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Chanted Landscapes

Fernando N. Zialcita

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Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia

Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia

Edited by

Nicole Revel

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P U B L I S H I N G

Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia,
Edited by Nicole Revel

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The quest of an anthropologist is to seek out the views and concepts – in other words, the relevant meaning – shared by a people as references to their verbal arts. It is our goal to translate them in such a way that their language and culture are not betrayed.

We are also forever indebted to the local knowledgeable collaborators who have accompanied us over the years, taking part with us in the long complex work of transcription and translation of oral performances.

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Of the scholars who share our views, and who came in January 2011 to Ateneo de Manila University when the website of « Philippines Epics and Ballads Archive » was launched, and then, in the following year, elaborated the in-depth chapters of this book, we are greatly appreciative.

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INTRODUCTION

The vast and comprehensive research program, “The Integral Study of Silk Roads, Roads of Dialogue” was launched in 1990 under the auspices of Unesco. As part of the Decade for Cultural Development, this multi-faceted project lasted 10 years and consisted of five international seminars, field studies and research, many cultural activities, and expeditions on land and sea. Early on I was in charge of the international seminar on Epics as part of this wide-reaching endeavor¹.

The term ‘literature of voice’ had then been chosen by the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* to refer to the oral tradition of the world². I proposed to consider epics and ballads in particular as the very core of the project. Numerous examples of this chanted verbal art were presented during a series of seminars on epics at the Centre de Recherche sur l’Oralité (CRO), Inalco in Paris that lasted over a decade; some of the seminars have been published³.

It had been my vision as early as 1987 to build a multimedia archive of epics and ballads, and I was able to make this happen in the Philippines.

¹ Professor Jean Leclant, Secrétaire perpétuel de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres and Professor Vadime Elisseeff of EHESS, were respectively President and Scientific Adviser.

Mr. Doudou Diene was the coordinator of all the related programs at Unesco, Paris. *Les Routes de la Soie. Patrimoine commun, identités plurielles*, UNESCO, Collection Mémoire des Peuples, [Colloque: Les Routes de la Soie: Problèmes scientifiques et culturels, Fondation Singer-Polignac, 13 mai 1992]. See : N. Revel, « Problématique de l’épopée. Routes terrestres et maritimes », p. 99-109.

² *Le Grand Atlas des Littératures*, 1990, *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Section : *Les Littératures de la Voix*, Paris. « Asie du Sud-Est », (N. Revel en collaboration avec J. Dournes), in *Le Grand Atlas des Littératures*, Encyclopaedia Universalis, Paris, pp. 98-103.

« Épopée » (N. Revel et al.), 1993, *Encyclopaedia universalis*, Paris, pp. 573-581. Nouvelle édition pour CDRom, et édition imprimée.

³ *Épopées. Littératures de la voix*, *Diogène*, Revue internationale des Sciences humaines, n° 181, janvier-mars, 1998, Gallimard, Paris, 136 p. *Epics : Literatures of Voice*, Translation in English published by Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 157p.

Cahiers de Littérature Orale, CLO 32, *Épopées*, N. Revel éd., INALCO, Mars 1993, Paris, 205p.

Beginning in 1991, audio-tapes, video-tapes, photos and manuscripts were collected and housed, bit by bit, at the Rizal Library Annex, thanks to the invitation and agreement of the President of Ateneo de Manila University, Father Bienvenido Nebres S.J.

The next landmark was a richly rewarding conference convened at this university in 2000 by the Office of the President. It was on this occasion that, for the first time, excerpts of manuscripts, songs, and analyses were presented to students, scholars, and teachers. The papers of this conference were published in 2000⁴.

After 20 years of joint endeavors, this collection of intangible heritage is now housed at the Pardo de Tavera collection of the Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University. It includes epics, ballads, and several rituals that have been recorded, transcribed, translated, and analyzed by scholars and knowledgeable persons from fifteen cultural communities in the Islands of Luzon, Panay, Palawan, Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagos.

Several years of collaboration between the CNRS, the “Archives de la Parole” (ultimately becoming the Audio-Visual Department at the Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF]), and Ateneo de Manila University, were needed to digitize this expanding collection. This joint endeavor was made possible thanks to the support of the French Embassy in the Philippines and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris.

In 2009, I was asked by the Ateneo de Manila President to conceive of and design a website for this expanding collection. The vision of Father Nebres was a legacy for education in the Philippines, and for the advancement in the safeguarding of endangered languages in cyberspace. Father Nebres’ trust and leadership facilitated the indispensable collaboration between various departments in Ateneo for this new implementation. On January 21, 2011, during the “Songs of Memory” conference, the website was launched.

The present book is the latest achievement of this endeavor in its intention to build on previous work at an international level. The scholarship provided here seeks, not only to safeguard and comprehend the uniqueness and evolving beauty of these ancient sung narratives as currently performed in the islands of Southeast Asia, but also to defend their vitality in today’s world.

⁴ *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*, 2005, [Proceedings of the 2000 Conference in Ateneo de Manila University], N Revel, ed., Office of the President Publication, 236 p., 32 photos, 1 video-disk of the performances.

A reflection on epics and ballads as intangible heritage, and our new capacity to safeguard and explore its works, opens Part I of this book with three essays.

In “Chanted Landscapes” anthropologist Fernando Zialcita’s shows how forms of tangible heritage, such as natural landscapes, houses, bridges, dress, weaponry, seem more durable than intangible heritage. Yet they too may have an uncertain future. Once they lose meaning for the community where they are located, it becomes difficult to elicit support for their conservation. On the other hand, epics and other oral narratives may seem evanescent, yet intangible heritage helps vivify tangible heritage by various ways: highlighting significant tangible assets within the narrative such assets are ‘revealed’ to listeners; imitating sounds of relevant objects and thus revealing them anew; acting as the vehicle through which a singer expresses his/ her being. Excerpts of some epics will illustrate this complementarity.

The second chapter authored by Leovino Garcia, provides the philosophical and theoretical inspiration for an hermeneutic in the field of oral tradition studies. Applying Paul Ricoeur’s narrative theory, in particular the threefold *Mimesis* of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration as laid out in *Time and Narrative*, Garcia’s essay demonstrates the ethical implications of chanted narratives.

In the third chapter, “Vivid and Virtual Memory”, Nicole Revel, who has conducted field research for many years, focuses on the poetics of voice that are featured by one of the singers of tales and the macro-structure of two long compositions, a *tutul* among the Palawan and a *kata-kata* among the Sama Dilaut. By doing so, she introduces heuristic notions and analytical procedures elaborated along the years. Then, in order to safeguard and provide access to these unknown artistic expressions, she presents the conservation of living performances and her shared experience in the making of a *literature of voice* archive at the turn of the 21st century. Finally, reflections on memory and creativity in traditional oral cultures as well as in the incipient multimedia culture are presented.

These three chapters provide insight into our joint teaching program on Intangible Heritage at the Departments of Socio-Anthropology and Philosophy at Ateneo de Manila University from 2001 to 2007.

Part II, focuses on the relationship between the voice, the music, and the words. Long lasting fieldwork, mastery of a vernacular language, and an attempt to bring out relevant ‘-emic’ categories, characterize the respective monographic works in anthropology and ethno-musicology presented here. They illustrate the stronghold of the method in our common approach.

With *Mangalimog Ako* ‘I will find my voice and produce it’, ethnomusicologist and composer M.C. Muyco focuses on the involvement of *limog* in the processual aspects of chanting, the preparation of the voice, tone production, and other aesthetic considerations of a highland people of Panay Island in central Philippines, the Panay Bukidnon. The *limog* involves musical and aesthetic organization of certain expressions that are embodied in the act of chanting. The vocal body is only a medium of a story that is woven in the process and pursuit of *sibod*, Panay Bukidnon’s ideology of thought and expression. A similar ideology makes these people, their music, dance, and other creative acts, perceptibly effective. Finding the *limog* also means finding the tone contour or shape that the chanter will use for the epic. The *limog* becomes an introduction and a form of preparation as this leads to the main body of the epic. The chanted text becomes more meaningful to the chanter and the community when the *mangalimog ako* is undertaken beforehand. This initial stage is relevant to the interweaving of a *sugidanon*’s long and winding story, forming the very essence of it as a way ‘to tell’ or *sugid*.

In the Toraja highlands of south Sulawesi, ‘ritual’ *aluk*, is always associated with ‘speech’ *bisara*. Every ritual act, every sacrifice is preceded by ritualistic words, deeply poetic, providing multiple keys to understand this society. *To minaa* ‘those who know’ are the people who master, conduct, and chant these words. After being uttered, ritual speeches are performed by way of songs and dances. Thus, the Toraja must perform again and again, to reiterate, in another register, what they have just said. In chapter five, the analysis by ethnomusicologist Dana Rappoport focuses on the ways in which music is rooted in ritual speech. Two opposite rituals: *aluk rapasan*, ‘the highest setting sun ritual’ (a death ritual) and *aluk bua’ kasalle*, ‘the highest rising sun ritual’ (a life ritual) are analysed. A funeral hagiographic poem, *ossoran badong*, declaimed by one or two officiants before the animal offerings, manifests a rhetoric of praise with a distribution of functions for a memory of songs forbidden today. A trilingual multimedia software with two related books, *Songs from the Thrice-Blooded Land* (2011) is also an attempt to represent the musical memory of the Toraja, emphasizing the link between speech and songs.

Tudbulul, the epic of the T’boli, who are living in southwest Mindanao, consists of eight episodes, each varying in length between thirty minutes and one hour. It is the principal means for transmitting customary law. Ethnomusicologist Manolete Mora observes that, despite the evidence for the ‘poetico-musical’ nature of the oral epic, more generally, most scholarly work focuses on the poetry. An important issue in epic studies, then, is whether the interpretative bias toward the poetry is justifiable. In

the T'boli context there is strong evidence for the intrinsic role that musical poetics plays in the dramatic, affective, and temporal experience of the epic when performed. Here, a specific musical-temporal scheme underpins the dynamic unfolding of the text. It is in the 'Ring Form'. T'boli metaphors help us understand the processual and affective dimensions of this scheme and the culturally patterned responses during an epic performance. *Madness and Recovery* of the hero is one of the episodes described and analyzed here in terms of its narrative and temporal organization, as well as the structures that underpin the affective T'boli experience during the singing of the tale.

Ritual-Drama and Heroic Stories lead us to a description and analysis of the *alim* in contrast to the *huhud* among the Ifugao of northern Luzon. Both are major traditional Ifugao chants and often referred to as 'siblings'. The *hudhud* has been proclaimed by Unesco as a "Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity", and the *alim*, has been lauded by its performers as the 'crowning jewel' of its elaborate ritual. Anthropologist, Rosario Bona de Santos del Rosario introduces the lesser-known *alim*, by comparing and contrasting it to the better known *hudhud*, in terms of form, performance, poetic language, and music, the *alim* being chanted by men and the *hudhud*, by women. Music transcription and analysis has been provided by Fe Prudente at the College of Music, University of the Philippines.

Hudhud stories are lengthy narratives sung in alternating lead and chorus manner. They revolve around the problem of finding a spouse outside of one's sib and within the context of ordeals that require courage and heroism. They tell of romantic encounters, sing the praises of the *kadangyan* (the wealthy class), and show how the hero/heroine is challenged in deeds and ordeals when faced with the dilemma between preferential sib obligation and ethical wisdom.

Alim is a drama that is also chanted in an alternating lead-chorus style, performed in between parts of the elaborate *hongga*, a ritual for well-being that involves special stories, prayers, myths, movement, dance, and the playing of gongs, drum, and sticks. Through dialogues between husband and wife, the *alim* dramatizes issues of marriage, the difficulties couples undergo when the marriage is childless or adulterous and can no longer be upheld. The dramatic discourses span the processes of divorce, separation, remarriage, and reconciliation, all in the context of *kadangyan* wealth and celebrations. The *alim* may be interpreted as a kind of charter that establishes the grounds for moral and social behavior.

Part III, complements part II with a deeper focus on hermeneutics.

The analysis of the *hudhud* by Maria Stanyukovich, shows how it centers on strong ritual ties characteristic of Philippine epics. *Hudhud* characters are not just folklore figures, they belong to the *halupe*, a class of deities in the Ifugao pantheon. They control emotions and memories; they are believed to be *ma'ule*, 'kind', benevolently disposed towards human beings and act on behalf of human beings in their interactions with other deities. The *halupe* deities form the core of *halag*, the so-called 'women's religion' (Barton, 1946). They are also addressed in rituals performed by men. *Hudhud* singing during agricultural activities (weeding and harvesting), as in the *hudhud di 'ani/page* 'hudhud of the harvest/rice', traditionally aimed to remind the benevolent deities of the needs of the people to secure an abundant harvest. Women's singing in the fields serves the same goal as the agricultural rites performed by men, namely to ensure a magical increase of rice. Regional variations in *hudhud* epic singing result in the distribution of ritual functions between different genres within the frame of one ritual situation. The role of the *hudhud* epic and *hudhud*-shaped ritual songs in funeral rites is examined, showing how it serves to make the soul of the deceased admit its new status, aiming also to achieve reconciliation between the living relatives and the soul of the dead. To this end, it seeks to restore the territorial boundary between the dead and the living that has been jeopardized by a recent death. The soul of the deceased, led by a spirit conductor *Domia* by means of *hudhud* singing, must be convinced to 'forget' its way back and to 'cool' its emotions towards the living kin. For the living, intense positive emotions towards those left on earth are just as dangerous as negative ones.

The daily life of the Moken, a nomadic people in the Mergui Archipelago of Burma of 5,000 people scattered on hundreds of islands - is emotionally dense, rooted in the teachings of epics, the story of "*Gaman*" in particular. This song is performed secretly and transmitted from shaman to shaman in the heart of the night. Everyone knows part of the whole, but only the shaman is the keeper. It relates physical love and alliances of marriage. All these cultural fundamentals follow the rules transmitted symbolically by the epic, which even gave to the Moken their ethnonym and explains the so expressive hollowed out and notch out of their boat. Between secret and common knowledge, alternatively sung and narrated for six hours, the "*Gaman*" epic provides some guidance on how to survive in the Mergui archipelago, among other hegemonic peoples, be they Burmese, Thai, or British.

However this seemingly frozen cultural system does not prevent evolution. Anthropologist Jacques Ivanoff searches for the Moken' answer to contemporary history and presents the adaptation of a new epic in which

the missionaries attempt to gain influence, by using different images to explain the same rules enacted by *Gaman*, the Malay.

The Moken resisted many destructive forces. To a certain extent, their poverty preserved a stable cultural identity based on non accumulation, non violence, and mobility. Such values are anchored in this sea hunter society thanks to a rich and diverse oral tradition some parts of it reaches the intangible cultural landmarks. This orality is in danger today, and the Moken are waiting yet for a shaman whose words will guide them in a world that they understand less and less, and to which they must quickly adapt. Little by little, the epic floats adrift towards a world beyond physical representation, created by new sacred men and artists on frescos made from garbage that has reached their beaches. From the sung words and the power of the shaman, the Moken are now building a more expressive way of depicting various worlds.

In a study of the many variants of the myth of the Sailfish, linguist and story-teller, Aone van Engelenhoven, elaborates on narrative knowledge management in Southwest Maluku and Tutuala. While on the Southwest Malukan islands the story of the Sailfish is still known in its different variants, such knowledge is confined in Tutuala to the ritual masters of speech of only a few clans. The mythical stories relating the origins of the different clans in Tutuala were hidden from the outside world and told only under special circumstances.

Today, the regency of Southwest Maluku and the sub-district of Tutuala belong to different nations – respectively, the Republics of Indonesia and East-Timor; however they were once part of a single economic network, called *Nuspaikra-Rapiatatra* ‘the Conducted Islands – the Arranged Lands’.

Comparative research on oral traditions in both regions has revealed that, notwithstanding their long mutual separation in history and different languages and landscapes, their storytelling traditions are in principle the same, though in Tutuala, these traditions evolved into a realm of secrecy.

Brandon Reilly’s research report on written sources revisits the early Spanish writings about epic performances in the Philippines from the late sixteenth to the seventeenth century, in an attempt to understand how the first Spanish witnesses made sense of them. While they did not transcribe these performances, many writers did *describe* them, and some did in detail. They also appreciated such performances to the extent that they sought to understand them as repositories of culture and history, even if they produced this knowledge with the aim of reforming native culture. Some evaluated the singing of epics positively, many negatively; some found the style of performance benign or even enjoyable, others found

them excruciating for their length and what they viewed as their repetitiveness. The accounts of Loarca (1582), Chiriño (1604, 1618), San Nicolas (1624), Colin (1663), Combes (1667), Alcina (1668), and San Agustin (1698) are scrutinized and some light is shed on the earliest historical period of contact with respect to these epics.

This book comes to a close with the chapter on interpreting memory by scholar and poet, Muhammad Haji Salleh and the emotion inspired by *Hang Tuah*, the greatest of culture heroes in the Malay world ‘who was allowed to cross all the spaces, the divine, the royal, the international, the spiritual, the personal and the natural’. Endowed with bravery, wisdom, and magic, *Hang Tuah* was also a loyal servant par excellence in the feudal world of the Empire. Many readings of the “*Hikayat Hang Tuah*” (*The Epic of Hang Tuah*) perceive him as the real symbol of Melaka. Stored in the memory of the Malays for over 500 years, this hero is often re-interpreted with respect to the current age, its needs, and ideologies. Identity, history, and the achievements of his people are described from a variety of viewpoints within this great narrative. This grand *hikayat* has been translated in English by Muhammad Haji Salleh and recently published.

The 12 chapters that make up this book represent only a part of the vast research inspired by the vitality of orality in Southeast Asia at the turn of the 21st century. Though the forces of oblivion and destruction are numerous in today’s world, the forces of memory and creativity counteract them in a genuine, contemporary, and yet traditional way. If we look toward the new digital multimedia revolution with open eyes, ears, and minds, we can foresee it is an extraordinary ally for the Masters of oral traditions and the spoken or the chanted word.

One way of defending endangered languages and also encouraging mother tongue in education is to empower native speakers by giving them access to digital technologies, by placing these languages and artistic expressions into cyberspace, an infinite space for humankind.

Nicole Revel
February, 2013

PART I:

**CHANTED NARRATIVES INTANGIBLE
HERITAGE IN TODAY'S WORLD**

CHAPTER ONE

CHANTED LANDSCAPES

FERNANDO N. ZIALCITA

Landscapes within, landscapes without. Contrary to positivist science, the boundary between our body and the world is indefinite and shifting. When I experience space, according to the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964: 59), I do not experience it as “an exterior wrap.” Instead, “I see space from within, I am enfolded by it... rather than the world being in front of me, it is around me.” Moreover, in our experience there is a constant interplay between the open and the closed, between the within and the without, between the here and the yonder, between inner space and outer space, writes Gaston Bachelard (1967: 192). These metaphors spring from our experience of space as we move through it, changing positions, and reconfiguring it. What seems external may become part of our inner space, conversely intimately held images are eventually exteriorized.

Our consciousness is not a camera that blindly records raw data. Even as the senses relay information to the mind, they are oriented by it; for the mind continually re-organizes sensory data into meaningful wholes. The universal is present in the particular, as Hegel observed.¹ Thus our senses spontaneously highlight certain features of a landscape, flatten others, and ignore the rest. What may be far for others, may be near for us and vice-versa.² What may seem but a forest may, for a community, be the abode

¹ In the act of perceiving (*wahrnehmen*), the object (*Gegenstand*) becomes a definable being because the perceiving Ego intervenes in the flow of sensations. It posits a Unity that brings together otherwise unrelated qualities such as whiteness, saltiness and a cube shape (Hegel [1807] 1952: 95).

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962: 261-62) reminds us, that without the intervention of our Understanding, we will not see an object three dimensionally. For when face to face with a box, we imagine or we see in our imagination the unseen sides of the box, and factor these in.

of their spirits. Or a sword may be more than a finely crafted weapon, it could signify a bond between father and son.

In this era of relentless change, where commercial interests dominate, many communities all over the world are now trying to protect material objects that give them a sense of continuity and purpose. But what is tangible does not necessarily endure forever. If a forest is merely regarded as a commodity to be bought and sold on the market, it will be laid waste. A sword bought outside its cultural context may well be melted down one day for scrap. Hence even as nations and local communities protect their material heritage, they should also protect the intangible world into which this heritage was born and that subtly nourishes it. Tangible and intangible heritage are woven together like body and spirit.

The Tangible May Decay

To have a site included in the Unesco's List of World Heritage Sites has become a mark of prestige for nation-states. In 1972, this august organization ratified a worldwide convention protecting all those sites, whether natural landscapes or manmade structures, that were submitted to it for approval. Since then, many member countries, like the Philippines, have nominated natural and cultural sites for inclusion. A Philippine example in the List of World Heritage Sites is the historic city of Vigan (Villalon, 2007). The defense of architectural heritage being a life-long advocacy of mine, I was actively involved in writing the justification for including Vigan in UNESCO's list. Another example of tangible heritage, one that is directly pertinent to this conference, is the Rice Terraces of Ifugao (Ibid., 2007). These are classified under a separate category. Not quite a conventional structure, since the terraces are roofless; not quite a mere landscape either, since the terraces are the product of human ingenuity. These giant stairs of mud and stone are classified as a Cultural Landscape.

However, while being included in the List of World Heritage Site is indeed an honor, staying in that list is a major challenge. For material structures are the product of the values, skills, practices, and rituals of a community. Moreover, sites including natural landscapes, become meaningful through the role they play in the life of a community – be this in their songs, dances, myths, stories and religious rituals. Though they are in the UNESCO List, the Ifugao rice terraces are in fact endangered. Left untended, their walls dry up and crack. There are several reasons why

large sections are now neglected. One obvious reason is that some farmers prefer to migrate elsewhere, notably to the lowlands, to take up other occupations. Meanwhile, anthropologists tell us that the *Hudhud*, which are epic chants that women sing during the rice harvest and two other special occasions, were for many decades ignored by the youth. Today, fortunately, a revival of Hudhud chanting is taking place. But what out-migration, the decay of the terraces, and the temporary loss of interest in the epic chants tell us is that the preservation of tangible, material heritage constitutes one entire system of interconnected variables. There may be subtle, causal relationships that could be articulated to make the living system work.

To ensure therefore that a people's material heritage survives, it is equally important that their non-material heritage be alive. UNESCO (2003) enacted an International Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Defined as Intangible Cultural Heritage were the following: 1) oral traditions and expressions, including language; 2) the performing arts; 3) social practices, rituals, and festive events; 4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and 5) traditional craftsmanship. A list of works of universal significance was drawn up. Among these works inscribed were the Ifugao Hudhud.

The Intangible Vivifies

Epics and ballads are particularly important for keeping material or tangible heritage alive for two reasons: they interpret narratively and they sing. This paper seeks to understand how an epic vivifies a people's tangible heritage.

But first we should qualify the conditions under which I undertake this exploration. Following the phenomenological tradition, it is important not only to understand how the world is interpreted by an epic's text, but likewise how an epic is understood today both by its singers and hearers. Asking people about their interpretation of particular passages that concern their material heritage discloses levels of meaning that outsiders would not have suspected, while highlighting what is truly relevant to them. In the absence of fieldwork, we are left with the next best thing, the available written texts.

Since our concern is with the significance of material objects within a chanted narrative, we start by reflecting phenomenologically on the

relationship between the self and its world are two movements essayed by the self.³ Of these, the second is more pertinent to our exploration. 1) In the first movement, as embodied consciousness, the self interacts with its environment – which includes other selves and the non-human world – in order to fulfill its various needs. In so doing, it positions itself vis-à-vis other bodies and projects a series of projects. In this emergent space-time, epics can play a major role. Thus, as the women of Ifugao tend the rice fields, they organize themselves into teams in order to cut through the rice stalks more efficiently. Singing the Hudhud keeps them in unison as a team; at the same time that it commemorates the exploits of their heroes and heroines. While transforming the material environment, Hudhud singers celebrate their oneness as a people by singing about shared ideals and values. In this process, each participating self both discovers and affirms itself. 2) There is a second movement by the self. It seeks to express forms, such as narratives, emerging from its consciousness. These narratives become landscapes within which elements from the surrounding landscape are incorporated, such as sights, sounds, gestures and smell, and may become signs.

In his phenomenology of poetry, Gaston Bachelard, distinguishes three activities within the poetic act. His schema clarifies the transformation of the tangible into the deeply meaningful intangible. Poetry brings together: 1) visual impressions, 2) aural impressions and 3) vocal impressions. This schema defines the several ways through which an epic becomes meaningful within a community. While the voice projects vistas, the lips and the teeth articulate different spectacles. “And the joy of expressing one’s self is such that, at the end, it is the vocal expression that gives a landscape its dominant ‘touches’” (1942: 254). There are landscapes that are conceived with “fists and jaws” (Ibid: 254). On the other hand, there are landscapes that are “labial, sweet and gentle” (Ibid.). If “words with liquid phonemes are grouped together, a watery landscape results” (Ibid: 254-255).

Visual impressions appear as epics interpret objects while narrating a story. Within a narrative, an object loses its mundane, everyday character, for it becomes associated with a hero who is loved by a community as the embodiment of their core values. The object becomes special or even sacred through association with him. Coming from a Christian background,

³ This section was inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s exploration of Space and Time using the body as referent (1962).

allow me to draw an analogy. The River Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the hills of Galilee have a special meaning for the believer because of their association with Jesus. So likewise would places and objects mentioned in the lives of the Buddha and Mohammed for the Buddhist and the Moslem. A similar pattern most likely occurs when a member of a community hears particular places referred to in an epic that is chanted by his people.

For instance, the Hudhud called *Aliguyon, Son of Amtalao* narrates how the hero battles his enemy among the rice terraces. Consider, for example, this excerpt from a Hudhud chanted by Caridad and ten Ifugao women, taped by Nicole Revel and Lourdes Saquing Dulawan in February 26, 1993, and translated into English by Lourdes Saquing Dulawan in collaboration with Nicole Revel. I have modified some of the original English words for the sake of accuracy.

“Someone is shouting,” said Aliguyon, Aliguyon, son of Amtalao.
 Straight away he ran to the house yard of Dayagan
 Straight away to the stone walks of the handsome braves of Dayagan.
 He looked down at the stone yard of the granary of Dayagan,
 He saw Gumingin, Gumingin son of Dinug-anan.
 “Who are you who shouts from the stone yard of the granary of Dayagan?”
 He looked up, Gumingin, Gumingin, son of Dinug-anan.
 “I am here, “shouted Gumingin, Gumingin, son of Dinug-anan,
 “To revive the enmity between you and my old man, Dinug-anan.”
 “So, so,” said Aliguyon, Aliguyon, son of Amtalao.
 “Don’t be in a hurry, wait for me, “said Aliguyon, Aliguyon, son of Amtalao
 (Box 1, (1.1), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*).

.....
 He entered their house in the center of Dayagan.
 He got the shield of their father, old man Panga’iwan,
 Went down to the yard of Dayagan...
 Down to the paddy fields of Dayagan.
 So likewise did Gumingin, son of Dinug-anan.
 He too went down to the paddy fields of Dayagan.
 Between them flowed the channel of the fields of Dayagan.
 And the spear of Gumingin, Gumingin, son of Dinug-anan,
 He hurled it at Aliguyon, Aliguyon, son of Amtalao.
 Expertly Aliguyon, Aliguyon, son of Amtalao
 Caught the spear of Gumingin, Gumingin.
 They threw spears at one another in the paddies of Dayagan
 (Box 1. (1.1), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*).

An otherwise mundane object, such as a traditional house, a stone yard, or the stone walls of the terraces, is transformed by our imagination

through the epic's unfolding events. A humble house becomes the storehouse of a hero's weapons, while the rice terraces, an ordinary sight, become the locale of a cosmic battle that lasts for years.

The treasured object may be an even more mundane and domestic object like embroidery, as in the Tala-andig epic, *Tumulin ku Kayamag*, which was chanted by Victoriana Parente in May 20, 1993 in Talakag, Bukidnon, transcribed and translated by Irene Saway-Llesis, and edited and coordinated by Nicole Revel.

The Datuq of Layagen Ha Maliluk is Bugkawangan Mabantug. He wants his sister Nagilayag Aluyan to visit the famous country of Yandang as his emissary. But she hesitates for fear of losing her honor. He advises her that she can give, as an excuse, her interest in learning their embroidery techniques! She agrees and prepares her clothes:

She put on not just one skirt,
 That skirt beautifully made,
 She put on many of them.
 So likewise with her upper garment
 Together with her blouse
 (Box 5, (5.7), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*).

It was designed beautifully;
 It had many colors.
 The designs were varied,
 And had beautiful embroidery,
 And pretty stitch work.
 (Box 5, (5.7), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*).

Flying on her magic carriage, Nagilayag Aluyan arrives at Yandang and awes everyone with her beauty. She explains her purpose. The ladies of Yandang reply that they will gladly teach her their needlework and, in turn, would like to learn her version of needlework.

All the ladies were busy;
 All were busy embroidering.
 Their fifty needles were moving in unison;
 Their sixty needles were moving simultaneously.
 The lady's long finger moved like a madman;
 The fingers of the lady moved like an insane man.
 Soon one moon's cycle almost ended,
 And it was new moon again
 (Box 5, (5.7), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*).

Nagilayag Aluyan's needlepoint diplomacy is successful and she prepares to return to their country, but not before receiving marriage proposals.

Let us visit the epic of another country in Southeast Asia. Dr. Muhammad Hajji Salleh translated the magnificent Malaysian epic *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. The adventures of Hang Tuah bring him around Southeast Asia, in the process of which, he not only affirms his own Malay heritage, but imbibes as well the wisdom of the Indians, the Chinese, and the Siamese. The kris plays a special role in his world. Here are narratives that convey its several meanings.

Hang Tuah's parents gathered the rice and supplies for their son.
 Hang Tuah's father gave him a kris and a machete,
 And his friend's fathers likewise gave their sons a kris and a machete
 (Salleh n.d.: 31).

Because fathers are expected to give this weapon to their sons, the kris symbolizes the bond between father and son. In another episode, Hang Tuah and his four companions are attacked by pirates who want to kidnap them and turn them into slaves.

"Kill the damned kids!" shouted the pirates while attacking the boys
 And shooting with all their might. Hang Tuah unsheathed his kris,
 The other four companions followed his move.
 Together they all threw themselves at the pirates.
 Hang Tuah stabbed hard, killing two
 (Salleh n.d.: 32-33).

The kris' efficacy is shown in this passage where five young men defeat a large crew of pirates who rain poisoned darts on them with their blowpipes. The serpent-shaped sword, we are told in another passage, owes its superiority to the elaborate technology that made it.

His Majesty ordered an old master iron smith to forge forty kerises.
 His Majesty ordered him to craft a very long blade for Hang Tuah's own use.
 Twenty types of iron were mixed into an alloy.
 One hundred and eighty seven kilograms of iron were beaten down to make the keris (Salleh n.d.: 58).

Hearing these various episodes, the audience learns to admire not only the power of the bladed weapon, but likewise its manufacture; not only its elaborateness but its role as well in forging ties with one's peers and one's father.

Epics also create aural impressions. Following the linguist E. Benveniste, Nicole Revel (1992: 19) says that the linguistic sign is not "arbitrary" but in fact "necessary". Languages attempt to combine sound and sense in the sign by imitating the environment. The Palawan language seems highly apt for onomatopoeia, for Palawan has a "vocalism founded on four phonemes covering two levels of opening, a consonantal system of sixteen phonemes proceeding from a labial order to a glottal order in five points of articulation. This is organized in four correlative series of consonants consisting of voiced and unvoiced occlusives, nasal and continuous series. Together with these is a syllabic structure that is based on the Consonant-Vowel-Consonant Sequence (CVC), having no relevant stress but with an accent that lightly rests on the second to the last syllable". Revel maps out and classifies sounds in Palawan thus (Ibid. 53-66):

- 1) Air sounds (thunder, wind, movements, musical instruments)
- 2) Water sounds (fresh water, salt water, shells, fish)
- 3) Earth sounds (earthquakes, steps, beatings, work in the fields)
- 4) Animal sounds (insects, birds, nuisance animals, leaping or flying animals)
- 5) Falling sounds (landing on the ground, landing into the water)
- 6) Fire sounds (field fire, hearth fire, smithery, scraping sounds)
- 7) House sounds (people at home, housekeeping)
- 8) Calls and cries (male calls, female calls, infant cries)
- 9) Human calls and interjections (Fear and fright, joy and happiness, sadness and chagrin, sorrow, distaste, amazement and surprise, affirmation and negation, anger, curses, clicks)

She analyzes the various patterns with which the Palawan language imitates such sounds. One pattern is created by repeating syllables in which the vowel is enclosed by two consonants. Examples: *lilyah-lilyah-lilyah* (cricket) or *gigyah-gigyah* (cricket); *tultulingang* (thunder) or *kukutibang* (thunder).

Revel's description of the Palawan language also applies to other Philippine languages within the Austronesian family. As a speaker of Tagalog and Ilocano, I find similar patterns. Recognizing onomatopoeia as an organizing principle discloses the subtle manner in which the

environment, the sea, enters into the epic of the seafaring and boat-dwelling Sama Dilaut of the Sulu archipelago of the Philippines: *Silungan Baltapa*. In several stanzas, the sea is indeed mentioned. But something more happens through the juxtaposition of the syllables, as will be seen.

*Si ata abinasa
Makablangan aluha
Asusa pamikil na
Alla na balio na
Ia lapal bahasa
Si Silungan Baltapa
“Ata adaran sinusa kita
Aminta-minta ma embal tendaq mata
Sigam makalimaya.”
Uy, uy, uy, uy --- iq.*

The servant was exhausted
In the wide open sea
(*Silungan Baltapa*) was so worried,
There is no wind
Silungan Baltapa
Said:
“My servant, often have we tried
To look for what the eyes do not see
As if anyone could go anywhere at will.”
Uy, uy, uy, uy --- iq.
(Box 2, (2. 9), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*; see also Revel et al.:
2005: 27-28)

The setting is somewhere in the wide, open sea. The master and his servant are becalmed. Somehow the vastness of the sea and the desolation felt are communicated by the repetition of the flat, open /a/ within syllables in every line, particularly *Makablangan aluha* ‘Wide open sea’. A sense of indeterminacy, of being trapped in the open, is communicated. The refrain, “*Uy, uy, uy, uy --- iq*”, that is repeated throughout the entire poem and is chanted at a high pitch, mimics the movement of the wind coursing over the water.

In contrast, a light, somewhat comic mood is created in the following lines from the same epic. *Mussa’ Dalmata*, ‘the Only Pearl’, *Silungan*’s wife, is with child and craves the sour *santol* (sandor) fruit. She recalls a bird flying in with such delightful fruit for them to savor.

Tuan na ta entom nu naba
Ari jaman pagsukay ta
Niaq manuk palabay
Si manuk-manuk bukay
Si manuk buring kakay
Manok deom kiama
Anangaq santol papa
Manambung takakan ta
Uy, uy, uy, uy --- iq.

Tuan, do you now remember
 The time you deloused me?
 A bird flew in,
 It was a small cacatoo
 With disheveled feathers,
 A bird from the Hereafter
 Bring a santol fruit
 For us to eat.
Uy, uy, uy, uy --- iq
 (Box 2, (2.9), *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archives*; see also Revel et al.:
 2005: 48)

The word *manuk* begins with a murmured /m/ that is rounded by an open /a/ and ends in a dorsal-plosive, hard /k/. The aural image catches the shape of the bird whose rounded head and body ends in a tail with a flourish of feathers. The repetition of the word five times in four lines, coupled with three ending words (*bukay*, *kakay*, *kiama*), in which the hard /k/ is prominent, evokes a bird excitedly moving about, cackling, flapping its wings, and wagging its tail.

Finally we turn to the vocal impressions made by an epic. Because an epic is chanted, it is a vehicle through which the chanter expresses his own personality. Writing on orality, Henri Meischonnic (1993) says that, unlike the written word, the spoken word cannot be neutral in affect. Through tone and pitch, orality reveals who the speaker is at a level that goes beyond words, for the very inflection of the voice communicates the speaker's personality. The voice may be shrill, soft, or resonant. Indeed the voice can even reveal if the speaker is merely pretending or is truly sincere. The human person is "rhythmic gesture" personified, says Marcel Jousse (1990: 21). Gestures are not only rooted in the human brain and in organic life, they are at the same time imitative (Ibid.). Hence the universal love for music and dance. Indeed, among peoples not yet dependent on the written word, everyday speech is much more rhythmic than among literate ones (Ibid.). And the voice is crucial for revealing the

person. Even as the mode of chanting reveals the person, the chanted object generates, as it were, a particular overtone.

Consider, for instance, the singing style of Binsu Lakbaw, singer of *Silungan Baltapa*, as analyzed by Olivier Tourny (2005). He is characterized as being more at ease “in the higher vocal register where his sung performance reveals a heightened dramatic intensity” (Tourny 2005: 192). In addition he loves to use “tremolos realized on a syllable in the middle of a word, on pitches of longer duration” (Ibid: 193). Tourny recalls that as he stood before the Temple of the Mount in Jerusalem in September 2002, he felt the surge of an emotion similar to what he felt when listening to “(the) sobriety and the modest, simple but forceful linking together of melodic cells and silences” of Binsu’s chanting (Ibid.: 196). All of a sudden, he said, Binsu Lakbaw’s voice resonated within him (Ibid.). For my part, listening to the singer’s style of singing conveyed to me the sense of a dreamer peering into the horizon. This made his evocation of the vast sea through “Uy, uy, uy, uy...” credible. The same text, when sung by another personality, would register differently.

Because epics and ballads are sung, both the hearer and the singer assimilate a physical object, not only intellectually, but physically as well. The rhythms of music are inspired by the most elemental rhythm of all: they mimic the heart beat which signifies life. Pulsations in a song are increased to communicate excitement, as indeed happens when the heart is agitated. Or the spacing between the beat is expanded to suggest tranquillity. Landscapes that are sung thus become part of one’s sensory world, of one’s body. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1977), the *habitus* is a long-lasting, pre-conscious disposition that is formed by social rules and structures. It is embedded even in a person’s way of moving and holding up the body, in what he calls *hexis*. And this enables consciousness to assimilate at a visceral level the *doxa* – the values and ideals of a society.

In some epics, the music that poetry expresses is woven around the music of traditional instruments, as for instance in the epic *Kudaman* of the Palawan people. *Kudaman* was sung by Usuy in 1971, transcribed by Nicole Revel, and translated by her into French, and by Edgar Maranan into Tagalog. Let us visit the scene where *Kudaman* throws a party. The English translation from the Tagalog is mine:

And the Lady of the Guinu'u Tree spoke,
 "For three nights and three days, we shall play on the gongs,
 and afterwards, we shall all drink rice beer together."
 (Box 15, (15.10), *Philippine Oral Epics Archives*.
 See also, Maranan and Revel-Macdonald 1991:193)

They say that Muta'-Muta', Kudaman's ritual brother, picked up the
 gong's stick.
 Only once did he strike the small rimmed gong.
 But, they say, its sound was as if spoken from the middle space.
 Muta'-Muta' did not take off his saber. (Ibid.).

He quickly took up mallet of the agung, the great gong.
 This was made of pure gold, and shone on another world...
 He pounded over and over again on the agung.
 And what is the sound of the agung? Truly, it was as though it spoke.
 Twice seven times did the sound of the gong music travel around the world.
 (Ibid.).

The section celebrates the music of the great gong that unites the
 community in merriment even as it shows off the gong-pounder's skills.
 Subtly it highlights the gender dimension of gong-playing. Even as Muta'-
 Muta' pounded on the metal drum, he wore his saber. The original
 Palawan text indicates an onomatopoeia at crucial moments.

Käduwang käpitu kunuq lumibut ät lungsud inägungan yä
 Twice seven times did the sound of the gong music travel around the
 world, the story says."
 (Maranan and Revel-Macdonald: 1992: 193).

The drummer's energy is suggested by the alliteration of /k/ at the
 beginning of three words in succession. On the other hand the repetition of
 the /l/ in two successive words and its juxtaposition with /u/ conveys an
 easy, flowing movement in space while the reverberation of the gong's
 echo is suggested by the nasal syllable /ung/ in two words in succession.
 The image created for us, in our consciousness, is of a man's arm beating
 with a mallet on the boss of a hollow metal object, a gong, and generating
 an amplitude of sounds. At the same time, these passages are themselves
 musical, for they are sung! Intersecting memories and meanings awaken