

# On Human Values in Philippine Epics

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Epic narratives provide historical witness to deep-seated indigenous values in the societies from which they arise. Many of these values are common to many cultures and many traditions. Here we would like to focus on a number of value themes as they are presented and clarified in Philippine epics.<sup>1</sup> We divide out themes into two groups: values relating to human interrelationships and values relating to relationships with the numinous, the world of god and spirits.

## VALUES RELATING TO HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

### *The Case of Lam-ang: Human Worth and Justice*

In the epic *Lam-ang*, the hero, Lam-ang, encounters his rival, Sumarang returning from Calanutian, where he has failed to gain the attention of Doña Ines Cannoyan. When Sumarang finds out that Lam-ang is also going there, he tries to dissuade him, telling him that Lam-ang would certainly find no favor with Ines. When Lam-ang insists on going there just the same, Sumarang tries to spear him. The account reports that after Lam-ang had inquired from his friend Sumarang where he had been, Sumarang tells him:

I came from the North  
From the town of Calanutian  
To try my luck  
With Doña Ines Cannoyan (*Lam-ang*, 605-609).  
[*To which Lam-ang answers:*]  
If that is where you came  
I have the same intention,  
My friend Sumarang (*Lam-ang*, 611-613).

[*In return Sumarang counsels Lam-ang:*]

Ay, my friend Lam-ang,  
 You had better not continue,  
 For who are you  
 That you will be loved  
 By Doña Ines Cannoyan?  
 Many are rich,  
 Even Spanish gentlemen,  
 Yet they were not even looked at  
 By Doña Ines Cannoyan.  
 So, my friend Lam-ang,  
 You had better not go on (*Lam-ang*, 615-625).  
 [*But Lam-ang insists on his intention to go there:*]  
 Ay, my friend Sumarang,  
 Let us part  
 For I am trying my luck  
 In the town of Calanutian,  
 Perhaps I will be loved  
 By Doña Ines Cannoyan (*Lam-ang*, 627-632).

Sumarang hated him for this. He had not been successful and would not allow anyone else to succeed. He tells Lam-ang:

This will be your end!  
 My poisoned weapon  
 Is coming and you should be ready.  
 This weapon I am holding  
 You won't see and can't avoid (*Lam-ang*, 634-638).  
 [*And Lam-ang dared him:*]  
 You will have your wish,  
 My friend Sumarang,  
 I am here and ready (*Lam-ang*, 640-642).

Lam-ang catches the spear, holds it between his thumb and small fingers and turns it nine times around his back and neck. Sarcastically he tells Sumarang:

I give you back your spear,  
 For I do not want debts,  
 For it is warm from use,  
 While my spear is cold  
 For want of use (*Lam-ang*, 657-661).

Then Lam-ang called upon the sea wind. At the same time he let

loose his spear. Through nine hills was Sumarang carried. Blown by the spear. And Lam-ang's final words were: "That is what happens to characters that bad" (*Lam-ang*, 677-678).

Here clearly is punishment for Sumarang who did not honor the dignity of a fellow human being, Lam-ang. The evil end by which he was punished clearly shows that the epic tradition lays much store by human dignity.

*Doña Ines and Lam-ang: Respect*

Lam-ang catches Doña Ines' attention through the two pets he had brought along, a hairy dog and a white rooster with yellow legs. For when Lam-ang puts down his white rooster, it flaps its wings and an outhouse in front of Ines' house collapses. This obliges Doña Ines to look out the window. Then the hairy dog barks and it "made the old new and made something of nothing." In other words, the outhouse was restored to its original state (*Lam-ang*, 749-759). So the mother of Ines enjoins the girl to dress up and bring the visitor personally into their house (*Lam-ang*, 762-770).

Once Lam-ang has entered the house, he is very well treated by Doña Ines. She requests her father to bring out for him the chair of pure gold wrought by the northerners. Then Ines requests her mother to pour water on the magic pot ". . . because we must prepare the food of *caca* for the man Don Lam-ang" (*Lam-ang*, 789-811). Again Ines requests her father to catch the capon for Lam-ang's visit. Then at the luncheon table both Ines and Lam-ang share the same rice plate, the same fish dish, and the same bowl of soup (*Lam-ang*, 813-825).

After the meal Unnayan, the mother of Ines, prepares the betel chew for Lam-ang. She picks the heart shaped leaves from the vine, areca nuts, and the best tobacco leaves grown in eastern Cagayan. It was only after all these preliminaries that the parents of Ines ask Lam-ang why he had come. But Lam-ang is spared the need to answer, for the white yellow-legged rooster speaks up:

*Apo*, with your permission,  
We came to pay court (*Lam-ang*, 826-859).

Then follows the settlement of the bride-price. Before the wedding, Lam-ang has to return to Nalbuan to inform his parents of the success of his suit and to bring the needed provisions and paraphernalia for the wedding. He tells Ines that he will fire a salvo from the shore to signal his return. When he does this, the parents and townspeople of Cannoyan come to greet him. The wedding takes place on the next day. Ines is dressed in fineries brought by Lam-ang's people. The

are married in church amid the pealing of bells. After Mass a salvo is fired at every step taken by the bride. Then they dance the *fandang-go* and the *sagamantican* and celebrate the marriage feast (*Lam-ang*, 873–1171).

It is clear throughout the account that the hero Lam-ang respects his wife and her parents; as Doña Ines respects her husband and the parents of her husband. Lam-ang speaks the words that characterize the very basis of their human dignity: the love they bore for each other as husband and wife:

And it is but right  
That we should love each other,  
Beloved Cannoyan,  
So that we will live happily  
For this is our goal  
In this vale of tears (*ditoy daga a pagluluwaan*)  
(*Lam-ang*, 1467–72).

#### *Respect for Elders*

In the epic *Aliguyon*, while the hero is fighting with his enemy, Pumbakhayon, in the ricefields of Daligidigan, Dangunay, the mother of Pumbakhayon, carrying the child Bugan on her back, raises a double-bladed bolo to attract the attention of both combatants. Then she shouts to them:

You two men, what do you get from your fighting in the field?  
You are of equal strength in the field!  
What is the use (*Aliguyon*, 340–342)?

Aliguyon looks up at Dangunay, wife of Pangaiwan. He sees how motherly Dangunay is. Then Aliguyon pauses and speaks to his foe, inquiring who the lady and the baby she carries on her back are. Pumbakhayon tells him that the lady is his own mother Dangunay, and the baby his younger sister, Bugan (*Aliguyon*, 343–352).

Aliguyon reacts with respect for the dignity of the woman, saying, “Is not my own mother Dumulao like her?” (*Aliguyon*, 350). Dangunay appeals to the hero saying, “Aliguyon, go to your camp, for Pumbakhayon must go to eat” (*Aliguyon*, 351–352).

On another occasion Aliguyon and Pumbakhayon were once again fighting it out in the yellowing rice-fields of Hannanga. Dumulao, the mother of Aliguyon, with her baby on her back, climbs to the terrace to observe the fight. Like Dangunay in Daligidigan, she also sees that:

Neither seemed the better of the other—  
 Aliguyon nor Pumbakhayon.  
 Their forms were clouds of dust on the embankment;  
 Dumulao shouted, “ For what reason  
 Do you fight on the terraces, children, everyday?  
 Say, Pumbakhayon go up the terraces to the granary yard,  
 So that Aliguyon can do the same and go to eat  
 (*Aliguyon*, 473–479).

Pumbakhayon looks up and sees the lady and the baby. He pauses and asks Aliguyon who they are. Aliguyon confesses that the lady is Dumulao, his mother, and the baby child, his younger sister, Aginaya (*Aliguyon*, 480–488). Then, just as in the case of Aliguyon in Daligidigan, Pumbakhayon in Hannanga land thinks, “ Is not my mother Dagunay just like her?” (*Aliguyon*, 489). Pumbakhayon respects her and leaps to the granary yard. Aliguyon follows, puts down his shield, and goes up to the house to eat. The respect with which elders are valued is clearly evident here.

*Ability to Admire Good Qualities Even in Enemies*

During their first encounter, Aliguyon carefully takes the measure of Pumbakhayon. He:

Observed his toes and said: Is not Pumbakhayon handsome?  
 Pumbakhayon is trying to straighten his deformed toes,  
 It is useless to fight Pumbakhayon, I think;  
 If we should fight, would we be of equal strength?  
 (*Aliguyon*, 288–293)

During their first exchange of spear shots, Pumbakhayon likewise sees Aliguyon's feet and says: “ How wonderfully Aliguyon shows his skill, son of Amtalao ” (*Aliguyon*, 307–308). Afterwards when the women came to watch the fight and cried out to cheer him: “ Fight, fight, Pumbakhayon, kill Aliguyon, bring his head to us, that it may have fresh air at the door of our house!” Pumbakhayon answers: “ Soften your cries lovely ladies, for worthy as an opponent is Aliguyon. He is as good as I ” (*Aliguyon*, 320–322).

In the epic *Labaw Donggon*, Saragnayan, the rival of the hero, pays tribute to him in Saragnayan's last meeting with his wife. Referring to Labaw Donggon he said:

A fighter of the first degree is he!  
 Odoyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!  
 In all the world

Never leaving a leaf unturned,  
 Forgiving no man a harm,  
 Mighty too are his children (*Labaw Donggon*, 1887-1891).

Here too Saragnayan admires the warrior qualities of his foe.

In yet another account Agyu and his companions admire the dignified datu who was the leader of their enemy. The epic gives a laudatory description of the enemy leader. He was:

As big as the tree surrounded with vines,  
 Like a sizzling fire,  
 Around his chest a string of charms,  
 Carrying a bag of spells,  
 When they had met him.  
 This was what he uttered,  
 This was what he had said:  
 " Don't be surprised,  
 Don't be amazed,  
 For I am the leader,  
 I am the head " (*Agyu*, 2319-2330).

But Agyu and his men were surprised that the leader came unarmed:

But it was a great wonder.  
 It was so amazing,  
 For he had no spear,  
 Nor did he carry a shield,  
 Nor had he a buckler,  
 Not even a *bolo*,  
 Not even a knife.  
 Now you could perceive,  
 You could very well see,  
 There you would notice,  
 There you would mark,  
 The strong forged body,  
 The very tempered body (*Agyu*, 2331-2343).

From the above discussion it is quite clear that our epics abound in examples of respect for human dignity which is also exemplified in respect for parents and elders as well as in the capacity to admire the good qualities even of one's enemies.

#### VALUES RELATED TO THE NUMINOUS

*Prayers Addressed to God: Invocation at the Beginning of the Epics*

Not all of our extant and recorded Philippine epics begin with an invocation. For instance, of the five epics found in the *Anthology of Asean Literatures-Epics of the Philippines*, only two are provided with invocations: *Lam-ang* and *Agyu*.

The invocation in *Lam-ang* is addressed to the Holy Spirit and as such seems to have undergone Christian cultural influence. The invocation of *Lam-ang* reads thus:

O glorious God, the Holy Spirit,  
Enlighten my mind, *Apo*,  
So that I can faithfully relate  
The story of a man.

The last line even seems to recall Vergil's initial line in the *Aeneid*: . . . *virumque cano* (I sing of the man, the hero).

But the presence of invocations in other epics from Mindanao seems to suggest that the invocation at the start of chanting the epic may be an indigenous phenomenon. In the epic *Agyu* as found in the *Epics of the Philippines*, there is also an invocation (*pamahra* for the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobo; *pamara* for the Bukidnon). I shall first comment on the *pamahra* in the *Epics of the Philippines* text of *Agyu*, and then also bring in the *pamara* in the *Olaging*—"the Battle of Nalandangan" as found in *Kinaadman*, Vol. I (1979), 156-159.

### 1. *Pamahra*:

The chanter first of all addresses his own voice which he sends to the realm of the immortals. Next he addresses *Diwata* or *Suguy* (i.e., God Almighty) who guides his voice as he sings the *Ulahingan*. Then the chanter offers his singing to him who "lives eternally and who gives wise guidance."

The chanter continues with an apology to *Diwata*, professing his reverence and admiration for the god's leading the deep desires of his mind. He requests *Diwata* to light a torch, as it were, as he begins to sing, so that he will not go astray.

Then he addresses the lesser *diwata* or *suguy* who watches over the building in which he is singing. The chanter regards this lesser *diwata* as a leader, a friend, even a brother, and requests him not to put a hindrance to the voice he raises. For he could be lost like a bird on the wide shore or the vast ocean.

### 2. *Pamara*:

The chanter drives away fatigue and invites tranquility to enter his mind. For very seldom does he act like a naughty child, making noise

in order to attract attention. He admits that he is full of loneliness and that he is looking for entertainment in order to forget the loneliness that is housed in his mind.

Next he invites his voice to become golden, and never to mind the fact that people may despise it. He also counsels his voice to fly up to heaven, the circular sky with stars, the place of Tinampod, the half man. He is the watcher of singers. So that even if he is sleepy, he will wake up and reach out for his betel nut chew and, while munching, will look down from his abode in heaven upon the great *tulugan* (the longhouse). Tinampod will know that the *tulugan* will be veiled with black clouds. But there will be a talisman for the place reached by the voice (rather unclear). For some people may lay hands on us, upon hearing my voice.

Next the chanter who evidently is not a *baylan* or shaman says that it is very difficult because we do not have a *baylan* around. So that there will be no one who can apply poultice to the sick. And he tells us that he repeatedly asked Dayungba, the ship, to guide him as he goes up the mountain. (The chanter seems to be referring to the journey a soul must make after death according to Bukidnon belief, when it must go up the mountain Balatukan to Panigbasa, where the soul cuts a mark on the bark of the tree of life, on its way to Gomugunal's place, the keeper of the dead.) The chanter continues: We are born in the east and we are bound to go to the west, i.e., old age and death.

During the chanting of the *Agyu*, spirits are said to eavesdrop. Their presence must be acknowledged, otherwise the listeners will fall asleep. If in the middle of the night an eager listener suffers headache, it will be hard because there is no *baylan* (shaman) around. He ends with another address to Dayungba, to guide him in his journey, to light his way like a torch as he tells a disorderly story. And finally he addresses the eavesdropping spirits, inviting them to enter and come nearer to the story in his mind which he wants to tell.

Both invocations presuppose belief in an Almighty God (*Diwata* or *Suguy*) or at least Tinampod, the guardian of epic singers, who lives in the circular heaven (the sixth level in the Bukidnon gradated heaven, just below the seventh which is where Magbabaya lives (the Almighty God).

The Manobo *pamahra* believes also in lesser *diwatas* or *suguy*s who watch the house where the singing takes place. There is a feeling of friendship and close affection between the singer and these spirits. In the Bukidnon *pamara*, we also witness belief in other spirits who "eavesdrop during the singing." The Bukidnon *pamara* brings in



allusions to the death journey that a soul must make up the mountain in order to make the notch on the tree of life. The chanter appears to be reminded of this as he counsels his voice to go up to heaven. Fatalistically he states that we are born and birth is the beginning of a long journey to old age and death. He personifies the ship of death, calling it *Dayungba*, and addresses it to guide his voice and to serve as a torch to it.

The chanter's decrying the absence of a *baylan* or shaman and the mention of the ship of death which one must ride up the mountain to Panigbasa in order to make the mark on the tree of life, as well as the reference to the journey of life from birth to old age and death—all these seem to echo the shamanic origins of the epic. These elements seem to be unmistakable vestiges of shamanic beliefs and practices. The shaman after all is the psychopomp (the conveyor of souls to the land of the dead) in many ancient traditions (Eliade, 1964: 4, 182, 205ff, 208ff and *passim*).

*Prayers Addressed to God Almighty*

In the epic *Taake* after the death of his close friend and companion, Tomitib Manaon, the hero's wife, the Lady of Pintawan, tries to revive her husband's friend. She makes seven betel chews and, putting them all on the body of Tomitib, covers them with her *monsala*, and prays:

I pray, I entreat our Almighty Father and Lord; and mother's power; let *epag* wake up, my brother-in-law. Let him get up. Long has he slept, long has he rested (*Taake*, 6200-6208).

Slowly Tomitib moves, and turns to his side, but he is not alive and does not get up. Then, the Lady of Pintawan admits: "I lack power." And turning to her sister, the lady of Pintoqan, she says: "You revive him, you awaken him." She suggests that both of them go out for a walk (*Taake*, 6219-6225). The two ladies betake themselves to the *tonawan* or *tonogan*, the melting pot. If he is to live again, a dead man's soul has to be fished out of this melting pot. *Taake's* wife counsels her sister to look carefully at the *tonawan*, for "This Tomitib Manaon still runs after people." At this, the sister asked: "Sister, what shall we do?" They go around the *tonawan* and with a kerchief try to catch the soul of Tomitib. But they cannot. For in the *tonogan* Tomitib Manaon is waving his shield and brandishing his *karisan*. From early morning they fish for him without success until high noon. Then the Lady of Pintoqan catches him. Then she runs to Malopanyag (*Taake*, 6228-6265). Then the Lady prays: "I pray, I entreat

the Almighty Father to grant me power. My mother's power be also my power" (*Taake*, 6269-6273). Then she lets loose the soul of Tomitib and he slowly awakens. They urge him to get up and he does. They ask him what he would like to take. He replied: "I like to drink water from heaven" (*Taake*, 7287-6288).

In the epic *Agyu*, after rescuing his sister Tabagka, the hero brings her back to the fortress and advises her to take a rest. He then returns to the fray to fight the enemy. Finally, Agyu comes face to face with the leader of the enemy, Pinagtibolos Lona, Pinalintad Pamaloy. In the subsequent encounter the enemy leader is slain, but, after his victory, Agyu himself becomes breathless and soon falls dead (*Agyu*, 3890-3906). His shield keeps vigil over his dead body. Then it lifts the remains of Dig Degatan to the heavens where lives the ancestor Legabaan ko Langit. When Legabaan sees the dead body of Agyu, he prays to Suguy, the Almighty Father:

Great Protector,  
Highest Deity,  
I request thee  
To help me;  
Grant me the power  
To bring to life,  
Put breath into  
Dalomanon Mayungba  
Dayoon Dig Dagaton (*Agyu* 3932-3940).

And Agyu is brought back to life. In a very short time, a decision is made to settle the fratricidal war. For the Manobo believe that they and the Maranaw, the Maguindanao and the Bukidnon have descended from one and the same parents. Legabaan declared that they should live in harmony:

For there is strength in unity,  
For no one is a stranger amongst them,  
All of them brothers,  
All of them kinsmen (*Agyu*, 3965-3968).

What is noteworthy here is the efficacy of the prayer of Legabaan over the dead body of Agyu. His prayer to Almighty God to bring back to life Agyu's dead body is granted. One wonders if Legabaan's intercessory power with the Almighty God may be due to his closeness to the Suguy. After all Legabaan was already a denizen of heaven himself, thus his prayer is deserving of immediate hearing.

On the other hand, the prayers of the two ladies Pintawan and

Pintoqan are also addressed to God Almighty in their desire to bring back to life the dead Tomitib Manaon. But the lady of Pintawan is not quite so successful as her sister. Yet even the lady of Pintoqan is able to bring back to life Tomitib Manaon, since she and her sister had first recovered the soul of Tomitib from the *tonawan*.

Both ladies had also prayed that "Mother's power" be theirs. It is not clear who this mother is. Is it the power of their physical mother that was being invoked? Or is it the power of the Great Mother, the Eternal Feminine, who seems to be the religious basis of matriarchy? Or is it the feminine counterpart of Lintunganay ne Suguy? We should, however, note the holistic orientation that seems to be at the bottom of Subanon culture. For where there is question of restoring life, it is not only the power of the male god or patriarch that is called upon, but also the power of the female god or matriarch. Tomitib Manson's spirit is retrieved from the *tonawan* not by any man, not even by Taake himself, but by the Lady of Pintoqan with the help of another woman, her sister, the Lady of Pintawan, at whose suggestion both of them had gone out for a walk which eventually brought them to the *tonogan* or *tonawan*. And after they had retrieved the spirit of Tomitib Manaon, they presented it to Taake.

In the *tonawan*, the soul of Tomitib was still very active with his shield and his *karisan*. As mentioned already, it took the ladies half a day to fish out his soul with a kerchief. Once the soul of Tomitib is out of the cauldron, the prayer of the lady of Pintoqan proved effective and Tomitib was restored to life.

#### *Prayer to the Diwata*

In an earlier episode after the famous dream of Agyu, he tells the numberless warriors gathered in the large receiving hall that he is not sure that the highest Diwata would really bring about the vision of devastation which he had dreamed about. However, he confesses that his "conscience is deeply aroused for all of you, my brothers" (*Agyu*, 1834-1835). Indeed, since Agyu has become a datu, no enemy as yet has cried victory over Yandang and lived. So he evinced his own doubts about the truth of his dream:

Indeed I am not sure myself  
That we shall really encounter  
Yegpamaya' ne Suguy,  
We do not have the assurance  
That we shall come face to face  
With Yegpainted ne Diwata (*Agyu*, 1847-1852).

[*Then he tells the warriors:*]

The fact is, my comrades  
 Only the event of tomorrow will tell.  
 When we do meet face to face,  
 Only the proof will show,  
 When we shall encounter them (*Agyu*, 1856–1860).

The enemy does in fact come in hordes and in the course of the battle in the *sabangan*, *Agyu*, sends his ring with a message to his sister, *Tabagka Wad Pintua*, urging her and her lady companions, to send as many betel quid chews to the men of *Yandang* who were faint and starving in the battlefield. After the betel chews are prepared, *Tabagka* prays thus:

So, golden betel chew,  
 Dear betel quid,  
 This what I ask you,  
 This is my request.  
 You must look for everyone,  
 All must be attended to,  
 All the braves,  
 The thousands of warriors.  
 You must give everyone;  
 Each should take one,  
 Even those who do not chew,  
 Even those who do not eat (*Agyu*, 2168–2179).

[*She continues her prayer:*]

*Diwata*, my *diwata*,  
*Diwata*, my guardian,  
 It's now up to you;  
 It's for you to decide;  
 The prepared betel chew,  
 The limed betel quid,  
 Which will be sent to the warriors,  
 Which will be distributed to the worthy;  
 There in the roaring *sabangan*  
 In the rumbling *pig-agawan*.  
 They who are hungry,  
 They who are starving,  
 You must force them to take,  
 Press them to take you.  
 You must enter into their mouths  
 So that they will be revived,

So that they will be reinvigorated (*Agyu*, 2180–2196).

The betel quids were turned into *sayaw* and *kalugay*, birds like the *maya* which flew straight towards the *sabangan*.

This episode ends with the fight between young Imbalana, nephew of *Agyu*, and his grandfather who came disguised as the lordly chief of the enemy, but totally unarmed, except for the string of talisman on his chest. The episode comes to conclusion with the reconciliation mediated by Legabaan, and a feast in the big house.

The next two prayers were used by Tabagka after Inkilas had brought to her and the womenfolk the request of *Agyu* for betel chew in preparation for the battle that would take place in the next morning. When the chews were prepared Tabagka prayed:

*Diwata*, my *diwata*,  
My dear guardian,  
Pack this *munu*  
Bundle this *mamaen*  
So that it will be only one *munu*,  
So that it will only be a single *mamaen*  
A *mamaen* that is brilliant,  
A *munu* that is radiant,  
Bright as gold  
Shiny as gold (*Agyu*, 2870–2879).

After the *mamaen* had gathered themselves into one golden *munu*, Inkilas picked the bundle up and returned at once to the fortress and handed the bundle to *Agyu*. *Agyu* in turn then prayed:

*Diwata*, my *diwata*,  
My guardian and counsellor,  
Who made me a great leader,  
Made me a great warrior,  
And watches over my band;  
Guards over the knot  
The knot of my *tubaw*,  
The knot of my *tangkulu*  
Unbind the *munu*,  
Unfasten the *mamaen*,  
The golden *mamaen*  
The golden *munu* (*Agyu*, 2940–2951).

The people of Yandang were especially protected by the *diwata*, for it is said that “They were shown love by all *suguys*” (*Agyu*, 449), and

“showered graces by the *diwatas*” (*Agyu*, 450), and “they were chosen from others, most favored of all people, by Lintunganay ne Suguy (Eternal everlasting God)” (*Agyu*, 451–453). Still the people of Yandang were overpowered by the magic of Padsilung ha Kabatlaw, Pandinggabaw hu Langit. And the devastation and defeat of Yandang at the hands of Kabatlaw was in answer to his prayer.

Very early one morning he is seated on a huge rock, below the river junction of Yandang; alone and very fierce. At high noon he thinks of using his magic power (High noon is generally the witching hour). For he knows he could not win a war against Agyu and his people (*Agyu*, 3890–4018). The lonely, evil-intentioned man prays:

*Diwata*, my *diwata*,  
 My blessed guardian,  
 If I am not forgotten,  
 Always with me and counselling;  
 Let darkness fall,  
 Let dark night come.  
 Change my body,  
 Change my appearance  
 To a snake,  
 To a python;  
 Snake that enlarges,  
 Python that expands (*Agyu* 4022–4033).

After the inhabitants of Yandang had gone to sleep in the enveloping darkness, a huge snake makes its way into the fortress and swallows all the inhabitants: the men, the women, the children, including their war implements and weapons, all the wealth of Yandang. The only one who is not swallowed was Kayumbaan ha Agyu, Ligaya Tendeganeh; because of his *baklaw* and his *taklubu* (*Agyu*, 4060–4156). The snake brings all of them inside its belly into its own castle far away and imprisons them there.

Later on when Agyu awakens, he gradually realizes that magic had been foisted on him and his kingdom. At once he goes out to seek vengeance. On his way to recover his people, he meets Sawalan Tubagaan, daughter of Padsilung ha Kabatlaw, by the seashore. He is beguiled by her to a parley and a betel chew with her. He is then poisoned, killed, and thrown into the sea. But friendly crocodiles later on recover Agyu's body, place it on the seashore, and keep a long vigil over it. It was thus that the son of Agyu, Minayun, came upon his father whom he had also set out to find.

In an earlier episode in the *Agyu*, the hero sends his son Inkilas

Pantayabat, that is, "born with lightning flask," to the women's quarters in the big house to request that the women leader there, Agyu's sister, Tabagka ta Delag, prepare *munu*, to lime betel nut chew, to be served the thousand datus who were getting hungry, so that they be ready to battle the foe on the morrow (*Agyu*, 2637-2722).

The news brought by Inkilas causes consternation among the women folk. But Tabagka encourages and exhorts them to prepare the thousand betel nut chews. Tabagka next prays to her *diwata* to make it possible that the thousand betel chews become one golden *mamaen* or *munu* (*Agyu*, 2870-2879). This one *munu* Inkilas then picks up and, after thanking the ladies, returns at once to the *alet* or fortress. He gives the bundle to Agyu, who in turn prays that the *diwata* unbind the golden *munu* (*Agyu*, 2940-2951). He then casts the *munu* into the wide reception room and urges all to partake, even the very young boys. They continue to chew until the young boys became full grown men. The next morning, fortified by the betel chew, the warriors rush to the *sabangan* (the confluence of the rivers). When he arrives there finally, Agyu releases his full force (*Agyu*, 2952-3087). When the battle begins, the young men move to the elevated shore of sand and fight bravely:

Now we will be thrilled,  
 Now we will be amused,  
 For we can hear nothing  
 But the seeming laughter;  
 As if it were the cheering  
 Of beautiful maidens,  
 Of pretty ladies,  
 The shields breaking,  
 The bucklers shattering,  
 Of their numerous enemies (*Agyu*, 3187-3197).

The battle was decisive for the heroes of Mudan-udan. All their enemies perish except their leader. Agyu commends the skill of the young men. Then he tells them to rest. The next day, he commands them to form into three separate groups: one of the select datus; another of the young men tested in battle; and a third to be composed of Agyu himself separate from the others.

It is while the warriors were away that enemy ships are seen massing on the shoreline below. The women in the fortress are alarmed because they had no men defenders. Tabagka, rising to the occasion, arms herself with the armor and weapons of her renowned brother, Agyu. She hastens to the shore and attacks the nearest enemy she

first comes upon. The enemy is taken aback, because the chieftain of the foe, seeing that it is a maiden who is approaching from the fortress, decides, in collusion with his leaders, not to hurt the maiden, for he would seek reconciliation and ask her to become his wife. But Tabagka does the unexpected and is a match for the best of the enemy, until her hair-knot becomes loosened. She is about to be trapped, when Agyu, unexpectedly returning to Yandang, sees his sister being attacked on the sandy beach and hastens to rescue her.

The *diwata* which we encounter in these prayers are clearly well-intentioned towards human beings. They are like the guardian-spirits or spirit-helpers of the shamans in other parts of the world. They are at the beck and call of mortals to whom they are attached. A special relationship seems to develop between the spirits and the human beings. It is one of intimacy and friendship. The spirits obey the will of their charges: Tabagka orders the *munu* to go and seek out everyone of the Yandang warriors, to enter into the mouths of all, even those who do not chew, in order that the warriors may be refreshed. Although the *munu* is addressed as though it were a spirit, yet it is the *diwata*, guardian and counsellor, who is also enjoined to see to it that if forces everyone to partake of the chew. The *diwata* is invoked to gather the thousand of betel chews into one golden bundle so that Inkilas could bring it home to the fortress. And when Agyu received the bundle, he in turn addresses a prayer to his *diwata* that it may unfasten the bundle so that the thousand warriors in the reception hall can each share in it.

The enemy of Yandang, Padsilung ha Kabatlaw who was jealous of the fame of Yandang and had plotted to devastate the realm through magic, he too, is helped by a *diwata* who made him into a python which could swallow all the inhabitants and wealth of Yandang and transport them all as prisoners to his country and castle.

*Prayer to the Rooster and the Idao Bird*

In *Aliguyon*, traditional foes, Aliguyon, son of Amtalao of Hannanga and Pumbakhayon, son of Pangaiwan of Daligdigan, before fighting each other, address a prayer to the rooster and the *idao*. Under their house Aliguyon prays to the rooster:

Give us a sign, our rooster,  
 Give us a sign! I charge you in my prayer,  
 That you see not Aliguyon's defeat in war;  
 Answer our prayer by a sign, rooster (*Aliguyon*, 24-27).

Afterwards Aliguyon, wishing all the bad luck to visit his mother



and not him, once again prays:

Hi! little rooster, you who came first,  
 You were created by Darkness (*Lidum*)  
 You came from the Depths (*Dalom*),  
 Tadona of Kiangang reared you;  
 Then you came to live with us,  
 Increasing your number in our Hannanga land  
 You love to scratch for food  
 Around the base of our posts;  
 If you see that we shall be no match  
 For the spirits of Lagud (East), the spirits of Daya (West),  
 Protect us from our enemies, spare us;  
 If anyone of us is to die,  
 Lift up your bill  
 And start to peck,  
 Then we will abandon our plan  
 Against our enemies, spirits of Lagud, spirits of Daya;  
 But if we are never to be vanquished,  
 Then keep your body still, for from your act  
 Man can learn of death or life—*ino-ayo!* (*Aliguyon*, 51–68).

Then Aliguyon opens the bile sac of the sacrificed rooster and finds its forecast to be good. Early the next morning, after they had awakened and cooked in preparation for their journey to Daligdigang, Aliguyon tells his comrades:

Wait for me in the granary yard,  
 For I will do what is to be done in Hannanga.  
 I will ask which way to lead our force,  
 The *idao* bird I will consult  
 As to the way we should go (*Aliguyon*, 92–96).

After passing the test of skill administered by his own father, Amtalao, Aliguyon goes to the forest beyond their rice field and says:

I am here, *Idao*,  
 Sing, give a sign to Aliguyon,  
 For I am on my way to Daligdigang,  
 To fight the son of my father's enemy;  
 To measure our fighting skill  
 In the field of battle (*Aliguyon*, 136–141).

The *idao* starts to chirp, to dart from the field and Aliguyon was con-

fidest of the reassurance (*Aliguyon*, 140–143).

In Daligdigan, after Aliguyon had shouted his challenge to Pumbakhayon and his intention to “renew the hostility between your father and mine” (*Aliguyon*, 203), Pumbakhayon catches one of their roosters and, having gathered his comrades, confers with them in the center of the village. This is his prayer:

I sacrifice you, our rooster,  
Because I am going  
To the ricefield embankments to attack  
Aliguyon, son of Amtalao,  
To find out our skill on the embankment.  
Shall they fight Pumbakhayon to a draw?  
Show us by a sign (*Aliguyon*, 220–222).

Then Pumbakhayon repeats the same prayer to the little rooster that Aliguyon had prayed in Hannanga (*Aliguyon*, 228–245). Towards the end of the epic just before the reconciliation of the two families, once again Pumbakhayon prays an almost identical prayer, for now he is asking that the newly weds, Aliguyon and Bugan, will have a prosperous life.

Hi! little rooster, you who came first,  
You were created by Darkness, you came from the Depths,  
Tadona of Kiangan reared you;  
Then you came to live with us,  
Increasing your number in our Hannanga land.  
If you see that we shall have to fight  
The spirits of Lagud, the spirits of Daya,  
That one of these will die,  
That some of us will die,  
Lift your bill  
And start to peck;  
Then we will abandon our plan  
Against the spirits of Lagud, the spirits of Daya,  
The source of children.  
If they will be blessed with them,  
If they will have many chickens and pigs,  
And much rice,  
So that they will become prosperous,  
Rich aristocrats of Ifugao,  
Then keep still, for from you  
Man can learn of death or of life—*ino-ayo!* (*Aliguyon*, 1071–1091).

Then he cuts the rooster to inspect its bile sac. Seeing that it is good, he puts it aside and starts to drink and sing love songs.

From these prayers to the rooster and the *idao*, it is evident these two birds are divinatory for the Ifugao. The chirping of the latter, its darting across the field is considered an assurance or confirmation of what was asked for, namely, victory in the coming battle. The same is true of the movements or non-movements of the former, and the condition of its bile sac.

The rooster's divinatory quality seems to come from the belief that it was created before man. It came from the very depths of the world and was created by the original Darkness. Its crowing at the onset of dawnlight seems to be symbolic of its being able to see reality ahead of man. The rooster was first raised in Kiangan by Tadona; then it spread all over Hannanga, Daligdigan, and the Ifugaoland. Because it scratches for food around the very posts that support man's dwelling, it even has closer connections with man. Thus it is that it can foretell for man what will do him good or evil.

#### CONCLUSION

The above are but a few examples of the richness of Philippine epic literature in its clarification of values. After the fall of the dictator Marcos and the return of democracy to the Philippines, there remains the task incumbent on all Filipinos to rebuild the country on solid moral and human foundations. As outlined in this paper, we can learn from our indigenous epics values of justice and respect in human relationships, as well as in our relationship with the Transcendent, whether we call it God/Allah, *diwata*, *suguy* or spirit.

#### GLOSSARY

*Agyu*, the hero of the composite Manobo text has many other names in the various versions, e.g., Dig Dagaton, Dayoon Dig Dagaton, Dalomanon Mayungba, Mayungba Dig-Lehawan, Kayumbaan ha Agyu, etc.

Anilaw Mayun Anlaw, or Minayun or Nuti Manlag Diwata, is the son of Agyu who lived with his mother *sinyuda* or bai in far off Melayan ha Imbunsud / Langit ha Nakatana.

*Baklaw*—a bracelet worn by men made out of boar's tusk where powerful charms are kept.

*Diwata*, The highest *Diwata* among the Manobo is also named "Suguy" or "Yegpamaya ne Suguy," or "Yegpintad ne Diwata."

*Dayungba* is the personified ship of death mentioned in the Bukidnon *pamara* or invocation.

*Epaq* means brother-in-law.

Imbalana hu langit or Imbagtad Ku Malayun, the son of Tagyakuwa ta Dalag and

Banlak in the *Olagingon*, nephew of Agyu. Both names mean 'crack of heaven.'  
Inkilas Pantayabat, a son of Agyu.

*Karis* or *karisan*, a Suban-on word for kris or knife-blade.

Lagunga Manghimaug, the dead father of Agyu is also called Gulubatnon Nan Labi.

*Malopanyag* is another epithet given to Taake. Meaning 'he fights people everywhere.'

Other titles are Son of Tomoway, Datu of Sirangan, or Man from Sirangan.

*Pinag-agawan*, the place where the sea and the rivers meet.

*Pintawan* is a high tower where the lady whom Taake married lived.

*Pintoqan* is a tower lower than the *pintawan* where the sister of Taake's wife lived.

*Nalandangan* is the earth-paradise where Agyu and his clan have settled since returning from their brief sojourn in heaven. It is also called "Yandang," "Dagunalan ta Yugung," "Ligalan ta madaging," "Yendengan," "Mudan-udan," "Nengnengan," etc.

*Taklubu*, another name for *baklaw*, see supra.

*Tinampod*, a *diwata* also known as Lumbaton or Tinambulong, he is the Bukidnon chanter's guide and teacher. He is also described as 'a half man.' The motif of the half man, according to Eliade, is a demonic figure frequently found in Siberian and Central Asia mythologies (Eliade 1964: 37, n. 7). Cf. Anakhai, the one eyed demon of the Buryat; Arsari of the Chuvash (one eye, one arm, one foot, etc.); the Tibetan goddess Ral gcing ma (one foot, one emaciated breast, one tooth, one eye, etc.) Cf. also our own Philippine tradition of "Juan Pikas" (one eye, one arm, one leg).

#### NOTE

1. The five Philippine epics used in this paper are the following: a) *Lam-ang* an Ilocano Epic found in *Anthology of ASEAN Literatures | Epics of the Philippines*, henceforth to be referred to as *Epics of the Philippines* (Castro et al. 1983: 67-106); b) *Aliguyon* (Castro et al. 1983: 17-56); c) *Labaw Donggon* (Castro et al. 1983: 119-183); d) *Agyu* (Castro et al. 1983: 192-348; and e) *Taake* or *Ag tobig nog Keboklagan*, (a Suban-on epic), edited by Miguel A. Bernad (Ochotorena 1981: 359-543). After the manner of the editors of *Epics of the Philippines* who have simplified the longish titles of the Manobo versions of Agyu by calling their composite text *Agyu*, and the Suban-on epic tale of *Keg Sumba Neg Sandayo* by the simple title *Sandayo*, I have also renamed the Suban-on epic *Taake* after the hero of the tale. I also analyzed the *pamara* or invocation of the *Olaging* or "The Battle of Nalandangan" (Opeña 1979: 156-159).

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