik.

#### *Possession*

The structure of shamanic performance among the peoples of the Philippines as well as the peoples of Indonesia and Malaysia seem to possess a good deal of similarities, especially in the case of possession. Among the Dyaks of Borneo, the seance of the *manang* takes places at night. The patient's body is first rubbed with stones, while the audience chants monotonous songs. Then the chief *manang* dances to the point of exhaustion; it is then that she seeks and summons the patient's soul. The soul escapes the *manang*'s hands if the sickness is serious. Once the leading shaman has fallen to the ground, a blanket is thrown over him and the audience awaits the results of his ecstatic journey. When in ecstasy, the shaman is said to go to the Underworld in search of the soul of the sick which he finally captures, holds in his hand, and replaces it through the fontanel in the skull. This sacrifice is called *belian* and the sacrifice usually ends in the sacrifice of a chicken.

While in the state of ecstasy or possession, the onslaught of unconsciousness is often reported for the shaman both in the Philippines and in many peoples of Southeast Asia. The dance of the Malayan *poyang* usually ends in a state of *lupa* "forgetfulness" or "trance" (from the Skt. *lopa*, "loss or disappearance"). He loses consciousness of his own personality and incarnates some spirit. Among the Mentawai "the real seance follows the usual Indonesian pattern: the shaman dances for a long time, falls to the ground unconscious, and his soul is carried to the sky in a boat drawn by eagles." However, Eliade tells us, this shaman "never shows any sign of 'possession' and has no knowledge of exorcising evil spirits from the patient's body."<sup>80</sup>

The Kubu shaman of southern Sumatra dances until he falls into a trance. The Bataks of Palawan, another pygmy people of Malaysia, have their shaman, the *balian*, obtain his trance by dancing also.<sup>81</sup> When the Malayan *poyang* falls into a trance, he can also

<sup>80</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 349.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 340-341.

drive away demons and can answer whatever question is asked of him.<sup>82</sup>

### *Spirit Language*

Two other motifs are closely connected with the phenomenon of trance and possession: first, the shaman speaking in a language that is unintelligible, in a high pitched tone, or in a voice not his own. For instance, the *hala* and his helpers among the Semang once they had entered the leaf hut, begin to sing and speak in an unknown language, the "spirit language" which they profess to have forgotten as soon as they emerged from the hut.<sup>83</sup> In case of possession, of course, the shaman simply becomes a medium for the spirits or the souls to use in making their communications heard by the audience.

### *Doors Opening and Closing*

The second motif is that of a magical door that opens and shuts in an instant. The motif is found in Australia, in North America and in Asia. The Bagobos look upon the horizon as the spot where one exits from the earth. One Urbano Eli, tells of the hero Lumabat who was said to have been born after the flood and the dispersal of the races. In one of his wanderings, he is said to have come to a place called *bination* where the sky and the earth meet. He saw the sky going up and down like a man opening and closing his jaws. He says to the sky "You must go up!" But the sky said "No!" But Lumabat promised the sky that if it allowed him and others to go through, the sky might catch the last one who tries to go through. So the sky opened its mouth and the people hurriedly got through, but the bolo of the person second to the last one got caught in the jaw, and it devoured the last one.<sup>84</sup> The Pahang Negrito believes that a Chinoi named Halak Gihmal ("The Weapon Shaman") lives on the back of the great Snake, Mat Chinoi, and guards its treasures. When a shaman wants to enter the snake's body Halak Gihmal subjects him to 2 ordeals: first, he must pass through 7 carpets that are constantly in motion, approaching and separating. If the candidate does not act quickly he is liable to fall upon the back of the snake who lies below stretched under the beam that holds the carpet. The second is that of entering a tobacco box whose cover opens and closes at great speed.<sup>85</sup>

These two motifs symbolize the shaman's return, during her seance, to the "original times" when man understood the language

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>84</sup> Cole, *Wild Tribes*, p. 126.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

of animals as well as that of the spirits and the gods. It also is a symbolic flash back to the myth of the Center of the World (*Axis Mundi*) where exit is possible from one plane of the cosmos to another, whether up or below. And this is possible for the shaman today *only* in spirit, or in ecstasy.

#### 4. *The Nomenclature*

The name of the shaman itself coincides a number of times in the two regions: the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Among the Negritos the name is *balyan*, among the Mandayas, *ballyan*, among the Bisayans, *bailan*. The same nomenclature is found among the Ngadju Dyak, *balian* (priestess-shamaness), and we come across the same name among the Dusun of North, South and East Borneo. The shaman is called *belian bomor* in Kelantan; while the Sea Dyak call the seance of the manang, *belian*. And the impotent sexless priest-shaman of the same Sea Dyak is called *manang bali*.

The Philippine Negritos used another name for the shaman, namely, *puyang*.<sup>86</sup> The same word is used by the Jakun, another Malay race, to signify the shaman, *poyang*.<sup>87</sup> Another Negrito word *pauang*<sup>88</sup> closely resembles the Malayan word for shaman, *pawang*.<sup>89</sup> A fourth Negrito word for shaman, *huhak*<sup>90</sup> is akin to the Semang Pygmies *hala* or *halak*.<sup>91</sup>

It appears, however, that the greater number of coincidences as far as nomenclature goes is found among the Pygmies of the Philippines and their counterparts in Indonesia.

#### 5. *Mastery Over Fire and Madness*

Shamans all over the world are known for their ability to control fire and heat. Some can produce fire and heat in their own bodies. Linked closely with the power to produce heat is the rage, fury and madness which shamans, warriors and heroes are believed to participate in. Eliade has written some very instructive and interesting pages on the relationship between the inner heat or *tapas* of the Indian divinities and yogins, the *wut* or sacred force of the ancient Germans as well as their berserkers (literally, "warriors in shirts (serkr) of bears"); the *ferg* (literally, 'anger') of the Irish, and the *menos* ("wrath") of the Homeric Greeks.<sup>92</sup> In the Philippines we

<sup>86</sup> John M. Garvan, *The Negritos of the Philippines*, edited by Herman Hochegger (Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik, Bd. 14, 1964), p. 218. (Henceforth to be referred to as *Negritos*).

<sup>87</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 91, 34 ff.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 341, 345 ff.

<sup>90</sup> Garvan, *Negritos*, p. 218.

<sup>91</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-85.

are acquainted with the terrific strength that the so-called *engkanto* victims possess. It takes 5 or more able-bodied men to contain a frail, innocent girl, who says she is being dragged away by fair-faced young men to a waiting spirit car.<sup>93</sup> Plasencia reports that a shaman under the influence of the spirits "had to be tied to a tree by his companions, to prevent the devil in his infernal fury from destroying him."<sup>94</sup> Alzina tells of a woman of the local nobility in Sulat, a pueblo of Ybabao, present northern Samar. "The lady was . . . frail and delicate; when she was afflicted, she would climb to the highest part of the *nonoc* tree (*Ficus balete* Merr.<sup>95</sup>); there disrobe herself, leaving her clothes upon the highest branches; sometimes she came down undressed, sometimes half-dressed, depending on how long the madness lasted. Once when she had left her clothings up there, she came down and went walking down the streets, naked in the afternoon and was heading towards the church. Another chief who saw her thus, accosted her and asked her where she was headed. But she answered nothing. He took her forcibly to her house and ordered her to dress or cover herself until she came to. Ashamed at being seen in her nudity and realizing that she had gone that way through the village streets, she began to cry. The place was near my church, and so I learned all this from the chief who had met her. She remained in this state for many months, and this was a sign of her being *Daetan*. . . ."<sup>96</sup>

Madness and mastery over fire are well documented all over the world and known to be a magico-religious phenomena which are very archaic. For primitive people attribute the quality of "burning" or of being "very hot" to magico-religious power. The religious fervor felt by mystics in the course of their prayer or contemplation is known all over the world of Christianity as well. It is told of a young Jesuit saint, St. Stanislaus Kostka, for instance, that he had to go down to the college well in the patio very early in the morning and apply cold water on his chest. So fervent were his outpourings of love to God that he had to recourse to this external means of cooling his heart.

Siberian shamans swallow burning coals; and in Fiji, families can walk over burning coals or white-heated stones. Hard-nosed anthropologists and observers attest to the genuineness of these phenomena. Eliade writes that "what is more remarkable, the Fijian shamans can confer insensibility to fire on the entire tribe even on outsiders."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Demetrio, *Engkanto*, pp. 136-143.

<sup>94</sup> Plasencia, *op. cit.*

<sup>95</sup> Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> Aduarte, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-222.

<sup>97</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 372-373.

We have seen that the *mancocolam* used to emit a kind of unextinguishable fire from his own body as he wallowed in the filth under the house. We know, too, that Bisayan shamans could extinguish a burning torch by taking it into their mouth as reported by Pigafetta; Alzina reports that there were stories of women "who take live coals of fire in their hands and on their lap without burning themselves or scorching their clothes.... of another who scatters her hair in the middle of a large flame without scorching it."<sup>98</sup>

The same phenomenon has been reported in South America where during an Araucanian shaman's consecration "the masters and neophytes walk barefoot on fire without burning themselves and without their clothes catching fire."<sup>99</sup>

One more thing. The power to produce fire or heat in one's body is a sign that one has achieved a superior manner of existing. The myths of certain primitive peoples in Australia, New Guinea, Trobriand, Marquesas Islands, South America<sup>100</sup> tell that the old women of the tribe "naturally" possessed fire in their genital organs which they used for cooking their food. The men finally got hold of it only through trickery. Two historical events may be reflected in these myths, first, the hegemony of women in the matriarchal society, and second, "... the fact that fire, being produced by the friction of two pieces of wood (that is, by their 'sexual union'), was regarded as existing naturally in the piece which represented the female. In this sort of culture woman symbolizes the natural sorceress. But men finally achieved 'mastery' over fire and in the end the sorcerers became more powerful and more numerous than their female counterparts. In Dobo the aborigines believe that both male and female magicians fly by night and traces of the fire which they leave behind them can be seen."<sup>101</sup>

Mastery over fire, magic or inner heat, and the falling into a furor or a rage—all these are manifold expressions of the magic power achieved by the shaman, by the smith and the hero through their initiation. As Eliade writes:

From the viewpoint of the history of religion, these different accomplishments show that the human condition has been abolished and that the shaman, the smith, or the warrior participate, each on his own plane, in a higher condition. For this higher condition can be that of a God, that of a spirit, or that of an animal. The respective initiations, though following

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<sup>98</sup> Alzina, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>99</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>100</sup> James Frazer, *Myths of the Origin of Fire* (London: MacMillan, 1930), pp. 5 f., 22 f., 48 ff., 83 ff., 123 ff.

<sup>101</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 80.

different paths, pursue the same end — to make the novice die to the human condition and to resuscitate him to a new, a transhuman existence.”<sup>102</sup>

Finally, let it be added that, a similar idea underlies the belief that heroes and all those who die a violent death, being hit by lightning, for instance, or dying after having been assaulted by an enemy, or drowning, or being hit by a falling rock or a tree — all who die thus are said to mount up the sky by means of the rainbow. A thing common in Philippine folk belief. This kind of a death is considered an initiation; therefore, a higher mode of being has been achieved by these victims.<sup>103</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Having presented the data, we cannot but conclude that the phenomenon of shamanism in the Philippines as well as in many Southeast Asian lands is very similar. The similarity is seen in the manner the shaman is called and consecrated. The madness characteristic of the Philippine shaman-to-be is also borne out among the shaman candidates of Indonesia and Malaysia. The actual seance, often held at night, by women shamans, along with one or more assistants, ends up with the priestess falling on the ground, foaming at the mouth, often turning rigid and unconscious. During this interval, she is believed to be either carried away in ecstasy to regions where the gods and the spirits or the souls of the dead dwell; or else, her body is possessed by spirits and souls of ancestors who speak their messages to the people through the shaman as medium. In either case, whether the seance ends in ecstasy or possession, the shaman is the central figure who acts as intermediary between the spirit world and the world of men. Other magical powers attributed to shamans in many parts of the world are also attested to in both regions: magic stones and quartz crystals, control of fire, tree climbing and ritual transformation of sex. The author has been greatly impressed by this closeness. It remains to penetrate deeper the causal nexus between Philippines, Indonesian and Malayan shamanism.

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<sup>102</sup> Eliade, *Rites and Symbols*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>103</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 206.