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Cleansing the Earth: The *Pånggaris* Ceremony in Palawan

Charles J-H Macdonald



The main point of this note is to analyze and discuss a ritual phenomenon that takes place in a small area in Southern Palawan Island. Over a period of more than twenty years, I have observed a number of different types of rituals and religious ceremonies among the Palawan people of Southern Palawan (see Macdonald 1973, 1977, 1988, 1990, 1993; Revel 1990, 21–25). Their religious life is characterized by a considerable variety in local, sub-regional ideologies and ceremonial activities, but under a seemingly random process of local variation, there is an underlying structure.

Having thus constructed a model based on a comparative grid of ritual traits (Macdonald 1993), I felt satisfied with the realization that the great and apparently random discrepancies between ritual and ceremonial forms from sub-culture to sub-culture had been reduced to some kind of orderly pattern based on a finite number of dimensions.

There was a type of ceremony that was unaccounted for yet, which I knew existed in the southernmost part of the island, in the Kulbi-Kanipäqan area, but on which insufficient data had been gathered until 1994. In October of that year my field assistant was able to capture on film the main moments of this ritual.¹

Interviews with informants and other observations provide enough data now to support a preliminary analysis of this important ritual performance. It shows that it belongs to quite a different type of religious phenomena than the rituals observed so far in other Palawan sub-groups. It raises therefore a problem in the overall model that has been previously constructed (Macdonald 1993), mainly because it seems to bring to the fore new dimensions in the religious life and values of the Palawan people in general.

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The Palawan People

The southern part of Palawan island is inhabited by an ethnic and linguistic group to which the ethnonym "Palawan," sometimes pronounced [palaqwan], is applied. Various exonyms including "Palawano," "Tao't Batu," and "Kenev" are found in the literature. The main point is that this ethnolinguistic group, about 50,000 members strong, speaking one Austronesian language belonging to the Southern or Meso Philippine Family (Thiessen 1981, 2-3) divided into different dialects, is made of many local sub-cultures. Each sub-cultural local group (one per coastal river basin more or less, and one for the entire central highland area) displays an amazingly original conception of the supernatural world and how to stage rituals.

The "Ulit Complex" in Palawan

How do ritual traits and religious/ideological values combine to form the motley pattern of the Palawan religious life? (Fox 1982, 219). Taking into account three different sub-cultures, one from the east coast (Punang), one from the west coast (Quezon), and one from the highland area (Mäkagwaq-Tamlang), I have shown that a nucleus of traits which I call the "*ulit* complex" forms the stable basis, the substratum, as it were, of ritual forms.² This substratum is analytically composed of the following dimensions: the use of a specialized ritual language, (usually called *ulit*), the combined use of musical instruments, dancing and singing, the communication with spirits either directly or indirectly, and the development of the dramatic and theatrical dimensions of ritual play. Through an examination of seven main aspects of the ritual variation in the three sub-cultures, I have attempted to show that ritual forms of the *ulit* complex can be seen as forms of the basic pattern. In the total range of contrasted forms, one observes then a fundamental polarization between rituals based on, so to speak, "introspective shamanism" with an emphasis on the inner power of a ritual specialist, and rituals based on stage-performance with emphasis on the quality and complexity of the ritual drama. Philosophy and art as two approaches to religion could be one way, although oversimplified, perhaps, to describe it.

The Kulbi-Känipaqaan area is located in the southwestern part of the island, below the central highlands. The area under consideration is limited to two river basins, those of Kulbi and Känipaqaan which form one continuous area. Because of its location away from

the main communication roads and population centers in the island, it has retained until recently a very traditional way of life. Immigrant farmers from other parts of the country reached this area only in the eighties. The total population of the two river basins is about 2,500 persons.

It is what I call a "lowland subculture" with unusually large local groups and an extremely cohesive social structure based on kinship and residence. Several factors give this area a very distinct flavor. Firstly the rather large "villages" found in this area are quite exceptional in a culture characterized by a scattering of tiny hamlets. Secondly, the dress and the manners of the people reflect some peculiarities. It is the only area where formal courting and flirting is institutionalized. Prettily decorated little houses, *pupuq*, are built to accommodate young girls and their lovers. Also, this area shows an extremely high suicide rate which is the object of a current investigation.

Their religious life as well is unusual in certain ways. The main ceremony and religious feast is a ritual called *panggaw* or more specifically *pänggaris* (meaning "cutting" or "slicing"). Once a year, it brings together people from all corners of the territory and its general aim is to "cleanse the earth," and bring a general state of welfare for the entire area and its inhabitants.

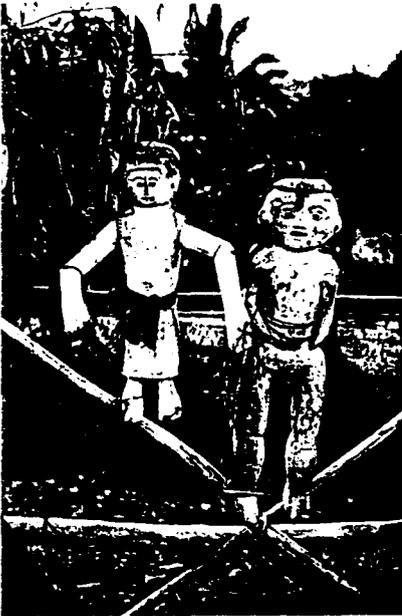
The Pänggaris Ceremony

This ritual takes place at most once a year in this area, and only a few specialists can perform this ceremony. Each specialist holds the ceremony at his place of residence only once every two to four years. This ceremony is held after harvesting and before clearing the new fields, during the months of October-November. It should coincide with the flowering of the *täwłaj* tree (Ulmaceae), and with the season when certain other trees, like the durian tree, or the *mälaga* tree (*Wendlandia densiflora* [Bl.] DC., Revel 1990, 343), or the *bunsikag* tree bear fruit, no later and no sooner. Of particular importance is the flowering of the *täwłaj* tree because its flowers provide the nectar which the *mugdun* bees transform into honey. It is repeatedly stated by informants that the timing should be respected, when bees are about to form hives and attach themselves, *mäkäpal*, under the limbs of forest trees. One of the explicit aims of the *pänggaris* ritual is to ensure a large production of wild honey.

The main part of the ceremony consists of a specific performance by the ritual specialist, *bäljan*, which lasts only a short moment at

sunrise, but is preceded by a long period of continuous gong playing, *basal*, and ritual dancing, *tarük*.³

A large house is selected for the ceremony. It is usually the house inhabited by one of the few main performers and ritual specialists in the area. Since the ceremony takes place only once a year in the Kulbi-Känipaqaan area, the location varies from year to year and there is a loose agreement that it should alternate between Kulbi and Känipaqaan. A few years back, there were two prominent ritual leaders in the area, Tukaring of Känipaqaan and Tukung of Kulbi, and they would perform the pänggaris in turn. The building where the people gather and where the basal (gong and drum playing) is to take place is partly renovated, enlarged if necessary, and decorated, and, most importantly, a platform, *pantaw*, is erected in front of the house, facing east. This platform and the roof top are decorated with bundles of leaves from the trees that are bearing fruit at this time of the year. Wooden carvings of human figures, *tawtaw*, are placed on the platform and attached to the cross-beam (see pictures 1 and 2). Carvings of beehives are also attached to the platform.



Picture 1



Picture 2

Performers, Actions, Scenario⁴

A male ritual specialist, *bäljan*, conducts the ritual, but many other people both male and female, perform ritual dances with or without trance. During the phase of "piercing, or opening the earth," the *pänggaris* properly speaking, a young girl is asked to dance on the spot where the "opening of the earth" has occurred. As already mentioned, the *pänggaris* in which the ritual process culminates, is preceded by a long period of gong playing with occasional dancing. The gongs and the drum should in theory be heard for a period of 8 days, or 16 days, continuously. Everywhere amongst lowland Palawan people, gong beating is synonymous of ritual calling of the deities, *diwata*, or "Powerful Ones," *kawasa*. On the eighth night a long session of dancing with ritual chanting, *däruhan*, is held and is performed by the main ritual specialist as well as other members of the community, in turn.

The *däruhan* is not a specific part of this ceremony. It occurs at various times during the year, and consists of dancing and chanting. During the dancing (performed on the floor of the meeting house) the spirits or divinities are said to come close and even enter the performer who experiences a trance-like state. During his trance, the spirit, who could also be a dead relative, speaks through the performer and his words are couched in a specialized, ritual language of a kind that is found in other areas as well (Macdonald 1990, 178-87). The content of the message thus brought to the attention of the audience, is usually of a general nature: the spirit is "checking in" and uttering a few vague predictions. Other people, young and old, male and female, dance, *tärak*, without necessarily lapsing into a trance although there is a general style of dancing, which indicates, by stumbling motions and loss of balance, a state of lack of control over one's body.

During this period of gong playing and dancing that lasts for eight to sixteen days and nights, but especially on the eve of the *pänggaris*, the main ritual specialist will dance on the platform, and on the main floor of the house, going back and forth between the outside platform and inner part of the house. He holds bundles of *silad* leaves (*Licuala spinosa* Wurmbe) in his hands, and is clad in a sarong or skirt, his head covered by a scarf or headdress. At various times he will invoke the divinities, *Ämpuq*, the Creator, and the "Powerful Ones," *käwasa*, as well as the ancestors, *käguranggurangan*, and he will chant

the *däruhan*, the ritual discourse, while facing in the direction of the rising sun. The sequence of actions: invoking the spirits-dancing-chanting follows a usual pattern found elsewhere in the island.

At sunrise on the ninth day, the main ritual specialist will start dancing on the floor of the house and on the platform to the accompaniment of the gongs and the drum. After a short while he steps down from the house—the houses are on stilts—and starts dancing on the ground, at the foot of the platform.

Shortly thereafter an entirely new action takes place. The performer holds a spear and jumps back and forth, and sideways, mimicking an attack or a fight. He is surrounded by a crowd of male onlookers. Some put their hands over their heads, in a gesture of atonement and imploration. They all shout and utter wild cries while the performer is going through this jumping motions and brandishing of weapons. After a while, he grabs a sword and proceeds to slice the ground eight times or more with the blade, all this amidst a general atmosphere of apparent confusion and even panic. This is the *gärisan*, the opening, the “wounding” of the earth. Finally he drives the point of the sword in the ground, piercing it and making a hole in it. He will pour immediately after some oil, *lana*, in this hole, and stick in it a little branch of *rukuruku* (*Ocinum* sp).

So far no women or children can be seen near the place where the action is occurring, but now a young girl is summoned and is made to dance on the spot where the ground has been opened. She performs the dance, *taräk*, for a short while, gyrating and moving to the beat of the gongs and the drum that have played constantly and on an accelerated rhythm during the piercing of the earth. There is a sequence of dancing by the main performer and then again by another girl on the same spot marked by a branch of *rukuruku*.

Next, rice grains are thrown on the ground and the ritual specialist bends down and puts some soil on his head. Another man performs the *taräk* one more time, just before the sequence ends with an acceleration of the drum's and gongs' tempo, and more shouts from the crowd. Then everybody promptly goes back inside the house.

The ceremony has not ended, though. First, prayers are made on the platform by the ritual specialist while he points the sword toward the east. After the pointing of the sword, the ritual performer goes back inside the house and proceeds to distribute his “blessings” by touching women and children on the head with the sword inside the scabbard.

At this point a new ritual sequence begins. A young woman is asked to come forth and to stand on the platform where she is made to face the rising sun. Her hair, which she is wearing long, is undone. Another woman stands behind the first one and starts combing the former's hair while the main ritual performer, who is standing behind, acts as if he were receiving and then holding something invisible from the girl's hair. The invisible object is passed along a line of people until it reaches the last person inside the house, where it is finally dropped on the floor. This whole performance is made to look like the transmission from hand to hand of an object, or a substance, oozing from the girl's hair and then passed through a chain of people to the last one in line. While this strange action takes place, shouts are heard and the noise made at this time is a reminder of the former sequence of "piercing" the earth, while everybody was shouting. To end this particular sequence, a man performs a ritual dance around the two women while holding bundles of silad leaves above their heads.

A ritual offering of rice follows. It is accomplished by the performer and several other people, on the platform, around a large winnowing tray where unhusked rice, *bāgas*, has been poured in a heap. This ritual offering of the newly harvested rice of the community (everyone brings his share) to the deities and ancestors has actually started just before the "combing" sequence, but is now completed by the utterance of invocations and prayers and the formal presentation of the harvest to the spirits.

The ceremony now comes to an end. The carvings of beehives are rubbed by one man with rukuruku leaves. Everybody then helps herself or himself from the heap of rice on the platform and goes back into the house, holding his or her share of the offering. A meal is served later and the whole ceremony is over. Guests who have come from distant villages start trekking back home.

Let us briefly summarize the proceedings. The first main sequence is the "cutting and piercing of the earth" followed by the pouring of oil, and the dancing of a young girl. The second main sequence is the "pointing of the sword" on the platform followed by the "blessing with the sword" of women and children. The third is the "combing of the girls' hair," and the bringing of its substance inside the house. The fourth and final sequence is the offering of the newly harvested rice and the prayers to the spirits.

Incest, Dragon and the Cleansing of the Earth

This ceremony, during which the cutting and the piercing of the earth figures so prominently, is the most important collective ritual of the entire area. It brings together people from all corners of the two valleys.

It was explained to me by several informants that the main point of the ritual process in this case is to "cleanse," *bäsaqan*, the earth, and the whole world actually, from things dirty, *märiddi*, lest a monster, *galap* or *tandajag* swallows the whole country or makes it disappear in a hole or a lake where it would sink with all its denizens. Among the things that are impure or dirty, incestuous behavior (marriage or sexual relations with a sibling or parent or first cousin) ranks highest. It is the "smell," *abu*, of incest that will attract the dragon from the bottom of the sea and cause him to annihilate the place and its inhabitants. The ritual specialist, *bäljan*, is responsible for what is happening and he should be able to fight the monster and drive it away or be put to death himself!

It is at the very moment when the ground is being cut and pierced that the monster could spring out and the water spurt and flood the entire area. It is also at this very moment that incestuous people hidden in the crowd could be detected, and should then be put to death. Hence the weapons are meant both as a protection against the attack of the monster and as a threat against the guilty persons. This is also why the sequence of the piercing of the earth is filled with so much threatening noise, such a clamor uttered by adult males, such menacing gestures and brandishing of weapons. What is happening is a preparation for a battle, if not already a battle, the anxious awaiting of imminent death for the incestuous people, or the *bäljan* himself or everyone.

It should be pointed out also that the earth appears basically as something human that has been wounded and slashed by man. The pouring of oil is both an ointment and a cleansing device. In some cases, the oil is poured not directly on the ground, but first on the hair of the young girl who performed the ritual dance after the piercing of the earth. The oil is then made to fall from her hair upon the ground. It is my interpretation that the puzzling "combing sequence" described above is nothing but a variation on this theme. The oil poured on the girl's hair is a ritual cleansing substance that is brought

back and symbolically applied to the human community. It is meant as the healing of a wound, the reparation of symbolic violence.

Subsistence, Honey, Rice and Flowers

The importance of the themes that emerge in relation to incest, battling and death should not obscure the fact that many symbolic elements point toward themes of fertility and life-giving process. First of all the representation of beehives, the flowering of wild trees and the expected influence of the ritual on the production of honey. These themes indicate a very strong relationship with the annual cycle of reproduction, with the wild, undomesticated aspect of the natural reproductive process. It is also true that this ritual includes other elements as well, like the offering of the newly harvested rice. One could then consider this ceremony as a device to enhance all productive forces that are at work in the forest and in the field, in the undomesticated as well as in the cultivated part of the environment.

This approach could very well be the one advocated most emphatically by Medsinu, the son of Tukung the great *bäljan* who passed away recently. Medsinu was himself a ritual specialist and had taken part in several *panggaw* rituals. He had this to say about the mental state of the ritual performer, "During a *panggaw* ritual you must think (*ujäkkinä*) deeply, you must be reminded of what sustenance you might obtain, what kind of subsistence there is. You must focus (*idakit*) on the fruits of the trees, you must remember everything, especially honey bees (*mugdun*), you must keep an awareness of all things that exist in this world (*suku nä ga't mänusjaq ätuqä üt dunjaq ituqä*)." Medsinu was even more explicit about his views concerning the organic nature of the physical world:

Wild grasses, all plants growing about, all trees are the hair of the earth . . . the rocks are the ribs, the bones of the earth . . . but above all you must remember the main subsistence, rice and after that, all other things, like trees and stones . . . your wife, your house, your belongings, forget about them, but the fruits of the trees, the honey bees, the entire countryside, the mountains, the valleys, the sea, the rains, everything, think about it!

The all-encompassing aim of the ritual process is therefore well established. The cutting of the earth is connected elsewhere with the letting out of "heat" and the cooling of the soil, as in the healing of

a sickness. Other informants still stress that the panggaw ceremony helps keep the universe in an orderly and balanced state, that the earth keeps cool and fertile, that it prevents sicknesses, that it ensures plentiful harvests. In this vein the panggaw ceremony belongs to the category of ulit rituals, the aim of which is a general state of welfare, of abundance and of sustenance of life.

Ritual Prohibitions

Among the traits that help establish the identity of a ritual event, the prescriptions and prohibitions about behavior and food are among the most significant. In the panggaw ritual, it is always stated that no pig's or wild boar's meat should be eaten. Sea turtle meat is also prohibited. This kind of meat is supposed to be a "repellent against the Powerful Ones," *sukang üt taw käwasa*. A number of other activities, like sexual relations, are prohibited for the same reason. The idea of things impure or dirty, *märiddiq*, is strongly emphasized and applies to menstruating women and menstrual blood, and generally all kinds of blood. This is why the young girl performing the dance after the act of cutting or piercing the ground should be of a premenstrual age. Other activities like buying and selling things, or changing one's shirt, or making jokes, may be prohibited for reasons not connected with the idea of impurity. Changing one's shirt for example will induce bees to fly away and fruits to fall on the ground. The consumption of alcohol is also forbidden. This particular prohibition is extremely significant in a comparative perspective. All rituals of the ulit type in other areas in Palawan are connected with the making and the consumption of rice-wine or honey-wine. The fact that no alcohol is permitted on the premises of the panggaw ceremony sets this ritual phenomenon apart from all other rituals of a similar kind in the rest of the island.

Spirits and Divinities

A word should be added concerning the spiritual or invisible beings this ritual is addressing. Although the creator and godhead Ämpuq, the "master," is always mentioned in prayers, there are a number of lesser gods or diwata that play a role in this ceremony. Since their identity is not well established and their number is uncertain, I shall restrict my comments to a few remarks.

The usual distinction is made between two categories of supernatural beings: the Powerful Persons, *kāwasa*, inhabiting the mountains, and the deities called *diwata* who seem to be of higher order and dwelling in the upper levels of the universe. It is not always clear who is who when it comes to particular individuals. Names are quoted for these supernatural beings, like *Rāngban Papan*, *Gintalunān*, *Sālāgnān*, *Dārāngagan*, the Lady of *Māliwanān*, names that are found in other places outside Kulbi to identify various types of supernatural beings. They are supposed to hear the music and the prayers of human beings and to help and protect them. Ancestors and dead relatives are also invoked during the ceremony, so a whole host of supernatural and invisible beings is called and it is not possible to define the *pānggaw* ritual as addressing one kind of spirits or deities only.

Rather than speak of individual spiritual figures, one should be inspired to think in terms of natural forces. Indeed the main supernatural being which the ceremony is meant to deal with, is not a human-like spiritual being, but a monster living under the earth and threatening the human community with cataclysmic violence.

The Pānggaris Ritual in a Comparative Perspective

In the *pānggaris*, some of the traits of the "ulit complex" analyzed above can easily be identified. But some themes emerge, like those of purity and violence, that are apparently quite unique within the range of the phenomena observed so far. Using the grid that was devised to analyze the ritual performances elsewhere in Palawan, I shall focus on a few dimensions that provide a sound basis for an evaluation of the degree to which the *pānggaris* ritual can be said to belong or not to belong to the general category of *ulit* rituals.

First what I call the mode of contact with the supernatural world is characterized very clearly by a phenomenon of trance and/or altered state of consciousness. We are faced with a clear-cut case of what is usually called possession as opposed to shamanism (Heush 1971, 235). But what is more relevant in this case is the fact that trance and possession play a rather marginal role in the general economy of symbolic actions. What constitutes the main focus of the ritual, inasmuch as it stages a direct contact with the supernatural world, is the expectation of disaster, the proximity of the monster, the possibility of incestuous behavior, the fight, the imminent death. The battle scene and the extreme tension of the audience during the

"cutting" and "piercing" of the ground are the real moments that bring together the visible world and the invisible forces. It is then a very original trait, since elsewhere the burden of the symbolic contact with the unseen depend on the discourse uttered by ritual specialists. In Kulbi, fighting gestures and a mock-battle serves this purpose.

Using the traits of gender, age, and number to define the ritual specialists, the *bäljan* of the Kulbi area is very close to his colleague, the shaman from the central highland subculture. But in the *pänggaris* ritual he is not alone. Another major role, in spite of its brevity, is that occupied by the young girl who is dancing where the ground has been "wounded," the girl whose symbolic function is to stop or prevent blood to be spilled. This again is a very unusual trait. One is immediately reminded of the *sinsin* ritual (Macdonald 1990) where the major roles are given to young women of a marriageable status (if not already married). The combination "adult male" with "pre-adolescent female" is an extremely new and original formula.

We still lack the data to be very specific about this dimension of the religious ideology in Kulbi. The cosmological world is vertically oriented with an emphasis on the underground. That again is a clear mark of a different ideological orientation compared to the vertical but upperworldly orientation of the shamanistic ideology, and the "horizontal" structure of the supernatural world in the lowland subcultures. As far as time is concerned this ritual cannot be considered cyclical—it does not belong like the *sinsin* ritual to a closed ritual cycle of ceremonies, but is periodical and tightly linked to the natural seasonal cycle. This again shows a marked difference from the other *ulit* rituals that are scheduled independently from the seasonal cycle.

Ritual morphology means the various components of the ritual play, namely dance, music, gesturing, singing, etc. and their integration into a whole. The main point here is that while shamanistic rituals emphasize the chanted words, and while possession or theatrical ceremonies emphasize a wide display of dance and bodily performance, the *pänggaris* does emphasize, among other aspects, a display of something specific and highly significant: the jumping motions of the performer and the mimicry of fight. It certainly orients the style of ritual staging toward the idea of "fighting" rather than of "dancing."

In sociological dimensions the Kulbi-sub-culture is very similar to the central highland area where the shaman tends to be an elder in whose ritual care rests the whole regional community. In Kulbi this is even more clearly stressed. Until recently, Tukung, a well-known

and respected elder who died last September 1995, was the undisputed leader of the area. He combined all functions of political leadership, ritual expertise and medical knowledge. The transmission of the ritual power and the relationship to the divinities or supernatural beings is also conceived on the model of ancestry rather than companionship or sibllingship.

A final note should be added to the previous list of traits. In Kulbi we do have a rather well developed mythology that accounts for important religious representations (Macdonald 1988, 74-77) but the main point is that this particular ritual performance is supported by its own specific mythology. The tale of the underground monster is a well-articulated story if one compares it with the fragmentary kind of information that one can gather about other rituals of the "ulit complex." Actually what is so interesting in our case is that the ritual is the unfolding of a unique drama in a way that is closer to the narrative style than the allusive symbolism found elsewhere.

Conclusion

So far the panggaw or pänggaris ceremony while retaining clear affinities with other ritual phenomena in southern Palawan (including for example names of divinities, ritual language, melodic patterns, decorations, etc.) display a unique pattern hard to fit in the model that has been previously constructed.

But there is one important aspect of this ceremony and its representations that will account for a more profound relation and affinity with the other Palawan rituals. This aspect concerns the general way rituals of this kind are defined. The word used to describe a ceremony or ritual such as this, is *usik*, "play" or "game." One finds the same word used everywhere among the Palawan people, no matter what dialect or subculture. The shamanistic performance in the highlands of Palawan, the ritual offerings in Punang, the dances and chanting in the Quezon area are all *usik*.

It has been observed that in many parts of the world a term meaning "play" or "game" is used to define ritual activities (Hamayon 1995, 68-69). But under this very widespread terminology of "playing," "playing games," "entertain," and so on, two distinct dimensions have to be considered. One is the development of the idea of playing with a sexual meaning. This results in a display of sexually oriented body motions, in dances with sexual connotations. The second

dimension is the fight element and the display of aggressive force (Hamayon 1995, 71). It is undoubtedly in this second semantic area that are found the representations involved in the pänggaris ritual. One has to be reminded only of the core of the ceremony consisting in a display of force, whether aggressive or defensive. The mood of the audience, the shouts, the jumping and the dodging motions of the performer, the display of weapons, all point toward an idea of violence.

Instead of transforming the core ideology of "play," usik, into an artistic, graceful or just skillful display of bodily and symbolic signs, or just into a dance, it develops and transforms this ritual core toward its semantic pole of violence and aggression:

usik (play or game) —————> pänggaris (fight, aggression)
 usik (play or game) —————> sinsin (dance, sexuality)

The very absence, even negation of sexuality in the pänggaris is completely in accordance with its fighting and violent spirit. At the very opposite end of the spectrum, the sinsin ritual with their beautiful young women consorting with diwatas, in their serene and almost "motionless" deportment, brings a *contrario* to this demonstration the most eloquent proof of its relevance.

Notes

1. M. Pierre Boccanfuso, a film-maker who happened to be present during one ceremony, was able to film the ritual in October 1994. My analysis is based on this film.

2. On the meaning of the word *ulit*, see Macdonald (1993, 26). Elsewhere in the Philippines the same word means an "epic" (Manuel 1958).

3. Usually 8 full days or even 2 x 8 days. In one case the ritual period is defined as 10 days. The number 8 in this area is the symbolically significant number (whereas 7 is the important symbolic number in the central highland culture).

4. The following description is based on the film made in October 1994, at Mätildäng, a place in the Känipaqaq river basin (see note 1). The master of ceremony and main performer's name is Ansisik.

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