

Between *Pangayaw* and Theater: Revenge Killings among the Agusan Manobo of Mindanao, Southern Philippines*

Sheila Mae G. Tampos

University of the Philippines Mindanao

Abstract. A number of contemporary studies on conflict and violence, especially among indigenous and marginalized groups, focus on understanding the mechanisms through which these practices are maintained and reinvented. This approach calls into question views on violence as pathological, an inherent tendency, or a mere epiphenomenon. It is in this light that this study on *pangayaw* as revenge killing was conducted. Drawing on direct ethnographic data gathered in a span of three years among the Agusan Manobo of Mindanao in Southern Philippines, the article argues that *pangayaw* is a mode of communication involving a performance of symbol manipulation to make explicit conditions and norms that would have otherwise remained unexpressed. *Pangayaw* as a threat, an act, a resolution, or a means to instigate resolution is designed to be meaningful not just to the actors but to the witnessing community. This emphasis on its theatricality also sheds light on the efficacy of traditional resolution mechanisms in these areas. Discourses on violence among marginalized and indigenous groups need to consider how this type of “theater” is maintained and reinvented.

Keywords: Manobo; Mindanao; performance; poetics of violence; revenge killing; ritual; symbols; theater

Introduction

Making sense of violence has been a contemporary preoccupation of conflict studies in anthropology and in the social sciences in general (e.g., Aijmer and Abbink 2000; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Schmidt and Schroder 2001; Stanko 2003). A general approach in this domain is to examine violence by situating it within broader social, political, economic, and historical contexts. These analyses are contrary to views about violence as irrational, senseless, and a manifestation of a breakdown of meaning. With this perspective, the overarching goal has shifted from addressing the

question “how to stop violence” to asking “why violence exists in the way it does” (Whitehead 2007, 41). The interest, therefore, is to understand the mechanisms that maintain and reinvent the practice rather than diagnose it as pathological or simplify it as an exotic tendency or a mere byproduct of another phenomenon. However, this does not justify acts of violence in any way, but it aims to search for perspectives that will deepen our understanding of this pervasive phenomenon.

The idea of violence as a form of expression and performance is made popular by Neil Whitehead (2002), specifically in his concept of “the poetics of violence.” In his study on *kanaima*, a form of sorcery that involves killing, ritual mutilation, and cannibalism among the Amerindians of the highlands of Guyana in South America, Whitehead examines how the practice has been performed through the centuries. He presents how the shamanistic rituals have changed as it served as a cultural expression in relation to the people’s struggle against forces of modernity, such as mineral extraction, colonial expansion, and the dominance of the modern state. For

***Editor’s Note.** The following article has been submitted, reviewed, and revised for a previously planned issue of the journal. But due to unforeseen circumstances, this article has not seen publication.

Correspondence. Sheila Mae G. Tampos, Department of Social Sciences, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Mindanao, Mintal, Tugbok District, 8022 Davao City, Philippines. Telephone: +63 82 293 0863 local 207. Email: sgtampos@up.edu.ph

Whitehead, *kanaima* has become a venue for the Amerindians to perform their violent stance against these external forces. As Whitehead puts it, the practice “offers a thanatology, a means of giving meaning to death” (247). Whitehead concludes that violence is best viewed as a cultural performance or a cultural expression that signifies the human capacity to manipulate signs and symbols in order to communicate meaning to an intended audience.

This approach of viewing violence as a stage, a theater, or a performance is apparent in some contemporary social analyses. Perhaps one of the most popular is Michel Foucault’s (1977) take on public torture in the eighteenth-century Europe as a “spectacle” that displays the monarchy’s sovereign power. In this form of punishment, the body of the condemned is regarded as an object to be marked, punishment as a display of power, and the scaffold as a stage. The execution, a means to restore the power of the disrespected sovereign, was often too violent compared to the offense committed to signify an imbalance through a “god-like” wrath. When punishment ceased to be a spectacle with the birth of prison, Foucault suggests that this should not be attributed too readily to humanization but to a shift in the way power is exercised. While the display of sovereign power through public torture renders the body as an object to be destroyed, the exercise of power through the penal process is even more dreadful for it acts not only on the body but the “soul” as a subject to be colonized. For Foucault, it is important to consider what “disappeared” when the spectacle of punishment disappeared.

This paper explores the practice of revenge killing among the Manobo called *pangayaw* (also known as *pangajow*) in light of this notion that certain actions are framed and presented to display meaning not only to the actors but to the witnessing community. In this case, such actions include those associated with the *pangayaw* killing itself as well the act of posing a threat to kill and soliciting resolution mechanisms before or after the act. In arguing for the points of contact between anthropology and theater, Richard Schechner (1985, p. 19) emphasizes that investigations on social processes should not be limited to what happens during the performance itself. Hence, an analogy of a social phenomenon

and the theater is relevant for it would also encompass the progression of events and roles from the so-called training, preparations, scripts, warm-ups, cool-downs, and aftermath—all of which do not necessarily have equal cross-cultural emphasis, of course.

In attempting to understand why a social group would set up a theatrical killing, Claude Levi-Strauss’s (1963) idea about the “effectiveness of symbols” would be helpful. Discussed in the context of the effectiveness of shamanistic healing, the symbolic efficacy stems from the act of “making explicit a situation originally existing on the emotional level and in rendering acceptable to the mind pains which the body refuses to tolerate” (p. 192). Such process involves a healer, a patient, and a witnessing society, all of whom share an understanding of each other’s moral narratives. The shaman, through chants, words, and other symbolic manipulation, makes explicit certain conditions thereby bringing to a conscious level conflicts and resistance, which would have otherwise remained insensible. It is through such manipulation that healing is expected. The theatricality of social processes, then, may be viewed as a venue for such symbolic manipulation to communicate a “cure.”

The Agusan Manobo

The Agusan Manobo is a subgroup of the Manobo family, which is considered one of the largest Lumad¹ ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao. The Manobo are mostly concentrated in southeastern Bukidnon, west of the Davao region, northeast of North Cotabato, and the entire Agusan del Sur, which means that the Agusan Manobo is the largest Manobo subgroup in terms of population (NCCA 2011). In a 2002 census, it was determined that there are at least 60,000 speakers of the Agusan Manobo language (Lewis et al. 2014).

Colonial accounts spoke of the Manobo as warlike and vengeful people who “expose the

1. Lumad is a collective term asserted by non-Islamized indigenous groups to refer to themselves as the original inhabitants of Mindanao. The term, which literally means “earth or soil” in Cebuano, emerged as a political stance during the 1980s when the native-migrant hostilities peaked under the Marcos dictatorship (Rodil 1997).

heads of their enemies on poles” (Cole 1913, 101). Referring to the group as “the most troublesome people of Southern Mindanao,” Faye-Cooper Cole (1913) used the word *Manobo* as a synonym for *Kulaman*, which he claimed to be a translation of “bad man.” John Garvan (1929), meanwhile, referred to the “instability and hot-headedness” of the Manobo. These authoritative and extensive Manobo accounts have somehow depicted the Manobo as a hostile people. Hostility on the part of the Manobo, however, is an attribute that was not explained in context.

The Manobo have long been influenced by nonnatives—for example, the arrival of Islam in Mindano around the fourteenth century (Kadil 2002) and the conversion of a number of Manobo to Christianity during the seventeenth century (Paredes 2013). The large number of Visayan migrants interacting and intermarrying with the Manobo has also immensely contributed to the latter’s gradual acquisition of Visayan words, beliefs, and customs, which later became almost indistinguishable from aspects of the Manobo everyday life. Furthermore, Spanish colonization, American occupation, and the creation of the modern Philippine state in 1946 dramatically contributed to the changes in the social, political, and economic structures of Manobo communities.

With the passing of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, the traditional forms of governance (e.g., *datu* or chieftain as socio-political head) and dispute resolution of indigenous cultural communities², which include the Agusan Manobo, are now recognized by Philippine state. However, the dynamics between these traditional political structure and the modern state remains problematic given the various issues on autonomy and land affecting indigenous peoples (see Gatmaytan 2007).

***Pangayaw* among the Agusan Manobo**

While descriptive accounts of Manobo warfare are available in the literature, discussions on the concepts underlying such activities like

pangayaw are nonexistent. This is surprising considering that the practice of *pangayaw* is observed to this day and exert a strong influence on how the Agusan Manobo resolve their conflicts.

Pangayaw, also known as *pangajow*, is a term shared among different Lumad groups in Mindanao to refer to a specific form of killing. Based on a linguistic reconstruction, **kayaw* is suggested to be a protoform for ‘headhunting’ among ancestral Austronesian languages (Blust and Trussel 2015). This implies that the term *pangayaw* and other cognates must have already existed in the Agusan Manobo language prior to colonization. Today, the Agusan Manobo generally refer to the following acts as *pangayaw*: slave raiding, prestige killing, armed revolt, and revenge killing.

In slave raiding, Manobos in the past would attack other villages to capture slaves for their own use or for trading. In prestige killing, a chief warrior (*bagani*) would kill another individual of high prestige from another community to increase his own socio-politico-economic prestige (*bantug*). In armed revolt, the Manobos organize an uprising against a powerful figure such as colonial authority³. These armed revolts are waged by Manobos who advocate socio-political or socio-economic changes, and these serve as a response to impinging forces such as colonization and the integration of the indigenous peoples into the modern Philippine state (see Gaspar 2011).

But among all the existing forms of *pangayaw*, revenge killing is the most common today. The practice is often referred to as clan feuding since it involves fatal retaliatory attacks between kinship groups. Clan feuding is considered “the most common source of violence in the country” (SWS 2005). In the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao where it is most rampant, the phenomenon is commonly called *rido* (Durante et al. 2007). Torres (2007) reports that there has been a steady rise of revenge killings in Mindanao

2. As defined in the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, indigenous cultural communities are territories composed of groups who “became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos.”

3. The last known *pangayaw* as armed revolt in the area was an incident in the 1980s where Agusan Manobos slaughtered officials within the premises of a logging company. The company’s encroachment of Manobo ancestral lands was said to be the key reason for the attack.

since the 1980s. This last form of *pangayaw* is highlighted in this paper.

Pangayaw Killings

This study aims to understand how the Agusan Manobo make sense of *pangayaw* killings. While I do not intend to claim there is a homogenous way that these people make sense of this practice, I believe that the contemporary Agusan Manobo recognizes a *pangayaw* killing as a form of expression that makes use of signs and symbols to communicate meaning to its intended audience. I aim to support this claim by presenting this descriptive account of the practice based upon first-hand ethnographic data gathered through a series of fieldwork since 2012 from five Agusan Manobo communities⁴ in Agusan del Sur, Southern Philippines. A total of 69.3 hours of narratives gathered from 51 Agusan Manobo (mean age: 50) were transcribed and organized through coding.

In this paper, I will discuss *pangayaw* as a theatrical process with its various aspects and accompanying rituals and practices prior, during, and after the attack. I will also be discussing the common triggers of *pangayaw*, how intent is displayed, the intended audience of the performance, and the resolution systems in place to address the threat of *pangayaw* and the cycle of violence born out of retaliatory attacks.

While there are many types of practices that is considered as *pangayaw*, this study will limit its investigation on *pangayaw* as revenge killing. Among the Agusan Manobo respondents from the various research sites, revenge killing was the dominant form of *pangayaw* in their narratives. Also, the claims and descriptions presented here are limited to the contemporary views on *pangayaw* gathered from the respondent narratives collected during my field work.

4. For security and ethical purposes, the names of these communities will not be disclosed. The demographic composition in these sites is between 80% to 90% Manobo based on local estimations made by traditional leaders and local officials

Before a Pangayaw Attack

What actions can trigger a *pangayaw*? How is a threat of *pangayaw* communicated? What rituals are performed prior to waging a *pangayaw*? Given its performative nature, *pangayaw* is rife with significations. In all cases examined in this study, Agusan Manobo communities would readily understand these signs due to a shared understanding of what can trigger a *pangayaw* attack.

Common triggers. An offense, violation, or transgression can be translated as *sa*⁵ in the Manobo language. The word *sa* is related to the Proto-Malayo Austronesian *salaq* meaning “wrong, in error (of behavior) . . . mistake, error, fault” (Blust and Trussel 2015), which suggests that it has already existed in the language even before the arrival of Muslims and Christian Spaniards in the island.

The use of the word “offense” in this paper as a gloss for *sa* is not to foreground the presence of a standard or a rule that has been violated as is commonly denoted by the word in the English language. Rather, it emphasizes the occurrence of a damage that needs to be redressed in order to restore equilibrium and order. However, a *sa* comes in degrees: light, less grave, and grave.

In a domestic context, a light *sa* can be a child’s failure to perform an assigned task—for example, a child’s inability to protect the grains being dried under the sun from the chickens. In this case, the *sa* is not that the child did not mind the grains but that the loss of the precious grains occurred. Hence, if the chickens did not consume the grains, the child has not committed a *sa*. The emphasis, therefore, is not on the failure to comply with a rule or an instruction but on the presence of a damage that results from such failure.

An offense made against an individual outside of the household will more likely require compensation. This refers to acts that cause personal damage to others, especially non-kin, like someone laughing at an individual with distinct attributes such as facial warts or a physical deformity and causing insult. The affected

5. The word is pronounced as /sæ/ like the ‘a’ sound in *cat*.

individual or his kin may demand compensation called a *buney*, which is for offenses considered as less grave and are less likely to provoke a revenge killing. The most common forms of *buney* are chickens and a sack of clothing materials. Today, this form of compensation for an light offenses remains practiced in some Agusan Manobo areas.

However, *sa* that causes very serious damage to an individual—and by extension his or her kin—requires reparation of higher value. The Agusan Manobo consider the following *sa* as grave offenses: murder, adultery or stealing of wife, land conflict, and theft of a highly valuable livestock, such as an adult carabao (water buffalo), horse, or cow. However, offenses such as failure to acknowledge a greeting (perceived as deliberate) or kissing someone's daughter who is already arranged to marry someone else, whether by force or with consent, are also considered grave.

When it comes to these offenses, there are two common ways the aggrieved party can get redress: a traditional settlement process called *minanggaran* or by waging a *pangayaw* (revenge killing). The traditional settlement process will be discussed further in a succeeding subsection.

Displaying intent. In most cases, the aggrieved party declares its intent to wage a *pangayaw* against the party who offended them. In several cases in the 1980s, displaying that one is straining to contain pain and rage (which could eventually lead to a *pangayaw*) is accomplished by engraving horizontal lines called *guhót* on a wooden post with a *bolo* or a knife. This wooden post is located outside one's house, visible to the neighbors. As long as the grievance stands, the offended individual would maintain an ascending series of *guhót*. Once the series of lines, which starts at ankle-level, reaches the same length as the individual's full height, retaliation is highly likely.

Pre-pangayaw ritual. The *magahat*, a term used to refer to an individual who wages a revenge killing, participates in a ritual called *pangumpaja* (asking for permission) or *panawag-tawag* (to call the attention) that is initiated by a *baylan* (shaman). This is the same ritual performed by a *bagani* (warrior chief) prior to waging a prestige killing and an armed revolt, which are other forms

of *pangayaw*. Like other rituals, *pangumpaja* is a performance. It communicates meaning to the attackers and their fellow residents.

The ritual seeks the attention of a class of spirit called the *tegbusow*. It is a form of a plea for these spirits to possess the body of the attacker so as to strip him of his inhibition to kill. This requires a brown sacrificial pig whose blood is believed to appease the spirits. In the absence of a brown pig, a red chicken may be an alternative. The blood of the sacrificial pig or chicken would have to be smeared on the sharpened edges of the weapons. This is said to increase the accuracy of the attacker as well as the effect of each strike to be fatal. Some of the blood will also be buried in the ground appeasing the *tegbusow* underneath. Water and betel nut are the other important materials during the ritual. These will also be offered to the spirits in order to gain their favor. Red paint, usually from fruit extracts or tree barks, is commonly applied on the face and the body. This reminds the attacker of the presence of the *tegbusow* and inspires fear in others.

During a *Pangayaw* Attack

The focal point of the process of a *pangayaw* is the attack itself. The process usually extends this far if a posed threat was not addressed in time and if the aggrieved party has already refused further negotiation.

The intended audience. The act of *pangayaw* is always a physical attack such as stabbing, hacking, and shooting. Killing a target through remote means such as with poison is not considered a *pangayaw*. The physicality of a *pangayaw* attack is another aspect of the theatrical nature of this practice. It appears that the attacker, physically inflicting pain on his target, is displaying a forcible physical capacity to give back the pain he experienced from an offense such as the murder of his kin or the stealing of his wife. This display of physical capacity may be viewed as a means to deter future transgressions.

In this sense, *pangayaw* is not merely an act to eradicate a target or a rival but to do so through a performance, an act that is designed to be meaningful not just to the actor but also to the witnessing community. In revenge killings, the

intended audience appears to be the community of the target. Killings labelled as *pangayaw* were always waged in the target's domain such as his house, farm, or his village. Killing a target outside his village is not considered as a *pangayaw*. By 'village', I mean a space where one has established close social relations. An example was the shooting of a male Manobo while he was riding a motorcycle in another village. It was later revealed that the man was shot by another Manobo whose wife the former stole. Although the killing resembles a typical *pangayaw* in almost all respects, informants did not qualify it as a *pangayaw* and instead used a loan word 'ambush.' When asked how an ambush differs from a *pangayaw*, informants explained that *pangayaw* is always waged at the target's house. House in the Agusan Manobo language is *banua*, a rich term shared among aboriginal Austronesian speakers (Blust and Trussel 2015). The Austronesian Comparative Dictionary defines *banua* as an "inhabited land, territory supporting the life of the community."⁶

In older cases during the 1980s, an attacker would announce his successful *pangayaw* by blowing a *bujong* (a large shell shaped like a trumpet) while standing on a boulder or at the edge of a cliff. This loud sound (which informants claimed to be comparable with the *agong*, a percussive instrument) declares one's prowess to the neighboring villages by informing them of a successful attack. This, I believe, further shows how a *pangayaw*, specifically a revenge killing, is a display of a message to an intended audience.

Liver eating. Another aspect of *pangayaw* attacks, liver eating, makes apparent its performative nature. This was commonly practiced in prestige killings and was sometimes observed in revenge killings. The last known case of liver eating during the conduct of a *pangayaw* in the communities I visited was in the 1980s. This brief description

supports the argument that *pangayaw* is an act that seeks to display meaning and intent.

Liver eating⁷ is a known part of this form of *pangayaw* which signifies invincibility of the *bagani* or warrior chief who triumphs over another powerful figure thereby increasing the former's *bantug* or prestige. Liver eating, viewed as a display of strength on the part of the victor, is always conducted in the presence of a witness as opposed to devouring the organ alone in an inconspicuous place. Informants further explained that such act also confirms that one is indeed possessed by a blood-thirsty *tegbusow*. Among the informants, having the capacity to kill without inhibition is not a natural human state. A general view is that humans have an inherent aversion to kill a fellow which others, like the *magahat*, circumvent by summoning or allowing the blood-thirsty *tegbusow* spirit to possess them. Hence, eating a victim's liver to display a confirmation of the presence of the *tegbusow* may be further understood as an expression of a view on man's intrinsic incapacity to kill.

After a *Pangayaw* Attack

Based on 27 cases dating from the 1970s until 2012, immediate consequences of *pangayaw* attacks in Agusan Manobo communities commonly involved death of the attacked party (Figure 1). Often killed were the individuals who committed a grave offense which triggered the retaliatory attack. The case would then be considered closed as both parties are now even or, as informants often put it, "quits." In other cases when a kin of the target was killed, the parties were not considered even. Instead, the target individual, after losing his kin in a revenge attack, may now be considered as the aggrieved who could then demand for restitution. The same applies when a nonrelative of the intended individual was killed. This happened in one out of eight cases.

Not all grave offenses, however, immediately led to *pangayaw* attacks. Prompt arbitration

6. As Paluga (2012) suggests, *banua* is one of the highly relevant concepts among many indigenous groups in Mindanao for it provides an understanding that intersects multiple domains—philosophical, psychological, ecological, and political. Further inquiry about the relations between *pangayaw* and the concept of *banua* would be highly relevant.

7. It has to be noted that liver eating has been observed in different parts of the globe. To name a few, the conduct of the Cambodian genocide involved liver eating by the actors (see Hinton 2005) and the revenge killings of the famous John "Liver-Eating" Johnson of Wyoming during the nineteenth century (see Bender 2006).

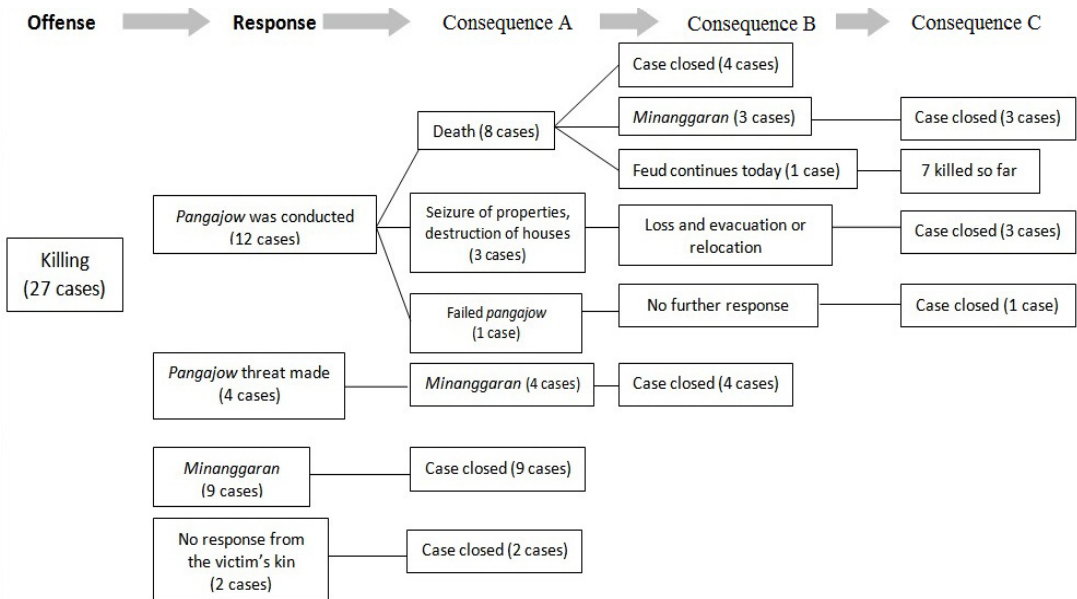


FIGURE 1. Cascading consequences of 27 murder cases among the Agusan Manobo, 1970s to 2012

by traditional leaders successfully prevented retaliation in many cases. This process may be invoked with or without any explicit threat of a *pangayaw* from the aggrieved party. Until today, not a single case resolved through traditional arbitration led to further dispute between concerned parties.

Cases wherein a grave offense such as murder did not lead to any action from the victim’s kin were attributed to a lack of male relatives capable of waging an attack or even posing a threat to wage one. In two separate instances, kin of murder victims moved to another province without posing any *pangayaw* threat or any attempt to consult a traditional leader. In both cases, the victim’s kin were situated in areas far from a recognized traditional leader who could have initiated an arbitration.

Traditional resolution processes were invoked after a retaliatory attack was waged, especially when someone else other than the intended target was killed. However, these resolution mechanisms were most commonly and productively applied at an earlier point so as to prevent a retaliatory attack.

Negotiations

Traditional means of forestalling an attack once a threat has been declared are still employed in several Agusan Manobo communities today. A *dagpon* (“restrainer”), who is unrelated to both parties involved, is a reputable person chosen by the community to negotiate with the aggrieved party who declares a *pangayaw* threat. The reputation is often judged by one’s socio-political status. In a recent case, the *dagpon* was a lawyer known for defending the indigenous peoples’ rights. The communication involved in presenting a *dagpon* has two primary purposes: (1) to inquire about the aggrieved party’s desired compensation which is based upon the degree of the offense committed against them and (2) to negotiate the time frame that shall be followed by the offending party in complying with the demands. Prior to contact with the wronged party, a *dagpon* should have already assessed the offender’s capacity to provide compensation. This will be his basis for negotiating the value of the compensation as well as the time frame that shall be imposed. After the negotiation, a *dagpon* leaves any material object from his body (e.g., a button from his shirt, a necklace, or a handkerchief) which serves as a symbol of his plea to the aggrieved party not to

wage an attack unless the agreed deadline for the compensation is not met. Failure to meet the demands on time is said to likely be considered a form of disrespect, which is a reasonable ground for retaliation.

Arbitration and Restitution

Husoy is a traditional arbitration process initiated by traditional leaders who are locally referred to as tribal chieftain or *datu* and are often the elderly members in a community. The process may be invoked whenever a dispute arises between two individuals or parties. Almost all issues that concern at least one member of chieftain's territory may be subjected to a *husoy* such as marital disputes between couples and land disputes between two clans.

This traditional arbitration process is commonly invoked in cases when a *pangayaw* looms after a grave offense. The chieftain may proactively initiate the process or at least one of the concerned parties would seek assistance from him. *Husoy* was also applied in cases wherein a retaliatory attack already led to a fatality. The goal would be to evaluate the loss of the aggrieved party and their demand for compensation.

This compensatory resolution system is referred to as *minanggaran*. It involves a *minggad* which are objects or valuables demanded by an aggrieved party to serve as reparation for their loss. It would be misleading, however, to view the compensation solely in light of economic. Rather, it is ultimately a symbolic gesture of restoring the balance after one party's unjustified loss. Giving *minggad* is also a means of recognizing the right of the aggrieved to be appeased.

Today, the imposition of *minggad* often involves properties considered of high value, approximately worth PhP20,000. The most common forms of *minggad* employed in cases from the 1970s until today are the following: (1) cash worth at least PhP20,000 commonly called a *dinatu*; (2) livestock such as an adult water buffalo, horse, or cow; (3) firearms such as carbine and Garand rifles; (4) valuables such as chainsaws or an old *bolo* bearing engraved markings called *sinugbahan* that are done by a shaman.

In this kind of settlement, it is the aggrieved party who determines the rightful penalty. The

chieftain evaluates the aggrieved party's demand usually based on previous cases. He will also require an assurance from the offender and his kin that the demand, after having been evaluated, will be met within the agreed timeframe.

After a successful revenge killing, it is considered very rare today for the party who had just waged the successful attack to willingly wait for a counterattack and perpetuate the cycle. Since the 1980s onward, it was more common for the party that waged the successful *pangayaw* to commence the traditional arbitration process. This process will evaluate the demand of the aggrieved party for compensation.

Today, the process of *minanggaran* is the most common resolution mechanism in the Agusan Manobo communities included in this study. In the following cases dating between the 1970s and 2012, 16 out of the 25 active responses to a kin's murder were resolved through *minanggaran*.

To further illustrate the dynamics of the compensatory resolution system, the following cases are narrated and discussed. All of the names used here are pseudonyms.

Paid by the Community (1980s)

Tali hacked Ilakon to death purportedly because Ilakon's wife declared being open to marrying someone else if her husband died. The dead man's kin declared a pangayaw threat against Tali. In order to prevent the attack, which would most likely affect the entire community, the tribal chieftain of Tali's village initiated a negotiation. Ilakon's kin demanded a carabao (water buffalo) and a large bolo. Since Tali and his kin could not provide for the demanded reparations, his fellow villagers contributed to procure the items. The case was resolved and no conflict has erupted between the two parties until today.

The *minanggaran*, in this case, is a collective effort. The punishment of the offender as an individual is not of primary concern. Rather, it is the need to appease the aggrieved party that is given premium. The primacy of the need to restore equilibrium by making reparation for the party who experienced an imbalance explains why the *minanggaran* system remains an effective resolution mechanism in these communities.

Inter-Kin Feud (1990s)

Mayu was sterile and his cousin, Galu, constantly made jokes about Mayu's decision to have his wife impregnated by another man so that they may have a child. Provoked by Galu's incessant jokes, Mayu stabbed his cousin with a sharp L-shaped knife meant for slicing tobacco. Galu died on the way to the hospital due to kidney failure. Galu's son, Gaman, and two of Gaman's cousins decided to retaliate against their uncle using their grandfather's rifle. They shot Mayu while he was on the way to his farm. After the incident, the cousins went to Galu's grave and shouted that he can now rest in peace because Mayu had paid. Mayu's kin, who are also the attackers' relatives, did not retaliate. Mayu was said to be a source of headache for the family for having killed a number of individuals in the past due to his temper. His family, who then took responsibility for the wife and child he left, considered his death to have made him "quits" (even) with all of the individuals he had killed.

Mayu's case did not require a *minanggaran* in order to be settled. The role of kin relations is relevant here because it is his family itself that deemed that the balance was restored with Mayu's death.

Mistaken for a Deer (2005)

Pano was shot to death while collecting firewood in the forest after his cousin mistook him for a deer. The incident was resolved through the customary settlement process. It was deemed an accident given the lack of circumstances linking the cousin to any hidden grudge towards Pano. Pano's relatives paid his immediate family a chicken and PhP1,000 in cash. Aside from this *minggad*, the relatives helped Pano's wife find a new husband.

The act of giving compensation to the aggrieved was witnessed by the community. Although they were not gathered deliberately, spectators were present for they knew they would witness something given their shared understanding of the norms that prop up the "stage" prepared whenever a grave offense is committed. Although the death of Pano was deemed unintentional, it still had to be

resolved not merely through compensation but a performance of it.

Dinatu. When the aggrieved party demands cash as the *minggad*, the act is called *dinatu*. On the day of the meeting, the compensating party will place the cash on the table stating the demanded amount. The aggrieved party will accept it without counting the bills, aware that it is probably lower than what they demanded as it has always been in other cases. For example, if PhP50,000.00 was demanded, the actual amount received would probably be only PhP5,000.00. What is more important is the demonstration of the effort to gather the needed resources (sometimes involving the entire village of the compensating party) than the actual amount itself. Familiar with the economic conditions of their fellows, the aggrieved party would be well aware of the difficulties of obtaining a substantial amount of cash.

This shows that the compensatory nature of the resolution process is beyond the material value of the *minggad*. This is another theatrical aspect of the entire process of *pangayaw*. It is a performance that concretizes the willingness of the compensating party to address the demand of the aggrieved through which balance and order (or what the informants called 'quits') are restored. This is why it does not matter whether the party receives the entire amount they demanded or not.

The *dinatu* signifies that the compensatory resolution process is not merely an economic transaction. Rather, it is a performance which displays the act of addressing an imbalance by making explicit the desire to appease the party that experienced a loss. Hence, *minanggaran* remains the most effective resolution mechanism in these communities not because of its materiality but its capacity to concretely represent balance between conflicting parties wherein lies the social order.

Concluding Comments

This article presents *pangayaw*, especially revenge killings, as a theatrical process that consists of a series of meaningful actions: from posing a threat to engaging in a post-*pangayaw* resolution system.

It shows how actions involved in this process are a venue to display meaning as opposed to merely being instinctive outbursts or pathological acts. The act of killing itself, therefore, has to be situated within this social process since the goal of a *pangayaw* is not just to kill. More importantly, it serves as a performance that communicates meaning not only to the actors but to the witnessing community.

This further implies that the crucial role of the traditional resolution mechanisms in these communities has to be taken into account. The prevalence of the acts requiring reparation, either *buney* (for less serious offenses) or *minggad* (for offenses considered as most grave), has to be viewed beyond its economic nature for these, too, are a form of cultural expression or performance which reflect the norms that the Agusan Manobo uphold to maintain a cohesive community.

Notes

Funding for this study was provided by the tripartite office of the Hiroshima University Partnership Project for Peacebuilding and Capacity Development (HiPEC), the University of the Philippines Mindanao, and the South-South Network (SSN) for Non-State Armed Group Engagement.

In compliance with guidelines on the ethical conduct of research involving human respondents, especially indigenous peoples, free prior informed consent was sought prior to data gathering and the ethnographic data used in the paper has been presented and validated during during focus group discussions in several research sites between June and July 2014.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Melody Nicolas, Albert Santos, Marvin de Castro, Bangilo Telocan, and Datu Polding Pantilgan during the conduct of the research and the valuable insights from Dr. Shea McManus, Dr. Sasha Newell, Prof. Myfel Paluga, Atty. Gus Gatmaytan, Dr. Robert Panaguigon, Prof. Emmanuel Nabayra, and Janus Cabazares.

References

- AIJMER, GORAN, and JON ABBINK, eds. 2000. *Meanings of Violence*. New York: Berg.
- BENDER, NATHAN. 2006. "The Abandoned Scout's Revenge: Origins of the Crow Killer Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson." *Annals of Wyoming* 78(4):2–17.
- BLUST, ROBERT, and STEPHEN TRUSSEL. 2015. "Blust's Austronesian Comparative Dictionary web edition." Last modified 16 June 2015. <http://www.trussel2.com/ACD>.
- COLE, FAYE-COOPER. 1913. *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao*. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History.
- DURANTE, OFELIA, NORMA GOMEZ, ESTER SEVILLA, and HOWARD MANEGO. 2007. "Management of Clan Conflict and Rido among the Tausug, Magindanao, Maranao, Sama, and Yakan Tribes." In *Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*, edited by Wilfredo Torres, 97–125. Makati: The Asia Foundation.
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon.
- GARVAN, JOHN. 1929. *The Manobos of Mindanao*. Washington: Academy of Science Memoirs.
- GASPAR, KARL. 2010. *Manobo Dreams in Arakan: A People's Struggle to Keep Their Homeland*. Davao City: Ateneo de Davao University Press.
- GATMAYTAN, AUGUSTO, ed. 2007. *Negotiating Autonomy: Case Studies on Philippine Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights*. Kobenhavn: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.
- HINTON, ALEXANDER. 2005. *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- KADIL, BEN. 2002. *History of the Moro and Indigenous Peoples in Minsupala*. Marawi City: Marawi State University.
- LEVI-STRAUSS, CLAUDE. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*, translated by Claire Jacobson. New York: Basic Books.
- LEWIS, PAUL, GARY SIMONS, and CHARLES FENNIG, eds. 2014. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*, 17th edition. Dallas: SIL International.

- NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS. 2011. "Manobo." Accessed 26 December 2014. <http://www/ncca.gov.ph>.
- PALUGA, MYFEL JOSEPH. 2012. "Ginawa, Banua, at Iba Pang Eko-sikolohikal na mga Kategoriya para sa Pag-Aaghamtao (at Pag-Aaghambuhay)." Paper presented at the 34th National Conference of the Anthropological Society of the Philippines, Cebu, October 25–27.
- PAREDES, OONA. 2013. *A Mountain of Difference: The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao*. New York: Southeast Asia Publications.
- RANADA, PIA. 2013. "Caraga Most Prone to Landslides, Floods." Accessed 3 January 2015. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/43167-yolanda-regions-landslides-floods>.
- RODIL, BUHAY. 1997. "The Tri-People Relationship and the Peace Process in Mindanao." *The Mindanao Forum* 12(1):1–22.
- SCHECHNER, RICHARD. 1985. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- SCHEPER-HUGHES, NANCY, and PHILIPPE BOURGOIS, eds. 2004. *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- SCHMIDT, BETTINA, and INGO SCHRODER, eds. 2001. *The Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*. London: Routledge.
- SOCIAL WEATHER STATIONS. 2005. SWS media release, February 24.
- STANKO, ELIZABETH, ed. 2003. *The Meanings of Violence*. New York: Routledge.
- TORRES, WILFREDO. 2007. "Introduction." In *Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*, edited by Wilfredo Torres, 11–35. Makati City: The Asia Foundation.
- WHITEHEAD, NEIL. 2007. "Violence and the Cultural Order." *Daedalus* 136 (1): 40–50.
- _____. 2002. *Dark Shamans: Kanaima and the Poetics of Violent Death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

SUGGESTED CITATION

TAMPOS, SHEILA MAE G. 2016. "Between Pangayaw and Theater: Revenge Killings among the Agusan Manobo of Mindanao, Southern Philippines." *Banwa* 11A: ART-002. [Date of access]. <http://ojs.upmin.edu.ph/index.php/banwa-a/article/view/206>