

# INLAND-COASTAL PHILIPPINE HYBRIDITY: HETEROGLOSSIA IN AGUSAN MANOBO MUSIC AND RITUAL

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## ABSTRACT

*This article deals with the hybridity of contemporary Agusan Manobo music as evident in its repertory and in the heteroglossia of possession ritual performances, where various archaic and modern speech styles (including song and ritual dance music) co-exist. This hybridity is consequent to the history of Agusan Manobo relations with outsiders, especially Visayan-speaking settlers whose markers of group identity have been incorporated into Manobo rites. Such incorporation indicates the Manobo presence to a social world that is characterized by a mix between inland Manobo and coastal Visayan cultures.*

Keywords: *inland-coastal social relations, presence, possession ritual, heteroglossia, materiality of ritual performance*

In various ethnomusicological field researches I made in 1996, 1997 and in 2008 in Agusan del Sur, Mindanao Island, I documented a variety of indigenous Agusan Manobo possession rituals, some of which inscribed my presence, not simply as an “outsider-researcher” but as an “outsider *Visayan-Cebuano*” spectator who, as my research collaborators then perceived me, was “from the seas” (*dagatnon*), a “baptized Christian” (*binenyagan*) and even a “trader” of some sort. Visayan-Cebuano, my first language, is presently the lingua franca of the town named Loreto where I did fieldwork, the original homeland of one group of Manobos who speak the language known by linguists as “Agusan Manobo,” the subject of this essay. The place is a “contact zone,” where the culture of the

autochthonous Manobo group living in the town, identified with downstream Umayam River, had met and interacted not only with those of indigenous groups living upriver and in the mountainous region, but, more crucially, with that of dominant settlers from the seacoasts (Buenconsejo 2002). Owing to the place's comparatively isolated location, Loreto can be described a frontier town, a site of interest for anyone doing studies on Philippine inland-coastal group relations or on the cultural bricolage or hybridity which emerges from such history. After vast tracks of forested lands were cleared of timber for global markets from the fifties to the sixties, Visayan-speaking peoples from the Eastern Visayan region and other parts of Mindanao immigrated to the place en masse to squat and own land clearings, or buy and barter these with goods desired and of necessity by Manobos—sadly with a disproportionate modicum of value that was, in the long run, detrimental to the marginalized indigenous people.

In this paper, I will explore a set of acculturated Manobo music repertory and another set of possession rituals held in conjunction with the cure of the sick in which hybridity is evident. Specifically, I investigate the mixture of cultures as emergent from the entanglements between Loreto's indigenous inhabitants (Agusan Manobos) and their various "others," as mentioned above. In ritual, such hybridity is expressed in heteroglossia or in the juxtaposition of different speech styles or registers in (certain parts of) ritual.<sup>1</sup> I argue that this conjures up the everyday, social, material world that Manobos share with various others from different localities in the region. A number of speech styles coming from outside Manobo society are parodied in ritual and I will explore these as expressions of a social experience of encounters with other groups. The Manobos' presences of others are embodied in spirits who, residing in mythical worlds external to Manobo society, speak in their own ritual media. This, I assert, represents the perceived reality of on-the-ground social, material processes; hence, ritual is a reflexive, symbolization of that praxis. I pay specific attention to musical embodiments in ritual performances, for these can tell us much how such social relationships are felt.

## **SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE VISAYANIZED AGUSAN MANOBO WORLD**

Despite their cultural isolation, due to natural barriers (mountains and rivers), the aboriginal Umayamnon Agusan Manobos

have lived side by side with other ethnolinguistic groups in a place that has been a site of a steady traffic, albeit in low volume, of people and goods. Although not along the national highway at present, the place is populated by a community whose cultures have never been pristine in the first instance, but have always been organically mixed. The community living in the town at present is composed of four groups of people, each differentiated by the primary language the particular group speaks.

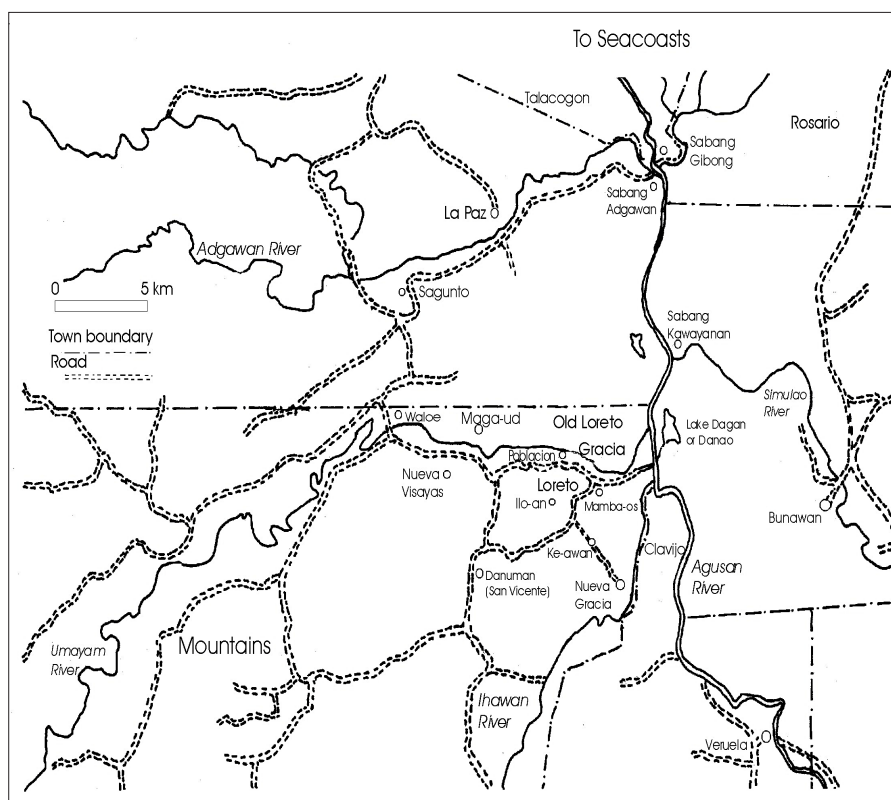
- (1) *Agusanen Manobos*—the original inhabitants whose primary language is Agusan Manobo;
- (2) *Visayan immigrant settlers* who speak two distinct languages: Cebuano and Ilonggo (Hiligaynon). The former come from the Eastern Visayan Region, such as Cebu, Bohol and Leyte islands, and the northeastern coasts of Mindanao, such as Surigao and Misamis Oriental, including Camiguin Island and elsewhere in Mindanao. The latter mostly come from Panay Island or have relocated to Loreto from Southern Mindanao;<sup>2</sup>
- (3) *Butwanon immigrants* whose primary language is Butwanon. This is currently an endangered language. Butwanon is quite distinct from Cebuano and Hiligaynon, and Butwanon speakers form a cultural minority who, historically, have been the original coastal people inhabiting the port of Butu-an and who have been in trade with the Manobo inlanders in Talacogon and Bunawan; and
- (4) *Other indigenous peoples* or natives (Cebuano *natibu*)—commonly lumped together by local Visayan speakers as “Manobos” living outside of Middle Agusan Valley—who have intermarried with the Agusanen Manobo speakers inland. These include people who speak (a) Banwa-en, the language spoken in lower Agusan River (in areas around the town of Esperanza), (b) Dibabawon and Mandaya in Upper Agusan in Davao, and (c) Umayamnon, Tala-andig and Binukid in the mountains, west of the area.

*Manobo languages (one and four above) seem to be mutually intelligible with one another (particularly that among Agusan Manobo, Umayamnon, Dibabawon and Tala-andig), but they are not intelligible to Visayan and Butwano speakers (groups two and three). Most individuals in the research area do not just speak one language, however. Instead, most possess a repertoire of languages, with the normative capacity to speak or use Manobo and Visayan bilingually*

in most communicative situations. Nonetheless, this bilingualism tends to be found only among Manobo groups one and four above, but not among most Visayans nor among the other recent settlers who cannot speak any of the Manobo languages. Thus, some kind of a discrepancy in the possession of language exists between the subaltern Manobos, who are bilingual; and the dominant Visayans, who are not. This situation exhibits the polarization of the Manobos on one hand; and the Visayan-Cebuanos, on the other; indicating a political asymmetry between them. Filipino (Tagalog-based national language) and English are not spoken in everyday life, though most Manobos, particularly those living in the town at present, are quite fluent in the former because of their exposure to national media, principally the television.<sup>3</sup>

Owing to the strong hegemony of the Visayan-Cebuano in the research area, it is quite difficult to isolate them (Cebuanos) from the Butwanos. Historically, Butwanos are coastal people who have mixed to an unprecedented degree with the Cebuanos. Manobos clearly perceive the latter as different from the Visayan-Ilonggos,<sup>4</sup> who are newly arrived immigrants to the place and who have bore the brunt of envy by the Manobos in recent years, for the Ilonggos are hardworking, having been responsible for developing the cleared forest lands into productive wet-rice fields with high yields. In contrast, the Manobos have had deep social relations with the Visayan-Cebuanos and the Butwanos because of the long history of inland-coastal trading relationship which I will describe below. This can be dated safely as far back as the sixteenth century.

The Manobos living in the center (*población*) of the town can be said to be the original inhabitants (*tumandak*) of the town. They invariably assert that their ancestors have come either from a place called Clavijo, a place near the mouth of Ihawan River (refer to Garvan 246) or Gracia, a place traversed by the Lower Umayam River, across from where the present Mamba-os is (see map below). Place names Clavijo and Gracia no longer exist in contemporary maps, but their locations are within the vicinity of present-day Nueva Gracia (for Clavijo) and Mamba-os (for Gracia). In addition, town Manobos in Loreto have had relationships with people who live along Adgawan River. This drains much of the neighboring river town La Paz. But that group speak a dialect of Agusan Manobo, which is distinct from the Lower Umayamnon (Agusan) Manobo in Loreto.



In 1879, the name “Loreto” was known to exist as a *rancheria* (Garvan 245); how this is related to Gracia or Clavijo is not known. At that time, Loreto referred to a small dependent settlement above the religious administrative level *visita*. It was composed of Christianized Manobos who the Spanish colonialists called *conquistas*. In contrast, Manobo “pagans” were called *infieles*.

The Belgian priest-scholar Peter Schreurs had written that there were very few Spanish clergy assigned to missionize Caraga from the late sixteenth to early seventeenth C.E. and, therefore, they had to conscript Caragan coastal peoples and the Visayan-Cebuanos from the Eastern Visayan region to help them Christianize the inland natives, i.e., the Manobos (cf. Irving). Christianization means putting the aboriginal, nomadic, swidden horticulturalist natives into settlements called *reducción*. When the Spanish Jesuits returned to resume their evangelical enterprise in Mindanao during the late nineteenth century C.E., it was most likely that the descendants of these coastal peoples from the previous encroachment were already established inland.

Historical records from the late nineteenth century show that the missionaries had a difficult time convincing Manobos to establish a nucleated settlement because of what it entailed: abandoning the lifestyle of changing residences and shifting cultivation. Meanwhile, many Manobo *conquistas* (i.e., Manobos who had been converted to Christianity) fled back to the mountains after the Spanish missionaries left the settlements; they were called *remontados*. Because of these continual dispersions away from the settlements, it is difficult to know exactly how permanent the small nucleated settlement that the Spanish Jesuits in 1879 named “Loreto” was or what it might have looked like before the Spanish Jesuits came.

Nevertheless, there is a strong probability that “Loreto” may have been a small-scale trading hub even before the Spanish Jesuits came, perhaps like Gracia or Clavijo aforementioned which means that Butwanen and Visayan speakers may have been in the place, owing to the coastal-inland trade relations. Though the channel for this past trading might have been cumbersome, the just-mentioned three rivers (two in Loreto, i.e., Umayam and Ihawan; and one in La Paz, Adgawan) connected Loreto to the largest river in Caraga Mindanao, the Agusan. This empties into the sea, facing the Visayan islands, by way of the city of Butuan. For centuries, foreign goods flowed in and out of Agusan River. It should be noted that trading relations between Butuan and the Southern Chinese port of Amoy, or Xiamen, existed as early as the tenth or twelfth century CE. Natural resources inland were extracted and delivered to Butuan City; while manufactured goods, such as salt, coins, cloth, porcelain and gongs, were brought inland. Hence, there could have been an inland-coastal exchange since ancient times.

Immediately after the Spanish-American War, the American colonial worker John Garvan devoted a whole chapter on inland-coastal commerce in his landmark book *The Manobos of Mindanao* (1941). Based on first-hand observations made during decade-long visits to inland Caraga region (1910s), Garvan noted the asymmetrical nature of economic exchange, with Visayans enjoying the advantage. This disparity was still in place when the logging industry brought Visayan laborers to the place during the fifties to the sixties, and it persisted thereafter because many other Visayan-speaking peoples from various parts of Mindanao, who settled in Loreto, were able to acquire landholdings for practically nothing. This more recent group of settlers were enticed to transfer their residences because they heard rumors that vast tracts of cleared forest lands, once

under the stewardship by the Manobos in the past, were available for barter or sale at very low prices. The place assumed its political administrative township only during the early sixties.

Going back to cultural geography, much as Loreto is linked to the north in Butuan via the rivers, it is also connected to the Bukidnon cordillera in the West via the same conduits. The headwaters of Umayam River—where a people speaking the Umayamnon language live—are found in Bukidnon province. Depending on the usage, the town Manobos in Loreto call indigenous populations inhabiting the mountaintops and slopes of Bukidnon Cordillera by various names: “from the mountains” (*bubunganen* or *ta-andig*); “from Pulangi River” (*pulangiben*); “forest dwellers” (*manggunwangan*) or people who speak the “mountain language” (*binukid*). These terms do not refer to formal ethnolinguistic cultural groupings. Furthermore, the Manobos in Loreto have exoticized the mountain people with whom they themselves are related by blood or marriage. They attribute ways of barbarity and savagery to them, especially describing those farthest from their cosmos as “raw meat eaters.” Their men are perceived to be fierce (*magabat*), and some are even believed to be practicing intertribal warfare ambush (*minangadjen*).

During the first decade of the twentieth-century of American colonial rule, an important police outpost, believed to have been named after an American officer named Waloe, was assigned to pacify and tame the “wild natives” (as “non-Christian, non-Moslems” Filipinos were then called by the American colonial workers).<sup>5</sup> Some Manobos refer to such times of war (extending to the Japanese-American/Filipino war of the forties) as *buwes de kutsilyu* (literally, “justice by the bolo”).

The headwaters of Ihawan are multiple and are found in Davao province—southwest and south of Loreto.<sup>6</sup> Based on information gathered during fieldwork, I have learnt that there were children abducted (*bihag*) elsewhere and brought to places such as Magimon, Calinan and Te-on in Davao. There they were said to be sold to Moslems. It is interesting to note that Moslems have frequented these mountainous places, south of Bukidnon, from North Cotabato and from the Davao gulf area in the past, particularly from places, which are now called Tagum (via Libuganan River) and Davao (via the same river).<sup>7</sup> The river (in Loreto) called Ihawan (which means in Visayan “place where slaughtering is”) probably

owes its name to the confrontation between Manobos and Moslems or between Spaniards (in league with the Manobos) and Moslems.

Agusan Manobo relationships with neighboring indigenous groups and with Visayan-speaking settlers are manifested in a set of well-known Agusan Manobo music. An examination of this pertinent music repertory—vocal or instrumental—reveals that town Manobos in Loreto have incorporated the musical styles of their neighbors. For example, in the repertory of lighthearted, humorous, narrative song called *buwabuwá* (which Manobos sing during their leisure time or as a lullaby), a well-known piece “Le-ugan di’t le-ugan” demonstrates that it has come from indigenous peoples living in Bukidnon province with whom the Manobos downstream have had social relationships (particularly with speakers of Umayamnon language who live near the Upper Umayam and Pulangi Rivers in the town of Cabanglasan, Bukidnon). In two separate field visits in that mountainous region in 2003 and 2005, another version of the song was described to me during interviews. They told me that they had gotten it, in turn, from other Manobo groups living south of Bukidnon province.

“Le-ugan di’t Le-ugan” is in Manobo language with a theme about going to the market town of Malaybalay in Bukidnon, wearing a modern make-over, such as baseball cap (“overseas cap”), trousers (made of modern material) and boots (“combat shoes”).<sup>8</sup> From the context and musical style, it is obvious that the song, transmitted orally, came into existence only during the twentieth century when the Americans ruled the Philippine colony.<sup>9</sup>

From the coastal Visayans, the Manobos have assimilated the narrative song genre *composó* into their *buwabuwá* repertory. According to the Manobos, the two share the same style and—based on music analysis—this is because both genres are diegetic and have a metrical pulse (unlike the indigenous Manobo ritual song *tud-om*).<sup>10</sup> Brought by the Visayans, who were the Spanish colonial go-betweens, *composó* is Westernized music, i.e., it is metered, has harmonic melodies and accompanied by the guitar. Some of them have been hybridized with Manobo lyrics and narratives like a priest impregnating a native maiden or a cowardly priest made a laughing-stock for running away during the war. The Manobos have also assimilated many other Visayan-Cebuano song genres, such as the *balitao* (antiphonal, jousting sung duet); *harana* (courting song); and church songs, such as *goros* (hymn) and *pasyon*. More importantly,



local Visayan music heard over the radio (since the fifties), some tunes of which have been set to Manobo language, continues to be quite popular among Manobos today.

In the realm of instrumental music, particularly that repertory of dance rhythms, perceptions of movements depicting identities of neighboring indigenous groups are articulated in the traditional Agusan Manobo jaw harp (*kubing*) and bamboo struck zither (*takumboq*) musics. These instruments can play fast driving rhythms that emulate the gestures archetypical of perceived warlike behavior (*mingangadjew*) or war dance (*saut*). As mentioned above, these are associated with the fierce, but now gone, warriors (*baganis*) from the headwaters of Umayan (Bukidnon mountain) and Ihawan (Davao).

In addition, the dance rhythm *pinandanggo* (in the style of the Spanish fandango) is still quite remembered among the Manobos. This piece alone shows how far-reaching the history of the relationship between Manobos and coastal peoples is for the fandango was a very popular dance during the eighteenth and nineteenth C.E.

right hand striking one "string" with thin stick

left thumb plucking other "string"

Agusan Manobo dance rhythm called pinandanggo, documented 2008

In the music transcription below (measure 9 to the end), the right-hand pattern of quarter note followed by four eighths in the melody with the quarter note, quarter rest and quarter note pattern in the accompaniment is unmistakably copied aurally from the Spanish source, and becomes the rhythmic pattern in the Manobo piece above.

In the next section, I proceed to discuss hybridity in Manobo ritual.

## MIXING SPEECH STYLES IN RITUAL INVOCATIONS AND DIALOGUES

The Agusan Manobo ritual is a communicative event that clearly exhibits organic hybridity in the context of inland-coastal

group contacts. In this section, I will explore the notion of heteroglossia in speech styles enunciated in actual performances, particularly those that entail the performance of spirit-possession (*yana-an*). To understand the hybridity in the following examples, it behooves us first to discuss who the ritual participants are and the roles they play in a Manobo ritual performance.



Left: Walls y Merino's fandango, 1892, page 42

For any Manobo ritual of the possession type, three basic participant roles are necessary: (1) medium, (2) interpreter, and (3) audience. The medium uses a variety of speech styles, whose linear combination is unpredictable, because there is no prescribed pattern from which each spirit ought to come one after another into the medium's body. Emoted contingently from that medium during an actual performance, the juxtaposition of spirit identities, as they take turn to possess the medium's body, is contingent to a performance. These styles correspond to the actual flow of the topics during ritual conversations, and, hence, these spirits' voices and gestures can be described as conventional "indices" to the topics of the said dialogues. The medium speaks not only to the audience, but also to the interpreter. The interpreter in turn speaks not only to the audience, but to the spirits in the medium's body as well. And members of the audience not only respond to the interpreter and the spirits, but also converse among themselves. In short, in Manobo ritual speech, there is hardly no simplistic, dyadic relationship between addressors and addressees.

To perform a participant role means to be competent in the speech styles that constitute the events or acts that the said role accomplishes in ritual. Speakers and listeners assume these “roles” vis-à-vis their acts and messages, sentiments and perceived speaker-listener identities. In a single ritual, it is generally not possible to assume more than one role at the same time (though there are many cases of overlap as when an audience member tries to help the interpreter’s invocation or the medium herself or himself helping the role of interpreter before s/he gets possessed). This constraint in performing participant role, however, *does not mean that actual utterances nor speech styles corresponding to that specific role are limited*. In addition, heteroglossia exhibits these unlimited enunciations and diversity of speech styles in only two of three categories of ritual events/acts which comprise a Manobo ritual. What are these ritual events?

Speech acts/events in Manobo ritual belong to one of three broad types: (1) invoking the spirits, (2) “magical” spells, and (3) spirit-human conversations. [The second type of speech event, i.e., magical spell, will not be discussed here. Magical spell does not exhibit hybridity because it has a fixed locution. It is primarily uttered and remembered through the oral-formulaic method.]<sup>11</sup> Each event foregrounds a specific aspect in the addresser-medium-addressee chain or in the dynamics of the participant roles concerned. Following Roman Jakobson’s holistic communicative paradigm, invoking the spirits foregrounds the “conative” (i.e., perlocutionary, or “effect upon the listener”) function of speech; magical spell, the “expressive” (i.e., illocutionary, or “effect upon the enunciator”); and spirit-human conversation, the “poetic.” In the last event, the medium’s body is “poetic” because the messages and conversational topics being talked about are reflexively encoded—literally “written” upon—in the medium’s body qua channel of message. That is, the medium “poetically” inscribes, or writes the discursive “contents” of the negotiation (i.e., the topics of the conversations and the medium’s reactions to them) between addressers and addressees. During ritual dialogues, the medium usually only makes pithy, incomplete statements, which the conjuring interpreter and the audience then fill in. In turn, the medium reechoes the audience responses. The back-and-forth tossing of conversational sentences, revolving around a certain topic, creates a shared and dialogical interaction (cf. with Shimizu).

For example, in the statement numbered 16 in the ritual conversation excerpt below (page 154), the singing spirit (appearing for the first time at that point)<sup>12</sup> gives information about what would have happened had the patients not been brought back home from the hospital. (The excerpt below was culled from a ritual done in the house of the officiating medium whose husband was the ritual interpreter. They faced the couple whose need was to ask for forgiveness [*pamalibad*] from the spirits (indirectly the medium and her husband) after the couple brought their sick children to the hospital within the three-day healing period.<sup>13</sup> This had angered the medium, for there is a strict taboo that one must not disturb the ritual place within three days after a performance of curing ritual. The couple's decision to bring their sick children to the hospital was prompted by their Visayan neighbors.) The listening interpreter then immediately jumps to the conclusion, i.e., filling in new information inferred from the suggestion of the spirit, that it would have meant death (an information the spirit did not, in fact, explicitly say). After which, the medium (still using the singing spirit voice) repeats what has been said (i.e., the hypothetical scenario of death had the patients not been returned home). Then, the interpreter reveals his uneasiness ("ill breath") regarding the fault of the patients' father, wanting to scold him. This prompts the medium to offer another new information, this time about a name of the spirit who saved the situation. The mention of this spirits' name, then triggers the interpreter to call the just mentioned spirit to incarnate. In short, given this excerpt, one can say that the voices uttered by the medium are not full explicit revelations, but they are merely pregnant with, if not prophetic of, construable information that the interpreter and the audience complete, translate and construct to make sense.<sup>14</sup> Because of this dialogics, each a "fellow constructor" of meaning, the medium utters diverse speech styles, perceived to be voices of spirit identities, and thus serves the role of indexing the flow of topics in the conversational floor.

In the specific performance above, the spirit "speaks in song" after the main sponsor (the father of the sick and who is, therefore, the main respondent of this ritualized face-to-face encounter) reveals the reason for his misconduct: his "breath was sad." The voice of the singing spirit is a response to that enunciation. In other ritual instances, the voice of the singing spirit is the most crucial expressive conversational act; it embodies compassion, and is the indexical icon for recognizing a related Other. Previous to the incarnation of

the singing spirit, the medium merely listens to the invocation, uttering nonlexical sounds to confirm the invocatory speech by the interpreter, supported by the ritual sponsor, regarding the purpose of the ritual. But what is the nature of this invocatory speech style?

As another speech event/act in ritual, invocatory speech is obligatory and performed during the first part of any Manobo possession ritual, and during the second part of that same ritual when cooked sacrificial food is displayed for spirits to see. In relation to its function, invocatory speech addressed to the spirits is highly rhetorical; after all, it is meant to invoke outside presences. These are literally brought inside the house—presences that refract flesh-and-blood participants who perform the role of guests fronting the hosts, the medium and the interpreter. Thus, spirit possession can be construed, at another level, as a metaphor of hospitality, though this is ironically dramatized, at first, as a violent act, as when a spirit penetrates the medium's body. In the excerpt below, the interpreter explicitly states the rationale for holding the seance: asking for forgiveness (*pamalibad*).

Unlike everyday speech, the invocation is in formal language, addressing personal spirits with distinct “full” (or “formal”) second-person pronominals. We see this in the use of the word “*(si)kuna*” (“full” second person) by the interpreter in numbered statement 1 below, and then used again and again by an audience member to help the interpreter, i.e., in statements 6 (*kunan*), 12 and 22 (*kyo*). Hierarchy, or the asymmetry of power, and respect between human beings and the spirits is clearly expressed in the use of these marked forms of pronouns. Invoking the spirits draws on the power of human speech to “pull” the spirits down to the ritual space, so that they can be addressed directly. They are hailed to incarnate, forcing them to heed the moral obligation and, in effect, recognizing the moral economy of what it means to “become human.” To convey more rhetorical forcefulness, the interpreter even calls the spirits with archaic Spanish phrases in statement 5, and then offers a proverbial saying, through “reported speech,” that everything is “solved” in segment 23. Thus, like ritual conversations between spirits and humans mentioned above, invocatory speech is heteroglossic, but invocations are generally formal and “well-placed,” articulating the speaker's breaths (*ginhawa*). Invocations are delivered in loud and clearly delineated speech phrasings composed of lexical words (unlike the medium's elliptical speech enunciations).

	Free translation in English	Transcribed speech (of the Manobo ritual interpreter)
1	<u>Interpreter</u> : (In) this (ritual), I am kneeling in front (of you). Ah, you Elder there. Ah, this (ritual) which is performed again now.	<i>Si-eni, egyuhod a't atubangan. Ab, kuna maniga-en duten. Ab, si-eni pigkuwa gihapon kunte-en.</i>
2	<u>Medium</u> : Hhm.	<i>Hhm.</i>
3	[recording clipped] <u>Interpreter</u> : If this is possible, let me explain. This is being prepared now, I will explain to you. Ah, (you who is the) Elder, who is being supplicated by brother Edwino and this...by...that sister Emmy. Because she has accepted her fault sincerely.	[recording clipped] <i>Ke mahimo si-eni, egpasabot ko. Si-e kunte-en ne nahikay, egpasabot tyo. Ab, ne maniga-en, ne ayeb ne migyudas ni Pari Edwino, dew si-e...kuwa...sujan Mari Emmy. Kay pig-angken din gajed sajep.</i>
4	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : My fault.	<i>Kasal-anan ko.</i>
5	<u>Interpreter</u> : <i>Corazón, por pabor, impormasinyo</i> , because of his confusion, of his mindfulness as regards to the illnesses of his sick children. Therefore...	<i>Corazón, por pabor, impormasinyo, tenged te kaelibeg en kandin, te sikan huna-huna te kan sakit te kan mge anak din. Di modo...</i>
6	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : You, Elder, appear.	<b>Kunan maniga-en, dugok ka.</b>
7	[recording clipped] <u>Interpreter</u> : Now this, this asking for forgiveness. They are asking for forgiveness, forgiveness. You can see this (performance), even if that is small, one candle only, but what (they) intended, they intended, that they are asking for forgiveness.... I almost couldn't accept (their request to hold this ritual), but because we are only human, I decided (to hold) this (event). I will assuage.	[recording clipped] <i>Si-e kunte-en, si-eni egpamyo da't pasaylo.</i> <b>Nangayo sila ug pasaylo, pasaylo. Kani makita nimo, bisan gamay ra kana, usa ka bu-ok kandila, apan gipasabot, nagpasabot sila, nga sila nangayo'g pasaylo.... Morag halos gani di ko makadawat pero tungod lagi kay tawo lamang gihapon kita, ako gibu-otan ko kini. Akong hupayon.</b>
8	<u>Medium (trembles)</u> : Hhm.	<i>Hhm.</i>
9	<u>Interpreter</u> : This (ritual act) is small. But this has (felicity)...this is here. That	<b>Kini gamay kini. Apan naa kiniy... kini nia diri. Kana kay sila nangayo'g</b>

	<p>is why they are asking for forgiveness because of the children whom you are taking care of, who are the god-children of this (spirit-medium). The children were brought there [to the hospital] without your permission.</p>	<p><b>pasaylo tungod sa bata nga inyong gitaw, nga kinugos ni-ani. Gidala nila didto sa way pagpananghid kaninyo.</b></p>
10	<p><u>Audience (main ritual sponsor):</u> Come here (spirit), because I have a plea for you.</p>	<p><i>Dugok kew da, su ehangyo ko iyo.</i></p>
11	<p><u>Medium:</u> Hhm.</p>	<p><i>Hhm.</i></p>
12	<p><u>Audience (main ritual sponsor):</u> You'll be the one to figure out.</p>	<p><b>Kuyo't matematik.</b>[clipped]</p>
13	<p><u>Interpreter:</u> In this (ritual act), please, don't be heavy-hearted, because that is requested. Therefore, I will realize the Inajew ritual (tomorrow). I will clarify this, that is what I have promised to the woman (referring to the go-between the ritual event). Had it not been for that woman earlier, I wouldn't have cared because I'm not feeling well. When [that woman] told me that they brought the children to the hospital without your permission, that (immediately) prompted me to implore for (your) forgiveness (in their behalf), that I will temper your anger (in this ritual) for their fault. That this (ritual)...this is being done now, there is no mockery/infelicity. But because one is a human being only, because one is a human being..</p>	<p><i>Sie, sadangay, ayaw kew'g begat-begat, su sikan kan pigpangajam. Ne a decir, a'g tuman te inajew. Egkabusey ko sie, kan kang kanak inpasalig te sujan behi. Kay kena pa sujan behi ganina, egpalingew-lingew a su migde-et yagi te ginhawa ko pedem. Pag-istorya ne pigbebe-etan dan en puli, kan kang mismo si-ak egpamujo a gajed te pasaylo, ne si-ak da si-e'g hupay ikew sikan kasaypanan dan. Ne si-e....si-e pigkawa, wada tamay. Apan tenged kay tawo lamang, tenged kay tawo lamang..</i></p>
14	<p><u>Audience (main ritual sponsor):</u> Because I was saddened.</p>	<p><i>Anged te'g kaguol te ke ginhawa.</i></p>
15	<p><u>Interpreter:</u> (one) can make a mistake</p>	<p><i>makakasajep.</i></p>
16	<p><u>Medium (sings):</u> Had (the children/patients) not been returned home.</p>	<p><i>Nga e, Ne kayke wada new kayi-uli kaynegde-et en kay...</i></p>
17	<p><u>Interpreter:</u> Look, had you not brought (them) back, ah (they would have) immediately (died). Had you not brought (them) back home, they</p>	<p><i>Na aba ka, te wada new i-uli, ah diritso na. Kung wala daw nila inli sa balay, patay didto sa hospital. Eb, na salamat man te sikan impormasyon nu. Na bala, sigue ipasige new, naa</i></p>

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	would have died in the hospital. Eh thank you for the information. Now, continue your story, your story, we would like to hear (it).	<i>mge istorya nu, gusto ney egsaputen.</i>
18	<u>Medium (continues singing)</u> : Had it not been intervened.	<i>Ne, kena kew en du-en Ne te natapenggae en negkade-e en key te...</i>
19	<u>Interpreter</u> : Right. That is true indeed. You know. I truly know why my feeling went bad after that incident. Now therefore, these words of mine will still be a slap on the face of my brother. Ah, I had scolded him, but I did not do it directly. (Only) in a mild manner.	Ay, gebay. Tine-ed man gajed sikan. Nama-an kad. Nama-an ad gajed te nekey't ingde-et te ginhawa ko, gumikan te sikan. Di modo kente-en, sikan sulti ko da egpad te kan pigsampalo ko'y kumpare ko. Ah, ingpanagda ko pero wada ko diritsoha. Mild ne pa-agi.
20	<u>Medium (sings)</u> : Had it not been for Suling-etan, please, there would have been something bad as regards to the health (of the children/patients).	<i>Eh, na kaySi Suling-etan, New kena kay, Midu-en en kayte ginhawa-an</i>
21	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : Na, include the other one (i.e., another spirit), you include (that spirit) so you can (also) treat the wife (i.e., mother of the patients).	<i>Na, pakasamaha da man te suja sebuok, pakasamaha da man pagtratar new te suja asawa[clipped]</i>
22	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : You (spirit) who are there.	<b>Kuyo da man si-e du-en.</b>
23	<u>Interpreter</u> : [mimicking the medium's speech:] "I say to you, 'I will accept one (fault as equivalent) for all of theirs (i.e., patients' parents who made a mistake in bringing the patients to the hospital, without the medium's consent)". [Mimicking the patient's father:] "My fault...period." That is the story we tell.[clipped]	[Mimicking the medium's speech:] "Mig-iling a iyo, ' <b>Angkenen ko se sabu-ok da se bu-ok dan ligas</b> '". [Mimicking the patient's father:] " <b>Sajep ko...tapos</b> ." Kan da kan eg-istorya ta.[clipped]
24	<u>Medium (Visayan spirit)</u> : This, my friend.	<b>Kini, amigo.</b>
25	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : It's you who knows.	<i>Iyo da man te'g ka-amo...</i>
26	<u>Medium</u> : My friend, it's almost that they did not....	<b>Halos amigo nga dili....</b>



27	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : weigh well....	<i>egtimbang-timbang...</i>
28	<u>Interpreter</u> : You listen to the statement.	<i>Paminegi new kan sulti.</i>
29	<u>Medium</u> : .... almost did not approach, my friend.	<b>...halos dili modu-ol, amigo.</b>
31	<u>Medium</u> : That...you were not able... have faith, my friend on....	<b>Kana...wala kamo maka... nagtoo ka amigo sa...</b>
32	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor begins to cry)</u> : Just kill me instead, my friend.	<i>Si-ak en puli't himataji, amigo</i>
33	<u>Medium</u> : the words, my friend.	<b>mga sulti, amigo.</b>
34	<u>Audience (main ritual sponsor)</u> : Just don't force me to contemplate on your godchildren. (cries) You are helping me illuminate my conscience now, my feeling and love for the children. You help, even if it was my fault, my transgression...	<i>Basta ajaw a'g pasud-onga kan mge anak nu. (cries) Migtabang kew da man kunte-en kan konsiyinsa ko, huna-huna ko't paghigugma kan mge bata. Tabangi key da man, bisan man e't kasajepan ko, kasal-anan ko...</i>

From the singing spirit, the medium code switches to another speech style, that of the Visayan-speaking spirit. This begins on segment numbered 24 above. The incarnation of this spirit has to do with the shift in the topic from (the song-act) compassion to (the reprimand-act of) justice. The spirit is prompted by the interpreter saying, “whatever you judge him.” For this reason, the performativity of this spirit was in contrast to that of the singing spirit who was incarnated earlier when the cause or agent of misfortune (the father of the patients and who, in this performance, was in the audience) had disclosed the reason for his misconduct: his breath was sad. In contrast, the Visayan spirit addresses the audience as “friends” (amigo), but not on co-equal terms because the tone of the Visayan voice (unfortunately difficult to capture in the convention of transcription) is demanding (but see the video footage of this spirit in Buenconsejo 2008a). The name of this spirit (specifically owned by the medium who officiated the ritual) is Makasasew, which means “one who makes noise.” The spirit originates from a tree which is within hearing distance from the headquarters of the logging company that deforested the area

during the fifties and sixties. It was around the vicinity of this area that the entrepreneur of the logging camp, the Butwanon-Cebuano speaker D. O. Plaza, had brought noisy, electronically amplified Visayan pop music during prestige feasts that “displayed” his position as a caring “boss,” the logging employer. Thus, at the broader analytical level, we have here the intrusive presence or the noise of Visayan modern industry felt and aestheticized as the Visayan spirit whose power is historically naturalized or hegemonically accepted.

Below is an excerpt of an invocation in 1996, which illustrates the Manobo recognition of Visayan social power. In this instance, the excerpt also inscribes my presence as a Visayan researcher. In the excerpt, the medium first addressed the (Christian) God, confirming its higher rank in the pantheon of Manobo deities. The Manobos are aware of the supremacy of this God. In fact, possessed mediums would continually remind ritual participants to be steadfast in their faith to this Being, a practice of Visayan religious piety that Manobo mediums, who are also devout Catholics, have learnt from the Visayans. But the Manobos never invoke God’s presence in possession ritual, for this God is impersonal (i.e., from the Manobos’ point of view as shown below). The message of invocation seems, therefore, wrongly addressed, though its unusual response was granted by my presence being a Christian researcher who has witnessed their ritual performance. Unlike the Visayan spirit whose incorporation had been conventionalized in Manobo ritual discourse, this God was invoked only in that specific instance, in my presence, given the context of their perception of my identity as Visayan-Cebuano.

In the excerpt, “God” is described as having left behind his creation, the inferior *ispiritu* (read: *diwata*) who have become the Manobo’s spirit guardians (*manlulunda*), or spirit familiars. The excerpt above comes from a long monologue that the medium made in that particular performance. The monologue is a *mimicry*, in fact, of a Christian priest’s sermon, perhaps even of a local politician’s speech. The excerpt starts with lines reminiscent of the Catholic Creed and ends with the sign of the cross!, after which the medium starts to invoke his spirit familiars, yet only rather reluctantly. Yet God was not offered betel nuts. No spirit possession took place because there was none of the ritual objects in which substances the spirits could possibly incarnate.

<b>Invocation addressed to God and not to the spirit familiars</b>	
<p><u>Miguel Antas (medium):</u> (invoking God at the beginning of the ritual in Manobo) Eh, God, who is the powerful, creator of the world, creator of earth and heaven.</p> <p>Ah, I wish, I implore your most precious presence.</p> <p>Take a look at me today, because</p> <p>I unexpectedly asked for your beloved name, my God.</p> <p>Now, my God, from the deepest of your own person,</p> <p>bless this ritual held this noontime, ah, through the remembrance</p> <p>of the spirits, whom you've taken care of, who live here on top of this world, like the</p> <p>spirits of the harvest, like the spirits of the hunt, like our spirit companions/ spirit familiars,</p> <p>whom you have given us here on earth, so they can watch over us here, since you flew</p> <p>to the skyworld. Ah therefore you left the spirits in order to watch over us,</p> <p>your children who were left on earth.</p>	<p><i>E, Ginu-u, ne makagagabum, mighubat te kalibutan, mighubat te pasak dew yangit.</i></p> <p><i>Ab pangbina-utun ku, hangyu-en ku't mahal ne atubangan nu.</i></p> <p><i>Egdemeyi kay kunte-en ne ka-awan, su ki bali</i></p> <p><i>nakakalit egsampiten ko't mahal nu'n ngadan Ginu-u.</i></p> <p><i>Kunte-en Ginu-u, ki bali, utang bu-</i></p> <p><i>et, egpanalangini si-eni ki bali binubat kunte-en ne ka-udtubun, ah, pina-agi te sa pagsa-ulug</i></p> <p><i>te kan mge ispiritu, na-inpang hangjam nu, dini't babew't kalibutan, sama te kan mge</i></p> <p><i>taphagan, sama kan mge sugujen, sama usab te sikan duma pad ne tawagenen ney,</i></p> <p><i>inhungyam new kanami di't kalibutan para pagpabantay dini, kay ikew migkayab kad man</i></p> <p><i>dya't yangit. Ah, sa atu pa, inbilin nu kan mge ispiritu ne, parag pakabantay kanami, ne</i></p> <p><i>nabilin ne mge ka-anakan nu dit kalibutan.</i></p>

## **MIXING THE SUBSTANCES OF RITUAL OBJECTS**

In Manobo ritual, speech is not divorced from the performative that it essentially is, nor is that performative speech separated from the ritual object that functions as an embodiment of that performative, i.e., without which the particular intention and purpose of the performative is not fulfilled. The ultimate goal of Manobo ritual, like most others, is to restore ruptured social orders between nature and human society or interpersonal relationships within that society which have caused illnesses. A composite of ritual acts (discussed above) are geared toward attaining social well-being, which is the overall aim of ritual. The potency of the ritual object is unleashed through the participant manipulating it, speaking with the object, so that this is “transubstantiated” from its mere physicality or prosaic materiality into the realm of the sacred.

The Manobos call the consecrated (read: mechanically, ritually manipulated) ritual object *sinughaban*, which literally means “that which was burnt,” following a felicitous ritualized performative-speaking. This “burning” is a trope for the act of “dedication.” Figuratively speaking, *sinughaban*, thus, means the “thing with which a ritual performative was acted upon.”

After a ritual performance, there is a taboo that one must not disturb the consecrated objects which are put on an altar inside the house, where the performance is being held.<sup>15</sup> Despite being leftovers from a ritual performance, these objects have been consecrated and infused with an inalienable aura because there has been a ritualized human act inscribed on it (a Roman Catholic will not find this unusual, for the leftover hosts after communion are put inside the tabernacle where the sacred is housed). Disturbing their “purified state” can cause harm (or what Manobos call *sagman*, or mystical power) to the doer, an inexplicable effect resulting from a neglectful and careless breaching of the taboo. Capable of causing things to happen, speech and acts are, therefore, taken to possess the same mystical force. For this, speech is some kind of substance, though its materiality, obviously sound, is physically invisible.

That these sanctified objects are auratic can be explained by looking into their use in everyday life and, hence, the basis of their symbolization in ritual. Most of these ritual objects are exchanged among persons in day-to-day life and, hence, they are signs of human

sociability. Other objects speak about Manobo social action in the natural world, where the Manobos have depended upon for survival (e.g., hunting, fishing, planting, travelling, and so on). Ritual objects are thus symbolic tokens pertinent to pragmatic activities—like meeting strangers, amending ruptured personal relations and doing subsistence tasks. By addressing spirits associated with human activities in day-to-day life and of those places where human praxis is fulfilled, ritual serves as a reflexive aesthetic, mimetic process. In other words, ritual objects, as technology (to draw on Heidegger's interpretation), bring about human presences to the world of their own making (Buenconsejo 2008b).

In elaborate rituals entailing the dance of possessed medium, animal sacrifice and communal feasting, the sound of ritual music being a necessary substance—like an act of speech—is capable of generating “energies.” The manifestation of spirit through dance is accompanied by the pair drum and gong. This depicts wholeness or unity through complementary. Let me explain this a bit.

Ritual music is characterized by a style of interlocking opposed, but complementary, colors of open and stopped sounds. The fusion of the materiality of animal/plant of the drum—played by one male—from the mountain world with the metallic manufactured gong—played by two females—from the seacoast is already and always a form of hybridity, except that what is mixed are natural symbolic substances that are significant, not to a colonial or postcolonial world, but to the ancient world of Manobo magic and resemblance. Manobo ritual music is known as a dance rhythm called *tinaga-untod* (in the style of the mountain people), indicating a cultural perception of the mythical mountainworld. This rhythm is played before the invocation to serve as a prelude that sets the mood of the participant, and during the possession dances—done “seven times” in both first and second parts of ritual (the latter shifting to “soft rhythm” as the medium dances cooked food offerings).

The Visayanization or the Visayan hegemony in Loreto has put a constraint into the holding of elaborate, festive and loud possession rituals that cap with joy as participants relish the eating of the cooked sacrificial pig's meat. For this reason, most Manobo rituals are performed in the outskirts of the town (e.g., in farm swiddens) for fear of Visayan ridicule and censorship. In response, a newer type of hybrid Manobo ritual performance has evolved.

This change also arises from the material history of Manobo inland – Visayan coastal social relationship that provided the more important condition for the emergence of this new hybrid ritual. Suffice it to say, then, that this newer type of Agusan Manobo ritual inscribes social history. The ritual happens only in performances among Manobo mediums who have interacted extensively with Visayan-speaking settlers, particularly those born of mixed inland-coastal intermarriages. At the end of this section, I will discuss the hegemonic Christian cultural practice *compadrazgo* (ritual kinship) that provides the backdrop for the incarnation of the Visayan spirit, and the mixing of substances which are unique to the hybrid ritual.

In this type, the guitar takes the place of the loud drum and gong. The rhythm is not termed *tinaga-untod*, but is instead called simply *binaylan* (in the style of the medium, or *baylan*). It seems to me that the guitar, cannot really “translate” the interlocking (complementarity) of different (open and stopped) sounds of drum and gong, but it marks the ritual rhythm, nonetheless, with a tuning appropriate to it. It is obvious that this is quite different from the guitar which plays Visayan *harana* or in songs sung during neighborhood *inuman*, but an instrument made to serve the local need for invoking spirits relevant to the new Manobo ritual form. In short, the guitar, to draw on Bhabha’s concept of radical hybridity, exists in a liminal, between and betwixt space, neither Visayan nor purely Manobo.

Aside from the incorporation of the guitar into the new form of Manobo ritual, various acts of mixing occur. I summarize these mixings in a table below, so one will have a quick idea on the major differences between the mixed Manobo-Visayan ritual form and that which is identified with the inland Manobos alone.

In the new form of Manobo ritual, food offerings to spirits are put on a table (*sangga*) instead of the grass mat laid on the bamboo floor of the house. The cooking of the sacrificial food is mixed with salt, obviously a material substance from the sea. Various substances from that cosmic realm are ingested by the spirit in the medium: beer; orange soda which, when mixed with the sacrificial egg, is ingested (instead of drinking pig’s blood raw); biscuits and even candies.

Parallel to the mixing of food offerings, bilingualism vividly characterizes the newer ceremonial form. In the excerpt below, the medium invites her Visayan spirit helper in both Manobo *and* Visayan

	Mixed (Manobo-Visayan)	Indigenous (Manobo only)
Ritual objects	guitar	drum and gong
	table	none
	food offerings cooked with salt	nonsalted food offerings
	beer, orange soda, biscuits (even candies)	
	bilingual invocation to correspond to Manobo and Visayan spirits	no Visayan spirit is incarnated, therefore, no Visayan language is used
	mixing of blood and liquor	none (sometimes liquor is not even ingested by the medium)

languages. From lines 1 to 6 below, the medium *speaks to the Visayan spirit in Manobo*, which suggests intimacy.<sup>16</sup> The Visayan spirit is then invited to chew betel nuts (a substance associated with the spirit of the mountain in lines 7 and 8), but then corrects it by pouring a beverage, which is the more appropriate Visayan spirit's substance. The medium then addresses her Manobo spirit guide from the mountainworld (lines 10-12), explicitly reminding the spirit to chew the betel nuts, for they are its substance. The normative Manobo rhetorical plea for compassion is then uttered at this point. Another spirit of this medium, this time from the sky world (lines 13-18), is also invoked. Thus, it becomes clear that the assignment of language and food offerings to spirit identities is clear-cut. This becomes all the more manifested when the Visayan spirit is explicitly called upon; the medium code switches her invocatory speech from Manobo to Visayan, enticing that being with a drink and cigarettes, both Visayan indexicals. The refraction of prosaic material reality into the world of imaginary ritual can be glimpsed in how the act of offering drink to actual ritual participants follows that of giving the drink to the Visayan spirit. One cannot miss the inference that ritual act, as it is a mimetic performance, is an imaginative reconstrual of the really real material world.

A few acts later on, the medium mixes sacrificial blood and liquor. This comes immediately after the sacrificial animal (a chicken) is killed. The gesture of mixing substances parallels the alternating

(bilingual) use of Visayan and Manobo to address personal spiritguides. No doubt, this form of Manobo ritual evolves with relationship of the inland Manobo and the Visayan-speaking peoples of the seacoasts in everyday life. To reiterate, I did not witness this newer Manobo ritual form in performances *done by mediums in whose families the languages Manobo and Visayan are not spoken.*

Free translation in English	Bilingual Manobo-Visayan
1 Delia (Medium): There is that obligation of mine, for the spirit of the seacoast. Come here	<i>Ke ma da man diya tumanen ku, na Mandagat. Ne duguk ka dini</i>
2 since I'm doing this for you today, my friend. You just pardon us,	<i>su'gtuman a ikew kunte-en ne a-den, amigu. Pasayluben key nud puli,</i>
3 since there have been small faults of ours, since you know this, friend,	<i>te ma man mge mangka-intek ne mge sae ney, su abi nu si-e amigu,</i>
4 my obligation. Because of our compassion, this person who is not one of us,	<i>pagtuman ku. Tunged te kayu-ny ta intawun, si-e kenaq ta,</i>
5 from the faraway place, just forcibly came. We're asking your forgiveness,	<i>ne madiyu na lugar, puli ad eg-aghat. Migpamaju ikew't pasaylu,</i>
6 you just pardon me, including those attending here. Forgive everyone.	<i>ne pasayluben a nud puli, bangted kan eg-andung kani. Tibu pasayluha.</i>
7 There will be no bad things, bad happenings. Please, you come here,	<i>Wada nekey'n mangkade-et, ne mge bitabu. Dangay, duguk kew dini,</i>
8 and you chew these betel nuts. You come here and chew these betel quids.	<i>aw mama kew te si-e mama-en. Duguk kew dini aw mama kew't si-e mama-en.</i>
9 (asks Herminia to pour liquor in glasses: one bottle of mallorca and one beer were opened and poured in two glasses)	
10 You who are from the mountains, this is what you chew, since it has been a long time,	<i>kew ne kuma, Bukidnen, si-e si ikew Imama ka, su nayugey en,</i>



<p>11 that ritual obligation which I have not done, since this has died, your friend.</p>	<p><i>ne wada ka, katuman, sukad mamatey te kani, si amigu nu,</i></p>
<p>12 Since how can we hold my ritual obligation, like that, their prayers, since I can do nothing?</p>	<p><i>Su amenuben ta pagtuman ku, ne anged ad te kan, eghinampu't dan, ne wadad egkahimu ku?</i></p>
<p>13 That is why I said, "Please, my friend, you who are from the skyworld,</p>	<p><i>Kali'g-iling a, "Adangay amigu, ikew ne langitnen,</i></p>
<p>14 you come here. Thus, pardon me, please, since I am calling you,</p>	<p><i>ne mu-andini ka." Su sadangay pasayluba ad, su- si-aken egpanawag a iken,</i></p>
<p>15 since this is our pity, to our fellow human being, our fellow human being.</p>	<p><i>tenged te si-e kayu-uy ta, te asi'g ka-etew ta, te asi'g ka-etew ta.</i></p>
<p>16 You're different, but for us, be compassionate to us here.</p>	<p><i>Iyu ya-in kew, peru kanami, maluluy-en dini kanami.</i></p>
<p>17 Pity, I'm kneeling in front of you. Come here,</p>	<p><i>Adangay, yubud a't atubangan nu. Muduguk kew,</i></p>
<p>18 chew the betel, and drink this wine, in the ritual place, where I offer the betel."</p>	<p><i>mama kew, aw inem kew't si-e binu, apugan ku."</i></p>
<p>19 Act 3: Invoking the Visayan spirit helper (in Visayan)</p>	
<p>20 You spirit from the seacoast, come, come here.</p>	<p><i>Ikw'n mandagat, dini ka, duguk ka dini.</i></p>
<p>21 (Medium dances and audience offers cigarettes.)</p>	
<p>22 Go ahead, you drink the beverage, (you) who have come here. This beverage</p>	<p><i>Sige, inum kamu sa bini. Inum kamu, nga nag-anbi. Kining binu</i></p>
<p>23 is offered to you. They are imploring in your beloved front,</p>	<p><i>nga gidalit kaninyu. Pangaliyapu sila sa inyung mahal nga atubangan,</i></p>
<p>24 that you'll give them good health and long lives. May they</p>	<p><i>nga batagi sila sa ma-ayu'g lawas, ug ta-as nga kinabuhi. Hina-ut unta</i></p>
<p>25 reach their goal, that is for the good of their lives.</p>	<p><i>nga ma-abut nila ang ilang gitinguba, nga ka-ayuban sa ilang kinabuhi.</i></p>

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<p>26 Go ahead, you drink first. You drink, you who are Manobos, come here,</p>	<p><i>Na, sige inum usa kamu. Mag-inum kamu, kamu nga Manubu, dinhi kamu,</i></p>
<p>27 there is a beverage for you. Those who are attending here, enter. Go ahead, you drink.</p>	<p><i>ana-ay binu para kaninyu. Nga nagtambung dinhi, sulud. Sige, inum kamu.</i></p>
<p>28 May you receive, the prayers of God, that their lives will be fine,</p>	<p><i>Hina-ut unta nga mag-alagad kamu, sa pag-ampu sa Ginu-u, nga ma-ayu ang ilang pangabubi,</i></p>
<p>29 healthy bodies. And give them the grace in their search for a living.</p>	<p><i>ma-ayung lawas. Ug hatagan sila sa grasya sa pangabubi.</i></p>
<p>30 No matter where they will go, you watch over them, accompany them.</p>	<p><i>Bisan asa mulakan, bantayi ninyu, uban-ubani ninyu.</i></p>
<p>31 (Visayan spirit offers drink to “guest.”)</p>	

The act of mixing blood and liquor is reminiscent of the blood compact *sandugo* ritual of kinship that had been romantically depicted by Juan Luna in his famous painting done in the late nineteenth century, which the revolutionary Katipunan secret society then had also appropriated for a different aim (Rafael, 168-177). The image is resonant of the act of friendship between Datus Sikatuna and Sigala of Bohol Island, and the Spaniard conquistador Legazpi in 1565. In another instance, the act expresses the parallel treaty of peace and friendship between Fray Jacinto and Mangabo in Placer Surigao in July 1631, following a local revolt in the Caraga region (as documented by the Jesuit priest Combes, see Schreur’s chapter 10).<sup>17</sup>

There are many historical documentations attesting to this type of ritual, where blood and liquor are mixed in other parts of Eastern Visayas and coastal Caraga. So, in relation to our subject, it is evident (i.e., because we do not have documentation of indigenous rituals inland until recently) that the ritualized mixing of substances originated from the seacoasts, and that this was later assimilated inland by the Manobos, as the Caragan coastal people married the Manobo inlanders of Agusan Valley. The medium who officiated the newer Manobo-Visayan ritual, from which excerpt I discussed

above, was, in fact, married to a Bunawanon speaker, and she herself is a mestiza Manobo-Bunawanon. It is important to note the materiality of this ritual: as a political communication, it is given a *substantive* expression. The substances blood and liquor are emblems of identities. Blood symbolizes indigeneity; and liquor, coastal identity.

The mixing of insider blood and outsider liquor is an image of racial miscegenation, or the creation of mixed identities to produce a hybrid called *mestizaje*, though in the discussion here, mixing needs to be understood in the context of a Philippine inland-coastal intercultural relationship, especially that of peace and friendship. The mixing of these ritual substances, as symbols, has to do with acknowledging the presence of one another. What might have this practice of mixing entailed in Manobo-Visayan everyday life, particularly in the domain of social organization?

The practice of mixed marriages is common at the present moment in the area, where I have documented the ritual above. Along with these exogamous marriages comes the ubiquitous ritual kinship ties called *compadrazgo* that have socially cemented the relations between Manobos and Visayans. This *compadrazgo* social relations are about friendships, and they are materialized in public during Christian rituals of baptism and marriage when parents of baptized and married children socialize with their neighbor-friends. Roughly, the same age group/set as the parents of the baptized and married children, friends—usually non-consanguinous kin and those that they have known intimately in the workplace—are taken in as ritual sponsors.

Thus, interdependent social relations among the Manobo-Visayan parties concerned are initiated/constructed and maintained in the said ritualized events. They assume the roles of patrons and clients. Patrons appropriate their status and role, as their clients seek their spiritual godparenthood guidance. This comes—of course—with material motivations. Ritual sponsors, the patrons, are addressed *ninong/maninoy* and *ninang/maninay* by the baptized and married couples whom the godparents reciprocally call *ina-anak*. Patrons are sought for by their prospective *kum pares* and *kumares* (clients)—the parents of the baptized and married children—because sponsors/patrons are perceived to be helpful in the clients' lives, as well as in their children's in the future, guaranteeing emotional support, job placements, recommendations, source of loans in times of need and crises. In addition, ritual sponsors also find the patron-

client arrangement beneficial because their clients give them deference and loyalty. Visayans have brought this to the place, having been Christianized. A Visayan hegemonic cultural practice, the Manobos have absorbed the *compadrazgo* relations. We find the same incorporation of hegemony in the realm of sensations or aesthetics: sounds of Visayan guitar and language in Manobo ritual, taste and smell of the seas (salt), sight of offerings placed on a table, dance gestures accompanied by guitar rhythm on triple time and so on. All these speak of the concept of presence that the Manobos face in the context of a hybridized social world.

### **THE PRESENCE OF THE VISAYANIZED MANOBO WORLD**

Like a parchment for inscribing language, the medium in Manobo ritual “writes” what is near at hand (i.e., as indices of topics in ritual dialogues), using codes that originate ironically from distant, faraway places. Similar to studies made elsewhere on the appropriation of elements from outside worlds to legitimate social power, these codes are exterior to the Manobo language.<sup>18</sup> Their “outsideness” embodies various forms of authority that uphold Manobo social worlds. The male Manobo elder is an archetype of indigenous customary law, but he resides in a mythical realm of the mountainworld. He is invoked by the drum-and-gong rhythmic motto—explicitly called *tinaga-untod*, or “of the mountainworld.” As already mentioned above, this is played as a prelude to ritual and as accompaniment to the medium’s dance that is done “seven times” in each part of the ritual’s bipartite structure. The medium dances in a circle around or in front of the food offerings. The dance is a mimesis of the act of unifying the cosmos. It suggests a parallel to the infusion of different sonorities heard from the accompanying drum-and-gong music where sonic rhythmic differences are made to interlock in creating the nonantagonistic, complementarity of sound colors.<sup>19</sup> The same principle of “complementarity-in-difference” is evident in the materials from which the sounds emanate: an infusion of substances that make the Manobo world.

The recognition of the authority of customary law is realized in the invocation when the male elder from the mountain is formally addressed by pronominals that mark his authority. This marking legitimates the status of ritual language. Yet, this authority is not monologic because, with the power of human speech to forge a dialogue, spirits are talked to and negotiated upon. In fact, they are made to appear in ritual space, in the first instance, as a response to

human rhetoric that inverts their negative identities or alterities. Spirits become agreeable, humanlike beings because objects of gifts are displayed for them to see and human rhetorical speech compels them to have compassion on human beings. In ritual dialogues, the power of spirits is not absolute, except the fact of the obligation that their authorities (*tavagenen*) must be addressed or called upon. It is the nature of these dialogues that decenter the work of spirit-power in ritual. Performing the negotiability of this authority is what remakes the Manobo social order.

In the contemporary world that Manobos share with Visayans, the incorporation of the Visayan spirit in the Manobo ritual is a means for writing the modern or new social order. Like the mountain spirit, the Visayan comes from the distant sphere in the Manobo cosmos, but the Visayan spirit is made intimate and familiar by hailing it as an *amigo* (friend). The incorporation of this spirit into the Manobo pantheon of deities is a proof of Manobo ritual's hybridity that conjures the really real social world of asymmetrical, albeit bridgeable, *compadrazgo* Manobo-Visayan social relationship discussed in the preceding section. In *compadrazgo* relations in everyday life, the distance in status and rank between affluent patrons and subaltern clients is breached, as ritual participants do with regard to the spirit world.

The Visayan spirit appears through its rhythmic motto *binaylan* (in the manner of the medium), indexically played by the Visayan guitar that simulates the customary rhythm played on the drum and gong pair. The incorporation of the Visayan guitar among the Manobos exhibits hybridization which is a corollary to the Visayan work hegemony as this is historically naturalized. The guitar silences the ritual drum and gong, but thanks to Manobo resilience to possess and hence domesticate outsider things, the guitar substitutes for the drum and gong. In ritual, the guitar is made to speak, not in a Visayan musical accent, but afforded to articulate a local speech style that is neither purely Manobo nor purely Visayan.

*Spirits, as distant others, thus affirm truths of Manobo presence in a hybridized Visayan world.* As proofs to what is said in the "here and now," spirits are incarnated as a third party, without which the encounter of participants is not affirmed. In a possession ritual, the Manobos constantly seek signs on the ritual media (the medium's body, being the most central) to seek answers from faraway locations. Spirits are thus telecommunicative means by which the causes of things are discerned, disclosed or revealed. In this regard,

the medium's body can be construed as an ancient television set. I use television in a literal sense because of its telecommunicative capacity like writing. The medium's body is a sound-image machine in whose signs participants divine, yet the truths shown in ritual media are symptoms of the on-going ritual dialogue nearby, rather than positively ascertained as "objective facts" per se (as Manobos themselves would naively construe them). In this paper, I have shown that these signs imprinted on the medium's body (as a ritual object) are contingent upon group consensus in performance. The flexible juxtaposition of spirits in the medium's body, thus, moves with the construction of reality conjured by the participants. Participants see and perceive these in the body as if the truths were from afar, yet paradoxically near.

In conclusion, I have explored in this essay that *spirits are presences—mirrors—of the undeniable social process of hybridity that is constitutive of the contemporary Manobo social world*. Presences, following current literary theory (Gumbrecht), are the relationships to the world and its objects. When these presences incarnate as figural subjects or as "spirits" in ritual performance, the Manobos' recognition of their worlds, past and present, is sighted and reflected upon. The presencing of hybridity is evident in the examples presented above. It is exhibited in the incorporation of outsider music repertory, and is manifested in a number of ways in ritual discourse: from code-switching of Manobo and Visayan languages in addressing both Manobo and Visayan spirits, to the mixed substances of salted food for tasting, to the guitar sounds for listening, even to a point of cross-cultural bricolage as in the signing of the Christian cross in my presence! The sensitivity of Manobo ritual to absorb whatever it is related to, thus, demonstrates its capacity for hybridity and mimesis.

Visayan domination over subaltern Manobos is also shown in the mimicry of a particular medium who accedes to the hierarchy between the supreme God and their *divatas*. The Visayan spirit *amigo* speaks about the on-going friendly relations (however detrimental this may be to Manobo self-esteem) with affluent Visayans who can be pleaded in times of stress and life problems. All these hybrid mixings are organic to the social world. They are a form of presencing, i.e., demonstrating the "taking place" of the recognition of a Manobo self to a related Visayanized world, hence a physical, albeit significant, relationship to a divergent, imported social world that Manobos have made their own, hence possession.



[Still from a video documentation taken by J. Buenconsejo in 1997.]

Let me end this essay by conjuring a memorable image that I saw in the field. On the walls inside the house where that hybrid Agusan Manobo ritual was held in 1997 (see above photo), there were images posted and cut from glossy magazines, showing cars (shown at the back of the medium), affluent couple in front of a yacht, a glamorous white house and a swimming pool (not shown above as these were to the left of the medium). These images were placed along images of Christian saints and photos of the officiating medium's grandchildren who got top honors in the public elementary school. Like the objects displayed for the Visayan spirit, the images on that wall are potentially "interpretable foreign objects," like the Visayan guitar, table, salt, and so on discussed above. They have been incorporated by the subaltern Manobos, as signs for indicating the kinds of social world they now inhabit and face.

The mixture of images may be "carnavalesque" (i.e., since there is no hierarchy in the random way the signs are stuck on the walls), these are objects of Visayan local modernity that Manobos have assimilated: honors in public school, devotion to saints, and glimpse of American glamour through Visayan culture. Put innocently for decorative purpose with no deferral to authority (that ritual performance, in a different context, canalizes), the images of modern glamour seem "irreligiously" juxtaposed beside the images of saints. Like the curtains of the room that indicate the natural order of things—the Visayan living room—that the Manobo

owners have learned to accept in the context of the Visayan cultural domination in the area, these “signs of wonder” (to invoke Bhabha) are potentially incorporable in ritual and interpretable to be, hence, “dedicated upon.” Yet hybridization is selective. In the end, it is Manobo culture that decides which is significant or not. In the event of starting the invocation to spirits with the signing of the Christian cross in my presence, then we reiterate an important point about hybridity. Manobo culture has never been pristine, for it has always been impure, hybrid or mixed.

This should not come to us as a surprise as Filipinos, after all we were never a pure “Malay race” but already and always a polluted cosmopolitan culture with strains of Hindu, Chinese, Spanish and American in our culture. Can anyone really blame the tendency for Filipinos to be xenocentric which, as this essay suggests, is based on an enduring cultural value for friendship and hospitality with outsiders?

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The interpretation offered in this paper is that of the author alone. Agusan Manobos do not talk about the hybridity in their rituals, although they are aware of the formal differences between the ritual where food offerings to spirits are put on a table (*sangga*) inside the house and those that are normatively put on the bamboo floor (inside the house or rarely on the ground outside the house) on a grass mat. They rationalize the differences as natural for each type of ritual, having been handed down in each as consequent to tradition.

<sup>2</sup>Relations between Kinamayo speakers originally living in areas around Prosperidad are unknown. Furthermore, eleven Ilokanos, Tagalogs, and Bikolanos from Luzon island are reported to be living in the barrios in 1996-1997 (i.e., when the fieldwork for this essay was made), but there are none in the Población. There have been Ilokano public elementary school teachers in the past, however. In popular usage, the words “Cebuano” and “Ilonggo” are glossed as “Visayan” or “Bisaya.”

<sup>3</sup>These languages are heard in schools, government discourse, and the national medium TV.

<sup>4</sup>During my fieldwork, Ilonggos did not mix well with the Manobos; undoubtedly, this is due to the “shallowness” of the history of social interaction between the two groups. For example, it is a common



saying among the Manobos in town that they never go to eat in Ilonggo households during fiestas.

<sup>5</sup>This camp stood at the foot of the Bukidnon mountains, before the Umayam River begins its upstream course. Bagani ‘warrior-priests’—associated with the families of Tawidi, Man-æwon and Casal—raided this camp intermittently during the American colonial period. Probably, this was in retaliation for the killing of their kin (i.e., as Renato Rosaldo had documented the history of Ilongot headhunting). Names of constable “military sergeants and lieutenants” such as Magno, Kalaw, John, Castro, Labayin and Dizon, are still remembered by the town Manobos whom I interviewed in 1996 and in 1997; the parents of these Manobos had helped in bringing the new order of life to Loreto.

<sup>6</sup>Each headwater of the Ihawan River is known by a different name: Tigbaoan, Anahuan and Biga Rivers. Part of the latter is located in Mount Ampaoid (altitude of 1,066 feet) in Davao and in areas near the headwaters of Maguimon and Kapalong rivers.

<sup>7</sup>One should note that the Davao Gulf had been a Moslem stronghold and an ally of the Cotabato Moslems until the “last conquistador in the Philippines,” Don José Oyanguren, “pacified” the Moslems there during the late 1830s (Schreurs, 281-2).

<sup>8</sup>For one Agusan Manobo version, browse [filipinoharp.com/manobo](http://filipinoharp.com/manobo). Also see Florencia Havana’s version in Grace Nono’s *The Shared Voice*, page 109.

<sup>9</sup>For details of this song genre, visit [filipinoharp.com/Manobo](http://filipinoharp.com/Manobo).

<sup>10</sup>For a comprehensive ethnographic interpretation of this genre, consult Buenconsejo 2002 or the author’s documentary film in 2008.

<sup>11</sup>In magical speech, there occurs a shifts in the weight of pronouns to the speaker, or “first person.” In fact, not a single second person pronoun is found in any of the statements in this event. The concern is not to bring an action—pity and benevolence—from the spirit addressee, but an action from the human addresser doing and expressing an illocution of wish and desire to the patients, without the spirits’ volition. As the invocation centripetally or “conatively” pulls the outside spirits’ forces into the ritual space, magical spell centrifugally or “expressly” hurls the chaotic forces infecting the family to the outside, and replaces them back where they belong, that is, in the cosmos at large. In a reverse direction, a magical spell manipulates speech in order to create parallel effects in the world, reconstituting the cosmos out of the chaos within and without. In a human way, Manobos recreate a power of speech whose mysterious efficacy lies outside their own beings. It is through the use of these spells that Manobos, as rational agents, are able to control their universe.

The magical spell is the opposite of the invocation of spirits because the former emphasizes not perlocutionary effect—that is, the need to pity the addressee—but illocutionary effect, the need to say one’s intention. This illocution is not addressed to an addressee, spirit or human, but only indirectly to the beneficiary, in this case, the sick patients. I say indirectly because, stylistically speaking, a magical spell does not really speak to such a person; in fact, there are none of those pronominals found in the invocation. Instead, it is very impersonal: we get the sense that the speaker/s are simply saying things, so they will come into being. There are no complex, rhetorical syntactic structures like those we found in the invocation. Without exception, all statements mechanically follow the Subject-Verb-Object-Associate/Referent, a non-normative syntactic Manobo structure that is nonetheless crucial to focusing the speaker who seeks to order the confusion around him. In fact, this “I”-centered magical spell is formulaic. Stock phrases are known to most Manobos. They are structurally comparable to the Western “nursery rhyme.” The repetition of spells helps speakers remember the common fund of ideas and truths. Each of these statements is actor-focused, since each starts with the clause “I” or “my.” The focus on the actor is ironic because the whole effect of this magical spell is intended to be nonexpressive. The statements do not indicate the state of the speaker, except indicating that the medium and the interpreter are doing simple acts: waving the chicken over the patients head, sprinkling the lime on betel quids, wiping blood on the patients’ foreheads, turning and returning the cooked food offerings, and passing these to the ultimate goal of the act: good health to the family.

<sup>12</sup>The singing spirit sings in the style of Manobo ritual song called *tud-om*, the quintessential Manobo vocal expression in verse form. It is improvised, unaccompanied solo song characterized by a guttural, dronelike vocal production.

<sup>13</sup>The excerpt comes from a recording of *pangandila* (lighting of candle for illumination), which is the simplest of the set of Manobo ritual involving spirit-possession, the purpose of which is to divine the will of the spirits.

<sup>14</sup>Depending on the type of spirit being performed, the medium’s speech can sometimes be totally incomprehensible. Conversational turn-taking between mediums and participants usually overlaps. Ritual séance performance always runs the risk of failure, given the complexity of vocal codings that mediums use. It is for these reasons that the interpreter is needed.

<sup>15</sup>An assortment of *sinugbahan* are found on this altar, such as coins representing the participants, crocodile icon stuffed with palm fronds, drum and gong, etc.

<sup>16</sup>The identity of the spirit is obvious because the medium, acting as interpreter (her husband in real life used to serve this participant role, but is now dead), calls that spirit “amigo.”

<sup>17</sup>I have analyzed this act of peacemaking settlement in an article, “Friendship and the Fear of Poison: A Particular History of Alterations in the Agusan Manobo Ritual.” See reference citation at the end of the paper.

<sup>18</sup>De Certeau and, following him, Benedict Anderson have talked about the exteriority of power that authorizes writing/language. For a detailed study on the sources of power in lowland Christian Philippines that is shared with indigenous people in the Philippines as well, see Cannell, 1999.

<sup>19</sup>Jose Maceda had written about the opposition of colors (within drone or between melody and drone), though he did not make a cultural interpretation out of his findings.

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