

## Visual Depictions and Ponderings: Sindy-Muro and Other Beings of Panay Cosmology

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### ABSTRACT

An 8x4 foot pen-and-ink framed mural based on ethnographical data was exhibited during the second International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the University of the Philippines Visayas (Iloilo City) in 2018. The mural foregrounds a character who is hardly known in the *sugidanon* (Panay epic chant) except when mentioned in a *buhis* (sacred ritual call for rain) or *pana-id* (sacred ritual call for heat or the sun). All the rest of the cosmic beings have been written about online and in print literature. Sindy-Muro's visual representation through the mural is based on descriptions of the Panay Bukidnon elders, who serve as research participants of this study; there is also the artist's imaging of their features in the context of their environs. Having fluid roles, these characters function as intermediaries of mankind. We examine the local context of how they address problems with Sindy-Muro as *parangkutan* (consultant) who ensures smooth relationships among cosmic layers. This study moves from physical descriptions of characters in the mural—from the point of view of the artist—to the interesting discourse about *husay*, the Panay Bukidnon's dialogic manner of settling conflicts to ease relational differences—from the perspective of an ethnographer—with the guidance and advisement of a *parangkutan*.

*Keywords:* Panay cosmology, Panay Bukidnon, *sugidanon*, *kalibutan*, seven hierarchies of the universe

### Introduction

This joint essay uses a format that describes the work of mural artist Katrina Francesca M. Nazareno alongside references to interviews with research participants<sup>1</sup> which are then interwoven with online and print sources. Katrina's descriptions written in a different font and size are followed by the analysis of Maria Christine M. Muyco, an established scholar of Panay traditional arts (e.g., music, dance, chants, and embroidery). This format allows our analysis to converse throughout the essay; the weaving of two voices enables the elaboration of the work's various cultural details and process of creation.

The motivation behind the making of my pen-and-ink framed mural (8x4 feet), shown during the second International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the University of the Philippines Visayas in Iloilo City in 2018, began as an academic requirement. Paul Vincent Geraño, my mentor in English literature, assigned this to me in class to obtain background information on Panay cosmology. I experienced many challenges, but my research participants enlightened me about Panay cosmic characters, inspiring my creation of a visual narrative. I joined the conference in 2018 with that work and more interviews took place in the following years. What initially began as a hunt for information in order to complete projects ended in a discovery that would add to an existing body of knowledge centering on Panay Bukidnon culture.

A medium in whatever artform bears some sense of communicability. A mural embodies visual language that makes an impact on people differently than a sonic medium. Typically, people encounter the Panay Bukidnon cosmology through their epic chant called *sugidanon*. Other visual documents or transformations based on these auditory sources exist. For instance, films. Films based on or portraying the Panay Bukidnon cosmology are at once captivating and engrossing; but as time-based and experience-based media, viewing them makes them as liquid, transient, and distancing as listening to audio recordings of these source materials. However, images rendered in paintings or murals fix those images in a certain way. The power of a mural lies in its sense of relative permanence. Time can stand still while looking at an image; and for some cognitive or thought-automated response, the mind is given this space to process an idea and the form of that idea. Sometimes, this extends to an inexplicable realization of an inquiry or phenomenon. A fathomable moment like this leads one to say “Aha!” as an answer suddenly comes to mind.

If the Panay Bukidnon’s *sugidanon* tells a story through a chanter’s voice, it is through a mural that the Panay Bukidnon’s story is seen and to a greater extent, more specifically imagined. Katrina’s framed mural brings into specific focus the stories of mountain dwellers in Panay (Western Visayas, Philippines) called the Panay Bukidnon. They reside in various areas of Tapaz (Capiz), Janiuay, Lambunao, and Calinog (central Iloilo), as well as the adjacent areas of Aklan and Antique in Western Visayas. Their epic chants are passed down by ancestors to and through a younger chanter. It is through these epics that various characters and creatures come to life in the mural as they are given personality and color. Each character in the epic is made more concrete by identifying them with hyper-clothing, antiquated jewelry and weapons, and extraordinary capabilities.

Anthropologist Felipe Landa Jocano writes about the epic characters of Panay and the adventures of their heroes such as Labaw Donggon (*Hinilawod* 11). Many decades after, another anthropologist and historian, Alicia Magos presents her

research on these epics, which have been identified under many names but belong to a body of work termed by the Panay Bukidnon as the sugidanon. This body of work was released through what Federico “Tuohan” Caballero and Magos refer to as *bulos* or episodes, referring to one of the sugidanon or chant series (*Sinagnayan* xxviii) which were released in volumes (bulos/episodes) by the University of the Philippines (UP) Press from 2015 to 2023. There are more volumes from the series being prepared for printing after 2023. In the published series, Magos refers to these epics as the sugidanon based on her primary sources, particularly Caballero and other elders from Barangay Garangan, Calinog. As an esteemed chanter, Tuohan has been recognized as a master of his art. In 2000, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) named him a National Living Treasures awardee (“Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan”).

Aside from my understanding of the information provided by my research participants, I also note what I have gathered from published books and other literary materials. I interrelate my readings with the views of my research participants. For instance, Magos lists the seven layers of the Panay universe specifically drawn from her research in Antique: the *Makaako*, *ibabawnon*, *kahanginan*, *lupan-on*, *idalmunon*, and *tubignon* (*The Enduring Ma-Aram* 52-53). In another essay, she refers to the highest realm as the *langitnon* or the heavens. The *ibabawnon* is the layer where the gods, goddesses, spirits of stillborn babies, ancestors, and *babaylans* or shamans reside. The *kahanginan* is the atmosphere above the earth and consists of flying entities; the *lupan-on* is where people and earthly beings dwell; the *idalmunon* is the dwelling place of underground entities below the surface; and the *tubignon* is composed of water forms and entities that live in the waters. In Magos’s post-1992 writings, it was said that the lowermost layer is the *ranig-ranig*, the layer that lifts up or carries all other parts of the universe with bamboo poles; *bagsang*, the seven-headed snake resides in this bottom universe (“A Shared Way of Life” 53; 64-65).

Preceding Magos’s scholarship, it was Jocano who was immersed in various communities of the Capiz highlands. His groundbreaking book about the Panay Bukidnon, to whom he refers as Sulod<sup>2</sup> cites insights provided by research participants Hugan-an and Ulang Udig. These two mentioned the *Hinilawod* in reference to Labaw Donggon, Humadapnon, Mali, and other key characters in the chant stories. Huga-an intentionally did not reveal more stories to him as “these are sacred and part of the healing rituals” (*Hinilawod* 5). Heroes of these stories have *haraywon* (spirit friends) which aid their adventures, counsel their ways to pursue women, and direct where their *balangay* (boat) should be headed for the next raid. One of the layers that Huga-an mentions in *Hinilawod* is the *urugan*, which means the highest point in the sky (*Hinilawod* 190).

Muyco's published work helps illuminate details in my mural. She notes that the Panay Bukidnon in Capiz also see the universe in seven layers, namely (from the highest to the lowest): the *kahawaan* (upper horizon), *ispirituhanon* (spiritual realm), *ibabawnon* (upper dominion), *tunga-tunga* (middle space), *dutan-on* (earthly beings), *tubignon* (water entities), and *idalumnon* (the underground beings). She discusses these layers in the context of the people's traditional embroidery called *panubok*, and how these layers are represented through needlework to shape their imagined *kalibutan* or environment (*Sibod* 71-73). She notes that this term also translates to "surrounding and holistic consciousness." Panay Bukidnon typically associate the term *kalibutan* with one's awareness about something: "*Ano andang kalibutan?*" (What is their awareness [of it]?). Thus, *kalibutan* is attributed to man's knowledge, awareness, and consciousness.

On the other hand, the elders of Barangays Agcalaga, Garangan, and Masaroy such as Norio "Mirasol" Lozada, Rodolfo "Sandigan" Caballero, Rolando "Depara" Caballero, and Romulo "Amang Baoy" Caballero used the term *anib* to mean cosmic layers. However, instead of identifying the layers from the top, the elders enumerated layers starting from below:

- Anib 1: *Lim-awon* (Underworld)
- Anib 2: *Tubignon* (Water world)
- Anib 3: *Kutkutanon* (Upper ground)
- Anib 4: *Pagtung-an* (Middle world)
- Anib 5: *Kahanginan* (Sky or wind horizon)
- Anib 6: *Ibabawnon* (Upperworld)
- Anib 7: *Langitnon* (Heavens)

The mural is a visual documentation of characters in epic chants that otherwise may fade in time from folk memory. Nicole Revel in her fieldwork of epic chants in Palawan notes that pressures of today's modern world threaten traditional living and practices such as chanting (317). Magos adds that education, religious conversion, technology, and socioeconomic structures are some of the factors that threaten the practice of epic chanting (*Pahagunong* xiv). Through Katrina's mural, the visuality of the epic narratives is captured and held in a frame, a kind of *material histoire* (material history) that remembers perceived realities, practices, and other beliefs that can contribute to the growing scholarship on this culture-aesthetic field.

The seven layers as illustrated in the framed mural provide a visual documentation of characters in the *sugidanon*. Though they have specific roles, they are flexible enough to bridge and communicate with those in different cosmic worlds and assist

mankind. The local context of finding connection among intermediaries grounds the notion and act of Panay Bukidnon's *husay*, a dialogic process of settling disputes through deities below the langitnon with individuals or groups in conflict. Prior to *husay*, intermediaries such as Laonsina go through an important process of consulting with Sindy-Muro, the parangkutan (consultant), who dwells in the sky world and oversees the affairs of many.

### The Work Process and Characters



**Fig. 1.** The framed mural and the visual artist's categorization of cosmic layers.

Choice of materials is part of my work process. I used large pieces of special paper taped together in this illustration. Then, I sprayed a layer of yellow-brown hue on the paper. As a variation to the background hue, I lightly coated selected areas with yellow and brownish hues. This contributed to the vintage feel of the artwork, making it appear as an old and worn artifact using the medium of pen and ink. Though this was initially seen as a limitation in creating the illustration, it also proved to be appropriate for depicting the entire scene. For one, the use of black in 90 percent of the piece provided a stark contrast to the light-yellow background. Other colors were used sparingly to avoid distracting the viewer from the overall neutral theme of the work.

My framed mural features the following entities: Sinda-Muro, Laonsina, *bakunawa* (gigantic snake), *mulang* (child-eating bird), *hubot* (umbrella-like sky bird), *bentohangin* (half-man, half-flying horse), *burulakaw* (fire-headed woman), *muwa* (half-human, half-gorilla), *bawa* (flying moon-eating entity), *aswang* (human flesh-eating carnivore), *manananggal* (viscera-sucker), *tiyanak* (unborn vengeful infant), *taghoy* (spirit or wind messenger), *kapre* (smoking tree-dwelling giant), *kamá-kamá* (small greenish entity), *tamao* (quasi-human), *murokpok* (malevolent entity holding a cane), *sigbin* (shadow-eating entity), *mangigilaw* (man-eater), *tay-hu* (half-horse and half-man), Nagmalitong Yawa Sinagmaling Diwata (one long name for Mali), Humadapnon, *tulayhang* (enchanted hermit crab), *tibsukan* (sharp-snouted piglet), *lulid* (pig-headed worm), *kataw* (mermaid), *syukoy* (merman), and *bagsang* (seven-headed snake). However, characters or entities such as Masangladon, Luyong Baybay, Luyong Kabig, and a creature called Angol are not included in the mural since I discovered them through more recent interviews after the mural was finished.

I present an overview of the mural in its minute form before explaining the cosmic creatures. My intention with the blurred digital representation (fig. 1) is to show the demarcations of the layers and not to lay the artwork in its full presence. The experience of it would be more fruitful when seen at the UP Visayas Museum of Art and Cultural Heritage (UPV MACH). However, in this essay, the individual characters are given clarity through detailed descriptions. Also, some of them are shown as clear examples just as how they have been portrayed in the mural.

I illustrate the divisions between layers to organize certain characters and their locations. However, I depict their interconnectivity with other layers based on their contribution to the balance of the universe by making the layers appear as though they were melting into the ones below them, avoiding rigid and constrained peripheries. Examples of this melting effect are seen in how the clouds connect the ibabawnon, how the rocky stalagmites in pagtung-an appear to pierce into tubignon, and how the waters of tubignon drip slowly into the lim-awon.

The blurring of certain boundaries in the artwork is reflective of the way the Panay Bukidnon conceive places and cosmic spaces in the sugidanon. Locations of entities

are not solely fixed in a single layer, as some of these beings and characters such as the taghoy and Laonsina are able to move back and forth from various areas of the universe to perform their task in keeping order among themselves and among human beings (*Pahagunong* xxxvi). Amang Baoy and other elders such as Rodolfo “Sandigan” Caballero, Rolando “Depara” Caballero, and Norio “Mirasol” Lozada explained that every anib has a function and beings that occupy these have distinct characteristics. Of the seven-part Panay universe, Amang Baoy said that there are mainly four anibs inhabited by human or human-like beings such as Luyong Kabig in the underworld; humans or part-humans in the middle world; Laonsina in the sky world; and Sindy-Muro in the heavens. This claim may be interpreted in many ways as he may be referring to the anib occupied by major characters such as Luyong Kabig in the lim-awon; Humadapnon in the lower dimension encapsulating the kutkutanon, the tubignon and the anib of the dutan-on, or earth creatures; the anib of Laonsina with sky companions; and alone in the highest anib, Sindy-Muro. Other anibs are occupied by beings considered as non-human.

Magos delineates layers to define spaces that are held sacred and should be left unperturbed. In her Antique version of the seven-layered universe, she explicates the overlap of layers, a *patong-patong*, as the universe is anchored on a belief system of protected zones that need to be observed and respected (*The Enduring Ma-Aram* 65). The overlapping of layers is not to be interpreted as a juxtaposition of layers, which in a sense erases the demarcation of borders.

The disruption of the *patong-patong* can affect beings that are in specific zones. Humans and places are symbiotic as they co-exist to thrive. Thus, layers are considered sacred and when these are not properly observed, “calamity, illness or sheer bad luck would befall humans” (Magos *The Enduring Ma-Aram* 65). To remedy the negative consequence of someone’s actions or revert the effects caused by disruptions, a *parangkutan* is consulted. According to Amang Baoy, one example of this is Sindy-Muro, who dwells in the Panay cosmos. She is consulted or informed of other happenings in the different anib and will delegate tasks if necessary. For instance, if there is a need to settle disputes, she calls on Laonsina who comes to aide as *husay* or mediator.

Other than disputes, concerns addressed to the *parangkutan* may include requests for a good harvest, healing, or any supernatural intervention such as disaster prevention. Another way of reaching out to Sindy-Muro is through *samba* where spirits are supplicated, and their names are called by the ritualist. As the supreme deity, Sindy-Muro may assign Laonsina to ease anger or early on, communicate differences between parties to avoid eventual conflicts. Rodolfo “Sandigan” Caballero shared that the pleas run from the lowest to the highest anib. For instance, from



Luyong Kabig, a concern is raised to Laonsina, then Laonsina consults with Sindy-Muro. Most of the time, it is through dialogues and negotiations that problems are settled. There are also instances when offerings of live animals and other forms of exchanges are required depending on the degree of damage caused to another.

### Layer 1: Kahawaan/Langitnon



Fig. 2. Sindy-Muro of the diwata realm.

The highest layer of the Panay cosmos shows the main character who oversees the activities of others underneath. My research participants identified her as Sindy-Muro, the highest reigning *diwata* (spirit goddess, enchanter). According to them, she is not really visible to the human eye, but rather imagined. I put their descriptions of Sindy-Muro together through pen and ink drawings: long, black, and wavy hair; full lips; and relatively medium-height nose. Large flat brushes were very handy in painting her hair.

The primary shading technique used in this piece include scribbling, hatching, and cross hatching. I used flowing strokes, creating lines that depict clumps of hair. On the other hand, I inked her smaller strands of hair with a thick black marker. I also outlined the clouds of ibabawnon with this marker. Brush markers were applied to non-black hues, while white pens, metallic gel pens, and markers provided bright hues and highlights. Finally, fine details were drawn meticulously using gel pens, the tips of which ranged from 0.8 to 0.1 millimeters in diameter. The letters translate to the syllables “si/se,” “n,” “da,” “y,” “mu/mo,” and “ru/ro,” which spell out Sindy-Muro’s name when put together.



Though Katrina's research participant Amang Baoy alluded to Sindy-Muro as a quiet force in Panay tales, her elemental presence is strong. There is a cloud of mystery around her, but she exudes power when sought for help. She is known to respond to pleas of restoring nature's balance and enforcing interventions among nature and guardian spirits. This is evident when she is called in a buhis (sacred ritual call for rain) or pana-id (sacred ritual call for heat or the sun). Sandigan clearly differentiated these two calls: pana-id is performed on a *bacolod* (hill-top) while buhis is performed by a river, shore, or any spot close to flowing water.

In one of the Panay tales, Mali (longer name is Malitong Yawa) calls on Sindy-Muro to aid the granting of her request. As a ritualist, she recognizes the different layers of the cosmic universe and addresses her concern primarily to its highest force. However, there are channels to communicate someone's plea. Luyong Kabig or those on middle earth receive the supplication but have to pass this on to Laonsina, after which is then communicated to Sindy-Muro.

Sindy-Muro is significant in the expression of the Panay Bukidnon's notion of husay as she decides whether this should be undertaken by deities such as Laonsina or not. This local term refers to arbitration, or the act of easing entangled relationships. In practice, the person who arbitrates is called a *manoghusay*. He or she tries to prevent disputes among dissidents of a community by knowing the nature of their problem, mediating to settle their issues, and negotiating a shared or agreed solution. If differences are irreconcilable, the manoghusay moves to the next step of advising each of the dissident parties to compromise.

Husay is synonymous to combing. In the Visayas, the object itself, the comb, is referred to as husày, said with an accent on the last syllable. This is differentiated from the verb, or the action word húsay, with an accent on the first syllable. In the framed mural, Sindy-Muro being at the top of the cosmic hierarchy has the vantage point of seeing the panorama of scenes below. She oversees the workings of the universe and calls on other characters to enact husay.

Katrina portrays Sindy-Muro's potency through her hair. She extends this to the sides of the illustration, all the way to depths of the lowest layer. Sindy-Muro's presence in all parts of the universe is depicted in the way her hair transforms into other visual elements of the scene, such as the clouds of ibabawnon, the caves of dutan-on, and the waves of tubignon. This recalls the comb analogy referred to earlier as husày. The hair, in all its prominence in the framed mural, bespeaks of Sindy-Muro's encompassing presence in ways that can be understood through her concern for everyone's harmonious relationship. She is depicted with a headdress of *baybayin* (Philippine ancient script)<sup>3</sup> letters in metallic gold and silver to provide a stark contrast from her hair. Also commonly known as the crown in English poetry

or prose, the hair occupies the highest point of one's body. It is a mantle directly on the head and this is where one starts to comb or husay the top part of the head down to the rest of the hair strands.

My research participant Amang Baoy explained the balance-maintaining system of the universe. He said that Sindyay-Muro's hardly-known presence in the stories of Panay tales can be traced to her unknown origin; there is no information whether she belongs to any family or kin. However, her presence can otherwise be felt in various ways. Amang Baoy tried to explain in the simplest way possible by providing an analogy using cellular phones. He said (I translate his *kiniray-a* words to English):

Sindyay-Muro can communicate like your phone. First, a problem arises within one of the realms. It could be that the humans of the middle world require something from the spirits and have offered a sacrifice to further ensure their prayers are answered. It could also be that an underground being such as Luyong Kabig is sensing a disaster that is sure to disrupt the order of the universe if not handled immediately. Second, these problems are taken to a messenger spirit. And so she sends out a signal, a kind of energy, or communication, delivering concerns to the mediators of the universe. The mediators could have either observed a problem, or had that problem taken to them by a source. Third, the messengers head to and from between other entities that may be of help towards solving the issue. If the problem could be solved just by proper communication between two people, entities, or deities, then this will be done. If it requires divine interference, then the messengers will rise to the topmost layer and consult with her.

As a *parangkutan*, Sindyay-Muro is a conjuror of order in the Panay universe. Katrina shows this in the mural by depicting Sindyay-Muro's face against her dark flowing hair in the background, which calls the viewer's attention. This surface image highlights Sindyay-Muro in the foreground, contrasted by a play of graduated light and dark spaces. Her presence is evident in the use of colors that provide the basic levels of foreground, middle ground, and background. This foreground is established with light colors superimposed against darker shades applied in graduating, or otherwise abrupt contrast. With this approach, it is easier to understand where one element recedes or ends (moving backward) and where the next one begins (emerging to the surface).

## Layer 2: Ispirituhanon/Ibabawnon



**Fig. 3.** Laonsina, one of the primary mediators of the universe.

The second layer of the universe is where other deities and spirits stay, as they play a role in overseeing and interfering with the actions of beings in the layers below them. Despite the multitude of deities in the pantheon of Visayan mythology, only two are illustrated here: the powerful mediator and messenger, Laonsina and the celestial body consumer, bakunawa.

Laonsina, more popularly known as Alunsina, is a diwata that my research participants described as someone with exceptional beauty. I depicted her with a *salakot* (straw hat) decorated with stars and the sun, as well as a long cape. She serves as mediator for entities in the lower layers who have problems with humankind. She communicates their concerns to Sindy-Muro, who finds solutions for them. She is also the sole connection between Sindy-Muro in the top layer and Luyong Kabig in the lowest layer. However, unlike Sindy-Muro, Laonsina is more well-known due to her character being frequently mentioned and described in the epics.

The term *laon* in Laonsina's name bears many connotations on aging that is associated with one's wisdom from years of experience and developed understanding of life's myriad phenomena. In the sugidanon, she arbitrates between men in conflict such as a *datu* (chief, leader, courageous man) fighting against another powerful datu, or two men trying to win over a beautiful maiden. She receives Sindy-Muro's instruction to mediate between people who have conflicts and need reconciliation.

As Katrina explained earlier, “She (Laonsina) serves as mediator for entities in the lower layers who have problems with humankind,” while also communicating these concerns to Sindy-Muro. The expanse of her obligation is extreme as she has Luyong Kabig in the lowest layer connected to Sindy-Muro in the highest realm. Such functions match the description of Amang Baoy that a manoghusay should come from a *kalawakaw* (neutral place) where neither of the contending parties stay. Thus, fairness is established and allows for communication, free from bias.

In my framed mural, I illustrated Laonsina’s salakot with a glow through a blinding white outline reflecting elements of the vast universe. She holds her hat steady to signify her role as messenger, mediator, and maintainer of universal activities. Additionally, actively holding down her salakot in this piece implies how she receives information on various issues first-hand. A string of baybayin is also written across her long cape, hidden in long black strokes which extend to the sides of her garment. The letters used here translate to the syllables spelling out Laonsina’s name.

I incidentally used a ballpoint pen instead of a gel pen while drawing a portion of Laonsina’s hair. After a while, the ballpoint pen’s ink reflected a violet-bluish hue, an interesting effect as this solidified the purple theme that I intended for the character. I also used that on her cape to depict her power and significance as one who occupies the uppermost cosmic realm.

The incidental effect of purple in Katrina’s inking of Laonsina’s hair produced what would be the appropriate color most fitting for her role and character. Purple is favored differently by many cultures, a symbolic representation of events held in high order such as Lent.<sup>4</sup> In the sugidanon, heroes revered as datu call on Laonsina to aid in matters beyond their physical ability, such as solving earthly disputes. In one of the epic’s *bulos* (episodes) titled *Pahagunong*, Laonsina is referred to as an arch-deity counselling the warring heroes who fight over a woman (Magos 338). She does not allow any of them to be killed as they are *baragubay*, or coming from one coconut stock, idiomatically meaning “blood brothers.” Laonsina is of the upperworld, befitting the ethereal color associated with purple.

On the other hand, to facilitate visual balance, the bakunawa, a gigantic snake or dragon-like creature, is given a place in the framed mural on the opposite side of the moon. I used a gel pen in presenting the details of its scales. In connection with Laonsina, I had the finer strands of her hair and cape flow through the air to match the bakunawa’s movements. Further up in the frame, Sindy-Muro’s hair lurks behind the bakunawa and Laonsina from two upper realms, almost as if tying them together.



**Fig. 4.** Bakunawa, a dragon responsible for the eclipse.

The bakunawa is the antithesis of Sinday-Muro and Laonsina. Katrina illustrates this dragon being intertwined with Sinday-Muro's hair to show connections, and yet the direction of the head towards the moon is autonomous of their twining. Sinday-Muro with the moon on her chest, as shown in the mural, provides light to the world. However, the bakunawa can cover this light resulting in an eclipse. In people's lives, such darkness can come in various forms: as retribution to someone's wrongdoing, punishment for the violators of the community's customary law, or foreboding occurrence.

The bakunawa is a mystical entity in the second layer alongside Laonsina. Its position may be due to the natives' perception of the entity capable of eradicating celestial bodies. It is common to observe strangely misshapen aquatic creatures in the lower depths of the ocean. Furthermore, fish near the ocean floor develop poor eyesight as light rarely reaches them. I considered these elements in designing the bakunawa, as seen in the misshapen head bearing five non-functional eyes (as they are depicted without pupils) on each side of its head. Its sharp teeth and long skinny claws give it a fierce appearance, much like how it is depicted in folklore. On the other hand, an illustration of the moon is placed in the center of the artwork as it is a crucial element in the bakunawa's folklore.

Often, people would make noise by banging pots, pans, and other objects to frighten the bakunawa and force it to retreat into the trench. Its behavior and features are likened to that of the bawa, which hides in the depths of the sea until it becomes hungry (Hontiveros and Tan 23). The Panay Bukidnon believe that it merely covers the moon or the sun's silhouette with its huge body, making it look like it has consumed these celestial bodies; but elders Amang Baoy, Sandigan, and Depara have said it is impossible for the bakunawa to consume such gigantic elements.

Both Laonsina and the bakunawa in the second layer of the framed mural function as the opposite-but-complementary beings in the Panay universe. In the sugidanon, Laonsina often appears among heroes to advise on their actions and adventures. Sindy-Muro does not really descend among humankind; rather, she sends her emissaries to accomplish the task of settlement or problem-solving.

Laonsina can directly appear to humans or may also send down a bird, snake, wind creature, or any being that will communicate to whoever can provide aid to problems. So, when the light of the moon is not radiating, the bakunawa sends a signal. It takes over, fulfilling a call or setting a balance; this time, it is darkness over light if it covers the moon, or otherwise, the effect of light over darkness, till another ecliptic cycle begins.

### Layer 3: Ibabawnon/Kahanginan



**Figs. 5-8** (left to right). First row: mulang and hubot. Second row: bentohangin and the burulakaw resembling the comet.

The third layer is the sky world with clouds and the atmosphere above earth's surface. It is the lowest in the upper section of the universe and contains flying beings and wind-travelling entities, among which the mulang, hubot, bentohangin, and burulakaw. Birds in the mural are illustrated with contrasting colors. I drew the mulang's feathers using warm tones of yellow and orange, whereas the hubot's feathers have cooler, metallic blue tones to represent rain upon its body and the shine of wet feathers. Furthermore, the hubot's wing structure was transformed to make it seem more umbrella-like, with its long winding tail meant to resemble an umbrella's cane.



Most creatures with wings in the sugidanon are messengers of the manoghusay, crossing wind and surpassing storms or distracting creatures that fly. Birds or half-breed creatures serve as vehicles for the needs of heroes in their adventures. The *banog* (hawk-eagle), for instance, flies out to an island across Panay to get magical water to revive a dying hero. They are bringers of life as they are asked to fly out, outsmart gatekeepers of sacred areas, and with great determination, deliver the needed potion across miles of horizon.

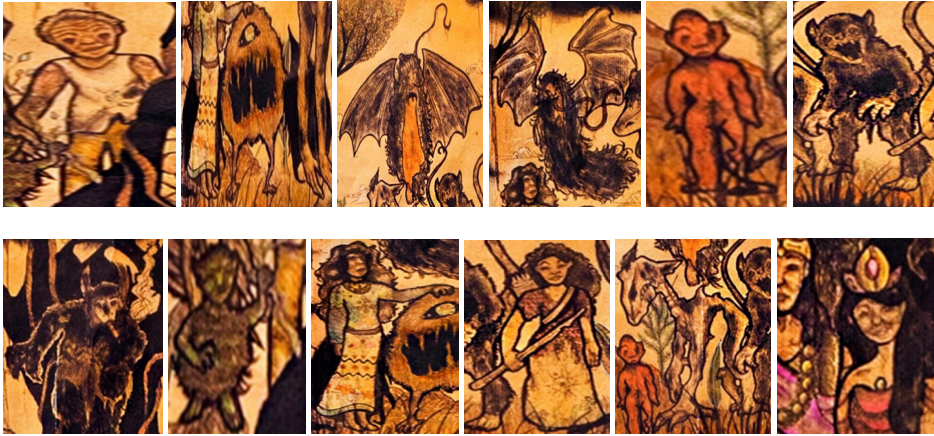
I depicted the playful half-horse, half-man bentohangin in contrast to the serious fire-element burulakaw which is believed to be the messenger of *engkantos* (enchanted beings or spirits). In my artwork, its hair transforms into curved, growing flames. Metallic yellow pens highlight areas of the fire that are hidden beneath the clouds. The dark spots located near her face and around a small portion of her hair represent ash and soot. The clouds surrounding her may be elements of the ibabawnon, but may additionally represent black, dangerous smoke.

My research participants advised that it is best to avoid looking at a burulakaw which passes across the sky as this may result in illness. Another interviewee revealed that the burulakaw is also present in the sky at high noon. When people stay too long outdoors, they may also get sick due to the heat emitted by this creature.

Various Asian literatures portray the burulakaw as a powerful force in changing the light of the universe. It causes an eclipse as it is believed to eat the moon. It is the *naga*, originally an Indian term that refers to the snake, or among the Chinese, the dragon incarnate. Muyco talks about the burulakaw which owns a gong named “Buysawang” (meaning fire and light), which is one of the treasured musical instruments of the Panay Bukidnon (*Sibod* 60). This gong produces the sound of magic and spells when beaten. Sound travels as much as the messages sent by Sindy-Muro through Laonsina and other subsequent characters in the Panay cosmos to husay, or put things that are disarray into order. Though according to *The Aswang Project*, an online reference, the burulakaw is a character that travels across the sky in a slightly diagonal path (Clark), Katrina in her framed mural shows black details surrounding the burulakaw’s face, signifying craters, possibly implying this creature’s connection to meteorites entering the atmosphere and descending towards earth. Light, density, and sound seem to merge in relaying the upper deities’ messages from the sky to the ground.



## Layer 4: Tunga-Tunga/Lupan-On



**Figs. 9-20** (left to right). Semi-human forms in the mid-cosmic layer.

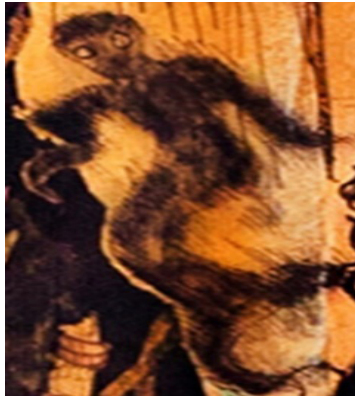
The middle domain is the fourth layer of the Panay cosmos, and it defines the line between the layers in the upperworld and that of the lower world. In this area, human beings live and carry out their daily activities. Although some people may be oblivious to it (or in some cases against it to some degree), it is believed that mortals in the material world live in the same realm as some entities or spirits. Some of them look like humans but can transform—they are shapeshifters.

The mid-layer of the Panay cosmos shows the *muwa*, *bawa*, *aswang*, *manananggal*, and *tiyanak* (figs. 9-14). Moreover, my framed mural features the *kapre*, *kamá-kamá*, *tamao*, *murokpok*, *sigbin*, *mangigilaw*, and *tay-hu* (figs. 15-20). Another being included in this section, the *angol*, is described here based on post-mural interviews.

Spirits that live alongside human beings in the middle world are affected by human presence and their actions. On the other hand, people who are disturbed by the affected mid-world beings usually consult a *serruano*, or a medico-spiritual healer. He or she is also a kind of *manoghusay* as this person mediates between the physical and spiritual world. This time, the *husay*'s function is not to mediate between humans but between two unequal entities: a human and another being with immense physical power, unusual features, transformative skills, and could sometimes be monstrous and invisible.

As earlier discussed, not all in the middle layer are harmful creatures. The *taghoy*, also known as a *manugbalita* or *manugtunda* (messenger), is a preternatural being of a few inches in height and can traverse to other layers of the universe to fulfill its messaging purpose.

In the sugidanon, it delivers messages from one being to another and is also a harbinger of good tidings. Some news, however, could be taken badly. This entity is willing to establish a connection between the natural and the supernatural world. In my framed mural, there is no solid silhouette outline on the *taghoy* because it is almost figure-less, a wind-like character, which can be captured through hatched lines to make its general shape. The only solid detail here is its two round eyes. The hatching technique without an outline gives the illusion of a formless, intangible entity.



**Fig. 21.** Taghoy, messenger of the universe.

The *taghoy* is often referred to as the spirit friend or guide of the characters in the sugidanon. It may be related to the *kamá-kamá* or may be one and the same as the *dwende* (dwarf) because they are called both names in the epics. It also takes the role of a narrator in the various epics, sometimes interrupting the story to ask the audience what should be done next (*Amburukay* xxxvi). The Panay Bukidnon refers to it as a creature or sometimes a shadow. It is present in many areas at the same time. This is a quality that assures the manoghusay that his or her message reaches its destination, even if this is in some remote area. Not only does the *taghoy* have the power to be omnipresent, but also travels very quickly from one place to another as it rides in the wind.

Aside from animal-like beings in the earthly domain, there are humans with extraordinary capabilities. One is Mali (fig. 22), wearing brightly colored garments and jewelry signifying not just material wealth but also the power to attract various entities because of her charm and beauty. I applied highlights on some portions of her jewelry with metallic pens, making them shine depending on the angle from which the viewer perceives the illustration. With all the challenges she confronted to save her hero lover as narrated in the sugidanon, she is calm and well-composed, qualities that I emphasize in my work.



**Figs. 22-23.** Mali, the goddess of beauty and magic with Humadapnon, an adventure hero.

According to *Visayan Mythologies of the Philippines*, Mali is a deity of lust and seduction, as her name literally translates to “beguiling demoness, bedazzling goddess” (Luzviminda Philippines). She is one of three most beautiful goddesses, the other two being her sisters Burigadang Pada Sinaklang Bulawan and Lubay Lubyok Mahanginun si Mahuyokhuyokan. Mali’s longer name is Nagmalitong Yawa Sinagmaling Diwata, often used interchangeably in the sugidanon. This longer name establishes her as a woman with charm and power, a diwata whose appearance can change at will as her dominion is the spirit world. Her beauty is further magnified because of her golden skin, an unusual color that has great value and is believed to be bequeathed by gods and goddesses of the Panay universe to Mali.

Matching the power and charm of Mali is her male counterpart, Humadapnon, who embarks on a multitude of adventures throughout the sugidanon. He is a cosmic hero. Amang Baoy refers to Humadapnon as a protagonist born of a mortal-god. He is depicted as a strong datu, a handsome man, a hero of the afterlife, the earth, and the cosmos. As leader, he is tasked to arbitrate, a manoghusay himself in his community.

Humadapnon is illustrated in the mural with bright and colorful garments to draw the viewer’s eye towards him (fig. 23). His position with Mali in the center of the mural foregrounds their figures amidst the numerous characters in the middle layer. While Mali is depicted with a calm disposition, Humadapnon is more stoic and rigid in his posture. His arms are placed behind his back to create an air of reservation and alertness. Humadapnon’s name resounds with power, value, and strength. He also bears the same golden skin color as his wife, Nagmalitong Yawa Sinagmaling Diwata as described in the sugidanon. In addition to his gold skin, he also possesses special powers and receives assistance from the gods in times of trouble. Endowed with demi-god features bearing supernatural powers, he is the half-human version of the upper layer deities that enact husay within their capacity and position.

## Layer 5: Dutan-On/Idalumnunon

The fifth layer is the first in the lower world and serves as the realm for spirits that dwell in the soil under the earth's surface. There are three soil-digging spirits drawn in this layer: *tulayhang* (enchanted hermit crab), *tibsukan* (sharp-snouted piglet), and *lulid* (pig-headed worm) (figs. 24-26).



**Figs. 24-26** (left to right). The *tulayhang* (enchanted hermit crab), *tibsukan* (sharp-snouted piglet), and *lulid* (pig-headed worm).

For the *tulayhang*, I organized a crisscross pattern for its shell. With this pattern, I created a texture which is different from other materials in the entire piece. Furthermore, the *tulayhang*'s arms are raised at its front, signifying it is in motion as it digs its way through the soil of the *dutan-on*.

The *tulayhang* is a miniscule spirit that takes shelter inside uninhabited shells, much like an ordinary hermit crab. Engkantos take care of the *tulayhang* as if it were a pet. The *tulayhang* resides near the mouth of the river, the riverbanks, or underground where it bores holes into the soil. If a person steps on these holes and disturbs or harms the *tulayhang*, the engkantos will sense the disturbance and put a curse on the person, usually in the form of a terrible illness. This is when a traditional healer is sought. The curse must be lifted so the healer utters his or her formulaic prayer to call on ancestors and spirit-aides to convince the engkantos to forgive the trespassers and allow the sick to get well. As mentioned earlier, ritualists also call on Sindyay-Muro to seek help.

In the case of creatures that are harmed intentionally or otherwise, there are ways of giving human beings a lesson. In this way, humans are made aware of protected land or water areas. A curse, disease, or any form of disability is a call to recognize sacred boundaries; permission to enter them is necessary. Thus, human beings (who need mediums to communicate their forgiveness or offerings) need trance-agents to supplicate the spirit world. There are ways of spiritual intervention; or in worse cases, the deities are invoked to *husay* so that problems can be addressed right away.

## Layer 6: Tubignon



**Figs. 27-28** (left to right). A kataw and a syukoy.

The sixth layer is the water world or the tubignon which I illustrated with crashing waves, bubbles, coral reefs, fishes, and clear water. Entities here have the ability to swim and breathe underwater. The *kataw* and the *syukoy* dwell alongside other aquatic lifeforms, and the water territory is located below landforms because water originates from deep below the earth, instead of being placed alongside the layer that only defines the earth's surface.

I shaded the rocks and waves of the tubignon using the dry brush technique. This technique makes the rocks underwater look hazy and muddy, which provides a stark contrast in values (referring to the lightness or darkness in color) in the waves on both sides of the layer. The waves are covered in very fine individually drawn lines to give them contrasting value in relation to the bright whites in the wave's foam.

The *kataw* is depicted in her long, thick, flowing hair and shiny fish-like tail. The scales on her tail are highlighted with a purple hue to add color and attract the viewer's eye.

Unlike most representations of mermaids as human-like and beautiful in films, animations, and television shows, I see the *kataw* as a scary creature. In the mural, I intentionally drew fins on the side of the head and black sclera with piercing tiny white pupils for the eyes. I also added a large gaping hole in her mouth filled with sharp needle-like teeth. When asked why the mermaid has sharp teeth I replied, "Well, because she is a fish after all."

The *kataw* is seen in the mural raising her left hand above the water and in front of a boat. I wanted to give an illusion of a woman drowning in front of unsuspecting fishermen. However, I showed the mermaid with her right hand placed near her face, with only the index finger raised, signaling for the viewer to be quiet. The mermaid is signaling her viewer to keep a secret as she awaits to devour unsuspecting men. A speech bubble with an exclamation mark is placed near the *banca*, implying that the inhabitants of the boat are



shocked at the sight of her hands in rough seas. The banca and speech bubble are drawn in a cartoon-like style to maintain the light theme of the piece. I used thin lines to illustrate the semi-transparency of the kataw's fins.

In the mural, the syukoy is covered in scales and I shaded these using the scribbling technique. The fins are attached to most parts of its body (i.e., the elbows, feet, head, cheeks, and tail-end) and lines are sparingly used to depict the semi-transparency of the fins. With eyes and mouth matching those of the kataw, the syukoy is seen smiling as he places his clawed hand on the fish's head, signifying the peaceful coexistence with sea creatures and beings from the non-spiritual world. I highlighted its scales with a metallic blue pen, giving the illusion of lustrousness.

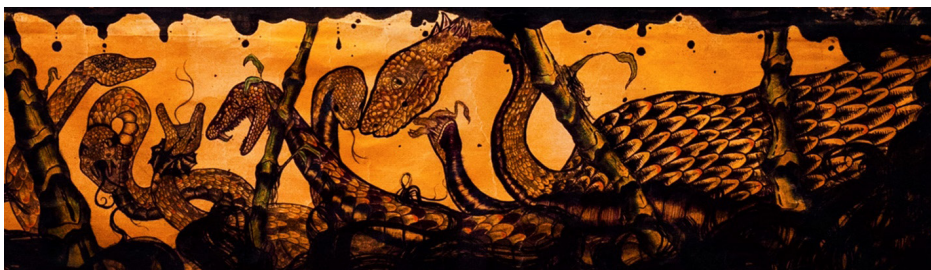
The syukoy has both a fish and full human form. They do not have half-fish, half-man forms but rather, as Hontiveros and Tan describe, look more like humanoid fish (101), with tan skin and curly copper hair. My research participants explained that the syukoy casts spells on people, luring them to the sea and urging them to stay there. Unlike the kataw, it has more fish features such as eyes, fins, and scales. Instead of luring humans to the water with beauty, people under the syukoy's spell display insanity by repetitively walking up and down the seashore. Hontiveros and Tan support this by saying that its victims, unless found beforehand, will be under its powers of "hydrokineses"; the syukoy has the power to make the water cold so the victim can be easily dragged deeper into the sea (101).

Men who are charmed by mermaids are not returned to their normal selves by simply negotiating with the mermaids or the manoghusay. In the sugidanon, heroine Mali transforms herself into a strong datu to rescue the enchanted Humadapnon. The sirens in the Panay Bukidnon version keep the epic hero Humadapnon in the *tarangban* (white cave), then charm him so that he will not leave the cave. Because entering the white cave and fighting the creatures and the sirens are extremely difficult, Mali needs a physical transformation. She takes on a male physique so that Humadapnon can be rescued and thus regain consciousness.

### **Layer 7: Idalumnon/Lim-Awon**

The idalumnon is void except for four bamboo poles. According to Panay chanter Amang Baoy, these bamboo poles serve as posts, the foundation of everything on top of its base, providing the strength and stability to all that is breathing and living.

The word "*bagsang*" literally translates to reticulated python in the English language but is depicted by the Panay Bukidnon as a seven-headed snake. It dwells in the deepest layer of the universe and needs to be fed well; otherwise, it will disrupt the balance of the universe and cause destruction in the upper layers. The bagsang is usually fed whole animals such as a wild boar to satisfy its hunger.



**Fig. 29.** Bagsang, a seven-headed snake of the underworld.

A bagsang's home is in *idalum* (beneath), occupying almost the whole span of this underground layer. Starting from the head, I portrayed each bagsang with multiple eyes, two tongues, a frilled neck, spikes near the head, and a mouth devouring a pig. And yet, although this creature has multiple eyes, it is blind. Each head has its own power. Each of the seven heads are rendered bigger or smaller to give the impression of depth from background to foreground. Most heads of this snake are drawn with a gaping mouth to signify a bagsang's constant hunger. The bagsang's heads and tongues are depicted in flowy lines and curves, making the seventh layer more fluid, and implying that a bagsang is in the middle of a feast. There are other creatures included in this underground area such as Masangladon, Luyong Baybay, and Luyong Kabig, which I learned about after the framed mural was completed. Still, I thought it is best to mention them in this essay.

Four green bamboo poles are found in the lowest layer of the Panay universe. These poles' tall structure outlines the scale of bagsang's size, almost mirroring each other. The bagsang's scales are highlighted with a red marker in some areas, signifying aggression. The Panay Bukidnon elders see this snake as protector of these four important bamboo poles. Although Magos's version states that in this lowermost layer, the tubignon, no entities reside aside from a boar that scratches its itchy back against the poles ("A Shared Way of Life" 64-65); the version of the elders who hail from Iloilo and Capiz identify this snake as co-existing with the bamboos. As much as the boar causes earthquakes in the upper realms when it scratches its back against the poles, the bagsang in this layer stabilizes the upper layers as it lifts up or carries all other parts of the universe with bamboo poles .

Magos's interview with Federico Caballero of Barangay Garangan (Calinog, Iloilo) refers to the four pillars of the world in the idalmunon, or the underground layer made of bamboos. The center of the four pillars is held sacred as it hosts the "samba ritual," a gathering of babaylans to implore powerful beings for a good harvest, abundant fish catch, among other spiritual interventions ("A Shared Way of Life" 64-65). The elders shared that it is in this layer that disorder in the upper layers (if



any) is mostly felt. Bamboos are not only sturdy structures but can sense and resist earthquake or earth movements. Thus, those in this lowest layer<sup>5</sup> relay incoming danger through tremors and this warning reaches Sindy Muro as well as other cosmic layers, in circuitry. With the bagsang in the lowest Panay realm, the cycle of energizing the balance-systems of the Panay cosmos from bottom-to-top aside from the aforementioned top-to-bottom, is realized.

## Versions and Recent Findings

The artist connects all the cosmic layers with the flowing black hair of Sindy-Muro, draping below to the lowest end of the cosmos. In the interconnectivity of realms, not only do beings of different layers acknowledge the existence of different creatures and realms, but also find ways to communicate with them. With peacemaking that extends in all directions, back and forth, up, and down, the mediation process moves in cycles within the system of husay.

Magos's 1992 Antique version of the seven layers of the universe perceives Makaako, the highest being, as male. This is further explicated in a 2007 essay wherein Magos equates Makaako with the Christian God ("A Shared Way of Life" 71). His name connotes all living beings and those in the hereafter. In the Capiz version, the topmost deity Sindy-Muro is described by the Panay Bukidnon research participants as a beautiful diwata, a powerful, enchanted female who engages everyone in the Panay universe to help mankind. They explained that Sindy-Muro is a caring and nurturing female deity, embracing everyone in the Panay cosmos, connecting them with one another by heeding the call of humans for assistance, or in the case of conflicts, putting things in order. Female ruling entities are very rare, which makes the Panay Bukidnon cosmology different from others. Aside from Sindy-Muro, the movers of the next cosmic hierarchy, Laonsina and Luyong Kabig, are females as well. This invites us to think of other exemplars in justice and governance where females are functional and efficient.

The identification of Sindy-Muro resonates with the indigenous character of shared power, as she distributes tasks among her sisters Laonsina and Luyong Kabig. On the other hand, Makaako as the name connotes means possessor of everything in the universe and thus, reflects the all-knowing one with authority; this centralized ruling is typical of most established hierarchies in organizational structures, e.g., church or state. As Magos says, Panayanons identify him as equal to a Christian god. The prefix "maka" in "ako" relates to one's capacity to own the world. So Makaako, as perceived by many, claims dominion in all the layers of the Panay universe (*The Enduring Ma-Aram Tradition* 52, "A Shared Way of Life" 71).

The indigenous people's beliefs do not merely acknowledge beings or spirits as responsible for interfering with the ways of nature; they also believe that there are ways of reaching out and connecting with these forces, as the various realms of the universe are perceived to be an open system. Panay elders communicate with the spirits in the upper realms by looking up, implying that they connect through the sense of sight. They also communicate with the spirits in the lower realms by stamping the ground during dancing (Muyco 145-146). This sonic manner of conveying a message is also exemplified by the seven-headed snake from the underlayers of Panay cosmos. With no vision, it relies on sound and motion sensing to understand the earth's movements.

Panay locals believe that spirits of the underground receive the messages of humans as stamping creates vibrations, which implies that they can connect through hearing and feeling. These actions and beliefs break the boundaries between what we perceive as separate realms and merge it all into one interconnected system that keeps the universe in harmony.

Interconnectivity between realms is also present in everyday life. Occasionally, there are supernatural occurrences that are not readily explained through normal laws. A strange illness, accident, or an inevitable circumstance lead to alterative solutions; sometimes, traditional healers are sought out for healing or answers to the inexplicable. Inversely, appearances of other worldly beings are known to us. News about a merfolk, e.g., mermaid or merman, spotted in oceans are interpreted as real based on testimonies though there are cases of false evidence (Verhaegen "The Aquatic"). However, Muyco's research participant Conchita Gilbaliga of Tapaz, Capiz, recalls how her grandfather's sighting of a kataw and his descriptions of this being have influenced her embroidery design, colors, and shapes (*Sibod* 72).

In various epics, we have known about gods and goddesses directly intervening with the affairs of man, some ascending from the underworld, or descending from an upper realm, staying in the middle world, and getting married to a mortal or a demigod. This we learn from the *Ramayana*, an Indian epic, that Rama is the incarnate of god Vishnu and is married to Sita (Mangharam 75); in Greek mythology, the goddess Persephone brings a human (Alcestis) back to life as she dies because of her piety (Waldner and Rice 345); in the Tamil epic *Silappadikaram*, Kanaagi, the daughter of a seafaring merchant is aggrieved and as she confronts the King of the truth about a stolen necklace, burns the city with the fire of her *karpu* (essence of divinity and chastity) (Ramaswamy 59). This *karpu* marks her godliness, more so made evident with her body ascending to heaven. These and others like them tell stories about beings whose realms crossed and their realities becoming one.

Among indigenous groups in the Philippines, peace-making is achieved through the traditional or customary system of mediation; otherwise, the mainstream judicial system takes over. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) recognizes the power of certain cultures to arrange and settle disputes; in the NCIP as well as other systems of governance, they call this ADR or Alternative Dispute Resolution. Husay is one of these traditional ways, which is anchored in their deep customary law and passed on as a generational practice. I witnessed this husay, a.k.a ADR communication in Barangay Siya (Tapaz, Capiz) in 2004. I met a manoghusay who was also the barangay captain at that time. He settled the problem of a couple whose marriage did not work. In conversation with the couple, the manoghusay was able to bring out the reason behind their failed marriage. The man admitted that he had beaten his wife; the wife showed the swollen areas in some parts of her body. The long discussion finally came to a halt and a settlement was reached: the man's family was obliged to give two carabaos and a pig to the woman's family. In this case, there was no bloodbath among families and the NCIP did not have to endorse this case to the Philippine court.

To this day, the Panay Bukidnon appoint their manoghusay within each village and the government through the NCIP, which recognizes that they (the Panay Bukidnon) have the capacity to settle problems based on their long history of practicing husay. In the same light, parangkutan Sindy-Muro advises on steps to take and decides in the execution of husay through intermediaries such as Laonsina. Thus, the concept and practice of husay draws its lessons of peacemaking, communication, and understanding from the Panay Bukidnon's seven-layered universe.

The findings of this research continue the strand of explorations from earlier Panay myths. It contributes to the continuum of stories<sup>6</sup> that seeks to understand the emergence of something new in an old but very interesting cosmology.

## NOTES

1. My research participants are the Panay Bukidnon elders from Barangay Masaroy (Calinog, Iloilo), namely chanter Romulo “Amang Baoy” Caballero and storyteller Erlinda “Waraan” Diaz-Caballero. Another group, from Tapaz (Capiz) includes storytellers Flora Diaz and Tina Jimenez-Diaz.
2. In my 2002 interview with Jocano, he said Sulod was a tentative name. This was the term used by outsiders to call the mountain people of Panay as they live in *sulod* (inside), or the interior mountain areas of Capiz.
3. Early form of Philippine script consisting of 20 letters comprising syllabary for only three vowels and no letter for “r”; this script showed Arabic and Sanskrit influence. Examples can be found in Juan de Plasencia’s *Doctrina Christiana*, printed by woodblock Tagalog in 1593 (Wade 44, 81).
4. In the practices of the Catholic church, purple is a color of Lent recalling sacrifice, suffering, and glorification through resurrection when Jesus Christ surpassed death after crucifixion. This color is seen in priests’ stoles, which are worn over their cassocks during Easter Sunday. According to Fr. Michael Witchak, this color is expensive to produce that is why it is valued and held high in liturgical rites (“Why is Lent Purple”).
5. I will be including the other idalumnon (Masangladon, Luyong Kabig, and Luyong Baybay) in my future works. Based on inputs from my research participants, Masangladon is a handsome being living in the underworld with his siblings Luyong Kabig and Luyong Baybay. He is most famous in the sugidanon for his fight with Labaw Donggon for the beautiful maiden Matan-ayon, who is Labaw-Donggon’s wife. He is depicted as having god-like powers and cunning wit as he devises a way to have Matan-ayon for himself. Magos describes his strategy in magically transforming the crab into an island to lure Matan-ayon (“The Sugidanon” 122-23). Luyong Kabig stays in the lowest layer in the universe along with the bagsang and her siblings Luyong Baybay and Masangladon. She is a goddess who is nearly blind, which is why she often relies on her sense of smell. She is known for being the goddess of snakes, guarding the entrance to the underworld, pulling back souls that wish to escape into the mortal world, and keeping out intruders who wish to come in. She is also a *buruhisan*, or one who performs rituals for rain or sun. She visits the river with offerings in case of drought, and she is the goddess in charge of constantly giving life to the universe. She is greatly revered by babaylans in the upper layers due to her control over snakes, which are creatures that the ancestors both respect and fear.

6. I realized the grave responsibility of helping the Panay epic thrive in its narrative substance and content. And so, I shared miniature copies of this mural to my research participants such as Amang Baoy as potential material for teaching students at the School of Living Traditions (SLT) in Panay in case these learners need visual motivation.



Left photo shows Engr. Jouie Calceñado III and Jona Lebuna of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Region VI-VII introducing the Formal Process of Informed Consent (FPIC), and elders Norio "Mirasol" Castor, couple Rita and Rodolfo Caballero. Right photo (from extreme left) shows Elsie Caballero Padernal, Engr. Jouie Calceñado III, Norio "Mirasol" Castor, couple Rodolfo and Rita Caballero, Remedios Caballero, Maria Christine Muyco, couple Romulo and Erlinda Caballero, and Rolando Caballero.

The interviewees participated in the Information Validation for this essay on 31 Mar. 2023. The validation is a procedure for the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) requirement of the NCIP prior to publication.

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