

The Medicine Men of Agusan in Mindanao, Philippines

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The folk healer or the medicine man of early primitive time held an infinitely more important position in society than the physician in the contemporary modern community. For the medicine man of old, was not concerned only with the people's health but also with their entire welfare, ranging from settling family troubles to promising a good harvest. It was also his function to avert evil spirits that might threaten the individual in any form and to propitiate them for the good of the entire community. He was, therefore, the priest, sorcerer and physician rolled up in one. In addition to this, he frequently was the bard of the community who knew the stories and songs that told of the origin of the world and of the deeds of the native heroes in a far and remote age. He thus fulfilled another function, one that was very important in a scriptless society.¹

The role of the folk healer in barrio Agusan may not be as powerful and prestigious as that of his counterpart in the days of old or even in the primitive societies in the world today, but certainly, there are similarities and as a matter of fact universal patterns by which he is recognized.

In this chapter, the writer intends to present the role of the different kinds of folk healers in barrio Agusan and their medicine.

The Agusanons believe that there are two kinds of ailments, one that is caused by natural factors, as for instance, a purely biological defect, and the other which is caused by supernatural powers or beings, beyond the control of the ordinary man. To cure the former, the rich field of plants and herbs would suffice as remedies. To the latter, however, a shaman must be invited to take care of the ceremonies and rituals necessary to propitiate the offended beings.

1. cf. A.L. Kroeber (edit.): *Anthropology Today*, Chicago, 1953, p. 772-78.

The general folk medical practitioner is known in this barrio as the *mananambal*. Other cognate terms as *herbolario* (herbalist), *manghihilot* (masseur), *mananabang* (unlicensed midwife), *mananawal* or *orasyonan* (one who possesses power to heal by means of his spittle, oil and prayer), and the *mambabarang* (sorcerer). These are some of the terms popularly used in this barrio depending upon which practice is more commonly employed by the healer. Very often, the healer combines several of these roles together.

Herbolario. The *herbolario* is one who cures a patient by means of his herbs, seeds, shrubs, grass or plants. If a patient is brought to his care and finds out that his illness is only a simple biological malfunction, he then prepares a decoction of some herbs and roots or seeds of plants for external or internal medicine, as the case may be.

Usually, the *baños*² and *haklop* are prescribed for external uses, that is, by rubbing the entire body with heated leaves to drive off the bad influence of the wind; the *haklop* is applied to keep the body free from the pollution of the cold wind. The *haklop* is prepared by smoking leaves with *salong* (resin) and then oil is applied to it and the leaves are applied to the patient so as to drive off *senda* (exposure) or high fever.³

On the other hand, to make the act of healing more effective, the *herbolario* usually, prepares some tonic drink which is called *talimughat*.⁴ This drink if properly taken is believed to prevent a possible relapse. The *talimughat* consists of the appropriate herbs to counteract the disease of the client. This is prepared by soaking leaves and herbs with water and letting it stay overnight (*patun-ogan*).

The Manghihilot. *Manghihilot* is derived from the Cebuano word *hilot*, which means "to massage", hence, *manghihilot* means a masseur. It is a common knowledge among the barrio folks that the gift of *hilot* is bestowed only to a select few, especially when one is born feet out first (or a freak birth). Whoever is born this way, promises to have finesse and suavity in massaging. The common belief is that he is

2. The word *baños* comes from the Spanish verb *bañar*, which means "to bathe oneself." Among the Agusanons, this word is especially used to designate the washing or cleaning of oneself as a medical act. They do not use this word to mean that a healthy person would go to a river or sea to swim or to bathe. Likewise the word *haklop* which means to press or attach something against the body is a medical act.

3. A more detailed description on etiology and therapy of sickness is given in Chapter III.

4. *Talimughat* comes from the Cebuano term *bughat* which means a "relapse", and the medicine to prevent this is called the *talimughat*. The *talimughat* could be applied externally or taken orally.

skilled in removing fish bones caught in one's Adam's apple.⁵ However, he is acknowledged to be able to restore dislocated or fractured bones,

When a child suffers from a fall, the masseur is to be consulted, for the child is likely to be a *napiang*.⁶ However, when nobody has witnessed the fall, the symptoms of an actual fall are: the child runs up a fever (*anokan*), suffers from coughing, or complains of chest pains. These symptoms are taken seriously and the child is brought to the masseur, otherwise as the child grows up he is likely to become athmatic and, what is worse, would be highly susceptible to tuberculosis.

So that when a child is brought to the *manghihilot*, he has to make sure that the child has suffered from a fractured or dislocated bone. He does this in the following manner: He wets his hands with oil and tries to spot where the malady is. Usually, the child will react with a loud cry if the ractured bone is touched. Once this is located, the masseur will exert pressure to reset the disjointed bone or bones. He repeats this as long as necessary until the bones have been set or restored to their original place.

After the massage, more oil is applied and he seals the defective part with "smoked" leaves, usually the leaves of *tuba-tuba* or *kilala*, to

5. The writer himself had this experience, for he was born "*suli*". As a child, he used to be asked by his neighbors and any member of the family who had fish bones caught in their throats (*nabukog*). The writer was barely five years old when his aunt who was a spinster in her late 60's used to instruct him what to do. The act of massaging is done in this manner: Two of his right fingers are wet with his saliva and he applies a massage in the form of a cross on the client's throat. He does this act as long as it is needed until the bone has been swallowed by the patient. After this act, the masseur is expected to receive a *pahalipay* (token of gratitude). Failure to do this would mean that the masseur would suffer a more fatal illness as a *sombalik* (boomerang). "*Kinahanglan gayud nga modawat ka sa bisag unsang pahalipay kanimo kay kon dili gani malad-an ka*" says my auntie. That is, it is necessary that you receive any token of gratitude from your clients no matter how little it is, just so that the venom of the illness would not boomerang to you." It is said that even a *gasing* (dried banana leaf) would suffice.

The writer does not vouch as to which of the two alternatives cured his clients: whether it was because of his being *suli* or because of the act of massaging which can be done by anybody.

6. *Napiang* comes from the term *piang* which is a malady of the bone—a fracture, curvature or dislocation caused by a fall. Usually this is true to children who frequently fall and whose bones are still soft and could easily be dislocated or fractured. The masseur is acknowledged to be the only person who can restore the dislocated bone. Agusanons disregard the physicians in this matter for this is beyond their knowledge.

dispel a possible *panuhot* (exposure).⁷ The parents of the child are advised to give the child a good rest and never to bathe him until the *haklop* and the assurance of the *hilot* has been given. Usually, it takes three days when the masseur once again checks the child by applying another massage to see if the bone had set in place permanently. The best sign that the *piang* had been cured is when the fever has left the child.

The Mananabang (Unlicensed midwife).⁸ The word *mananabang*, is derived from the Cebuano term *tabang* which means "to help, to assist, to aid someone who is in need of help". The role of the *mananabang* is to assist mother deliver the child.

Here is an attempt to present a character study of a representative of the *mananabangs* of the barrio. Josefa is a very conscientious midwife of Agusan, she almost knows all the herbs needed to help a mother before and after her delivery. The following is a tale told by her informant on how she got her supernatural power of healing.

"... kining akong gahum dili man sa akong kau-galingon, kon dili gitugyan kini dinhi kanako diha sa akon damgo.

Sa usa ka gabii niana, samtang matam-is kaayo ang akong pagkahinanok, mao-ra man ug dunay nagapanawag kanako sa pagbangon. Diha sa akong damgo nakita ko ang tulo ka mga tigulang nga barbason nga nanagbarog diha sa akong atubangan. Ang labing tigulang nila, maoy mimando kanako sa paglakaw aron sa pagtabang sa usa ka inahan nga dugay nang nagbati apan dili maga ka tawhan.

Matu-od man, nakamata ako sa akong katulogon ug mi-adto ako niadtong ma-awa-aw nga dapit sigun sa nakita ko sa akong damgo. Sa paghi-abut ko sa usa ka payag, migilak sa akong panan-aw ang usa ka inahan nga naglisud intawon sa pagpanganak. Apan sa pagta-an ko gayud aron sa pagtabang kaniya, kalit na lamang mi-uha ang bata, bisan pa nga wala pa man gani nako siya hikapti. Daku gayud kaayo ang akong kahibulong sa nahitabo apan, ma-oy mipuli kanako ang kalipay ingon sa gibayaw ako sa kahitas-an. Daw wala gayud ako makatu-o sa akong gisak-sihan, apan kining tanan nahitabo gayud!

Human ko gihiklin ang inunlan ug pusod sa bata, mipa-uli dayon ako sa may alas dos na ang takna sa kaadlawon nga daw mangi-ob pa ang kalibutan. Sa paghi-abut ko gayud sa tugkaran sa among pinuy-anan, daku ang akong kahikugang sa pagyangad ko nga ang tanan nga gi-isip ko nga

7. *Panuhot* is a Cebuano term meaning "sudden exposure to the wind. More of this type of illness is discussed on Chapter III.

8. In many parts of the country today, there is a belief that only women qualify to become midwives, which is not true in barrio Agusan. There are two men midwives in this area. Richard Lieban also found out from his study that there are men who qualify as midwives. R. Lieban, "Qualification for Folk Medical Practice in Sibulan, Negros Oriental, Philippines", *Philippine Journal of Science*, 91.4, 1962, p. 512.

usa lamang ka bunga sa matam-is kong katulugon, nahimong tinuod. Kay diha sa among tugkaran misugat kanako ang tulo ka mga tigulang sa akong damgo. Daku kaayo ang akong kakulba, apan gipugos ko ang akong kaugalingon nga mabatonan ko ang diyutay nga kaisog. Tungod sa tuman kong kakapoy, namatikdan ko na lang nga gi-agak ako sa tulo ngadto sa ita-as, ug diha-diha nawad-an dayon ako sa akong panimu-ot.

Sa pag-ilig na sa kangitngit, mibanos ang kahayag sa kabugwason ug nahigmata ako sa akong katulugon. Gi-asoy ko dayon ni Nanay ang tanan nga nahitabo niadtong kahibulongang gabii. Nasayran ko dayon kang Nanay (nga usa usab siya sa labing karaan nga mananabang dinhi sa Agusan) nga kadtong tulo ka kahibulongang mga tawo, nagdapit di-ay kanako nga mahimo akong usa ka mananambal, ug sila ang akong mga gabayan sa bisag unsang mga katalagman. Sigun sa asoy ni Nanay, kadto konong labing tigulang kanila mao kadto ang senyor nga Abian, si Senyor San Jose. Ug kadtong duha niya ka mga kauban, mao kono kadto sila si Senyor San Vicente Ferrer ug si San Guillermo.⁹

Sukad niadto, gihambin ko sa akong kaugalingon ang gimando kanako sa mga santos ko nga patron ug ang gibilin ni Nanay kanako nga iyang hinuptan sa dugay nga mga katuigan. Kining tanan gidawat ko sa hilom agi'g pagtamod sa gilamid kanako sa kahitas-an."

How Josefa Acquired Her Power of Midwifery

"... The power that I possess is not from within me, rather it was entrusted me by my patrons and my ancestors thru my mother.

It was late one evening when I was in deep slumber, I dream of three bearded men who appeared before me and commanded me to arise and help a certain woman who had been laboring for some time and yet the child would not be delivered.

The spell was so strong within me that when I awoke, I followed the biddings of the three men and proceeded to an unknown place. In the dark of the night, I could spot only a shaggy house. There was a woman painfully laboring, as revealed in my dream. However, when the woman caught sight of my presence, the baby was born. I was deeply surprised for I did not even have a chance to touch her, but there it was: the long-awaited child was born. How happy the mother was, how grateful she was to me, as if she was only waiting for my arrival.

After I had successfully cured the umbilical cord and put the placenta of the baby to safety, I hurried home.

Before I could come to my consciousness from toying with the incident, there, at the foot of our stairs, the three bearded men in my dream became a reality. I was so tired and afraid of the apparition that I lost consciousness. All that I could remember was that they carried me in their arms and put me to bed.

At daybreak, I recounted everything that had transpired that mysterious

9. Saints Vincent Ferrer and William, besides Saint Joseph are the most revered of all the saints by expectant mothers. Novenas are said in honor of Saint Vincent in Cugman (a neighboring barrio), where a chapel has been built in his honor, for a safe delivery.

night to my mother (an old midwife of this locality). I learned from mother that the unidentified characters were my mentors and sponsors. That they were inviting me to become a healer (shaman?), especially a midwife. She said that the oldest of them all was Saint Joseph my patron saint, while the other two were Saints William and Vincent Ferrer.

From that time on I carried out the mission entrusted to me by the saints and the power which was vested on me by my mother before she passed away from this world. That is why I said earlier that the power I have in me is not of my own but God's. That I become a midwife is His holy will."

Today, Josefa is a very active midwife of the barrio, she is certain of the herbs and plants that she uses to take care of a mother before and after delivery. *Iya Pipay*, (as she is fondly called) asserts that whenever, a malady is beyond her control, an intercessor would always come to her assistance in her dream. For instance she cited a case of a woman from the city who had a strange disease. Apparently it looked as though it was a venereal disease. However, the doctors (physicians) from the city assured the woman that it was not. *Iya Pipay* confessed that she did not know at first what medicine to use. However, during her sleep, she dreamt of a woman carrying a child who showed her three varieties of leaves.¹⁰ She (the woman in her dream) was about to entrust item to her but because of the barking of their dogs, *Iya Pipay* was awakened. She did not lose hope though, she went around her backyard to spot these leaves but she could not find them. Until next day during the fiesta in *Balubal*¹¹ she saw three groups of herbs growing separately along the trail. She procured this and visited the woman here in the city, and applied this medicine. *Iya Pipay* declared that in less than three weeks, the woman was completely cured.

These are some of the healing powers of Josefa but primarily she is widely accepted by the barrio folks first as a midwife, then as a healer or general practitioner.

The *Mananawal* or *Orasyonan*.¹²

All the folk healers interviewed claimed to possess some kind of *hinuptan* or *orasyon*. However, there is a specialist in curing venomous bites called the *tawalan* or *orasyonan*. His *orasyones* are really said

10. This woman referred to by the informant as she pointed to the wall was that of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. She is also a devotee of her aside from Saint Joseph and Jesus the Nazarene.

11. Balubal is a daughter barrior of Agusan, located atop the hills of Agusan, some two hours hike from the highway.

12. All prayers entered in this chapter have been given according to the way the informant exactly pronounced them. The prayers were dictated to the writer after the act of healing was accomplished and never during the act of healing itself.

only for this purpose. These prayers are a conglomeration of Latin, Spanish and Cebuano verses.

Ciriaco is one of the famous *tawalan* of this barrio. He declared that much of his powers to heal poisonous bites is due to the prayers handed him by his great grandfather who was a well reputed *tawalan* of this district. The prayers were shown to the writer, all contained on the *lanhanan* or *luba*. He says, "Kining akong diyutay nga pamaba ug ang lanhanan nga kabilin sa akong mga ginikanan mao ray akong gisaligan sa pagpanambal *contra todos!*" This means that his power of healing lies in his little knowledge of prayers and the only heirloom of the family, the bottle of Oil. Armed with these, he is confident of curing all kinds of diseases.

Iyo Kakoy, as he is fondly called, cited this case to prove his point.

At daybreak while Ricardo, a boy of thirteen, squatted on a fallen coconut tree in his backyard to defecate, he suddenly fell an intense pain in his buttocks. As he jumped instantly and looked back, he saw a big snake crawl fast into the thicket.

He hastened home, called his parents and they in turn called upon their neighbors to give their son some remedy.

Very soon, many well-meaning neighbors flocked around and tried to apply home remedies. Some masticated some leaves and rubbed them vigorously over his buttocks. Others offered to suck out the venom from the site of the bite. Despite all these, Ricardo kept complaining that it was getting more and more painful. Thus his neighbors advised the bereaved parents to bring Ricardo to him (Iyo Kakoy). There and then they brought him across the *tuburan* (spring) where Iyo Kakoy is residing. At the site of the patient and after he was informed about the ailment, Iyo Kakoy demanded that the boy should stay-put on the ground for as the belief goes:

"Ang mapaakan sa bisag unsang mga malalang mga mananap dili gayud isaka sa balay kay kong buhaton kini, mosaka usab ang kalala sa iyang lawas."

This means that when somebody has been bitten by any poisonous animal, he should never be allowed to go up any house or else the poison would also come and spread to his entire system and kill him.

In order to dispel some of the venom, Ricardo was given a piece of guava stick to bite on, the belief runs thus: "that as soon someone is bitten by any poisonous animal, one should grab any hard object to bite and thrust this on the ground so that the venom would go back to where it belonged."

This preliminary ceremony was followed and Iyo Kakoy started

the ritual of healing. First he applied his saliva to the wound and murmured this *orasyon*:

<i>Orasyon Contra Malala</i> ¹³	Free V. Translation ¹⁴
“Getog, Getog, Hependa, Espina Aleloya, Aleloya Amen.”	(Getog-nonsense. Pluck out the thorn.
“Jesus salba, Dominus dido, Jesus salba Compendido Christe Nustra Cosa de (Pinaakansa halas) Linebrema, Bebit Aleloya.”	Alelluia, Alelluia, Amen.) (Lord Jesus Christ, Save this boy who had Been bitten by a snake, Save him O Lord! Live boy! Live! Alelluia.)

Accordingly, after every prayer, the *tawalan* applied his saliva on the wound and later sealed it with his *luba*. Thus it was declared that Ricardo was saved. Iyo Kakoy vouched that after a few days, Ricardo went back to school safe and sound.

The *Mambabarang*. (Sorcerer) The term *mamabarang* refers to the person who has the ability to inflict sorcery on an enemy of a client at will. A *barangan* is believed to cause sickness by forcing live insects or inanimate objects like hairpins, broken glass, fine sand or mud, etc., into the body of the intended victim. The motivation for sorcery cannot be imputed to only one cause but to a variety of interlocking factors.¹⁴

Barang is the general term for all kinds of sorcery known to the barrio folks. Richard Lieban has mentioned in his work *Cebuano Sorcery* no less than twenty-six methods or kinds of sorcery.¹⁵ Several of these methods are found in Barrio Augusan. Here the writer endeavors to describe four of the most popular methods employed by the informant who claims to be a *barangan*.

At this point, it is good to recall the definition by James Frazer of magic. In his own words, he says: “Magic involves two basic assumptions: first, that like produces like; and second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance, even after the physical contact has been severed.”¹⁶ Frazer gives a technical term for the former as *homeopathic*

13. The free verse translations to all prayers are given here to the best ability of the writer. If translated literally, one would hardly find any meaning at all. The informants who have the prayers have been asked regarding the possible meaning, but they themselves do not know even in the dialect for they are supposed to be a supernatural power given them and are not supposed to be understood. They must remain a mystery.

14. Also attested to by Lieban, *Sorcery*, *op. cit.* pp. 34-37.

15. *Ibid.* pp. 48 ff. Appendix.

16. Frazer, *New Bough*, *op. cit.* p. 35 ff.

or imitative magic, and the latter as *contageous* magic.

Homeopathic or imitative magic finds illustration in *Barang de Calavera* and *Barang de Monyika* as commonly practiced by the sorcerer in the area of study.

Barang de Calavera means "sorcery thru the medium of the skull," that is, the sorcerer used a skull of a person¹⁷ to represent the soul of the intended victim, whereby he can inflict the sorcery. This method is carried out in this manner:

When the writer was present in his third call on the sorcerer, a stout woman, Salome by name, came to ask assistance of Tranquilino, the *mambabarang*. She declared that a neighbor of their's, who was her former *barkada* had threatened that she would soon be sorcerized by a sister in Luway, Bohol, who was known to be an efficient sorceress. She was charged by Tranquilino to confess what her crime was, and the woman simply answered that she could not remember of any grievous ill done to her gang-mate except that one evening while passing by the store, Salome refused to join her *barkada* for a drinking bout. She said that she wanted to avoid this group for she had promised her two *colegialas* never to put them to shame anymore by drinking. She said that she had a bad temper when she was drunk, and her daughters were much embarrassed at this specially that they were students of a well-reputed Catholic girls' school in the city. It was because of this resolution that she had a heated fight with the *tiendera* who owned that store. Now she wanted to know if her former friend was serious when she said that she would have her sorcerized. If this was true, she wanted Anki to sorcerize her before she reaches Bohol to make scores even "*para matodas kaming duha.*"

Tranquilino however, was calm and mild about everything. He said, "Before we do anything evil, let us first consult Saint Anthony." This ceremony is what the *manambal* calls the *bintang ni Senyor San Anton*. This method is carried out in this manner; A *perdon* (big candle) fully lit is planted on the altar of *San Antonio*. There before the altar, Tranquilino prayed the *panghalad* (offering to St. A.). This *panghalad* consists of three Our Fathers and one Hail Holy Queen. The prayer is given here below as dictated to the writer by his informant after the ceremonies.

Pater Noster

Pater noster

Free V. Translation

Our Father, O Lord Jesus Christ

17. Lieban reported that in Sibulan and Cebu, this skull must be that of an unbaptized child, for it has not seen God and is dwelling in the *Limbo*, *op. cit.*, p. 55 ff.

Animatan Ecce colum,
Anitorem semper Benedictum
Jesus meum. Amen.

Maghimaya ka Reyna

Colasem Monameum,
Ego sum, Santa Virginem
Jesus, amen!

Who art forever in heaven,
And Who art with us forever,
Bless us, O my Jesus. Amen.

Free V. Translation

O Lady, my blessed mother,
Who art truly a Virgin,
..... bless us my Jesus, Amen!

After these prayers had been said, the sorcerer stood up to interpret the movement of the *talo* (melted wax). There Tranquilino declared that he could see Margarita (Salome's friend) aboard the ship M/V Sweet Hope on her way to Bohol. This was the sign that she was really intending to have Salome sorcerized. When asked later how he knew all about the motive of Margarita, Tranquilino replied that: "Kung ang perdon nga gidagkutan alang kang San Anton dili motulo sulod sa tulo ka minutos, nagpasabut kana nga may dautan nga maligno." That is, if the lighted candle offered to Saint Anthony refuses to melt, that is a sign that the prediction is true.

This revelation made Salome restless; however, Anki assured her that nothing harmful would come to her before Margarita reached her hometown of Luway. Salome then pleaded that her former friend be sorcerized before she got her. Anki carried out the bidding of his client by suggesting that he would act on it but would not completely destroy her, for harm had not yet been done. He said that what he would do was simply to cause Margarita's conscience to withdraw her evil intention of harming Salome. Right there and then, Anki drew out his *calavera* and demanded that all present should maintain silence. With the candle mounted on top of the skull, Anki prayed to the soul of the skull to grant his request. Accordingly, after the prayer, a sharp *bagakay* was slightly thrust into the cerebrum and declared that this was enough to bother the conscience of Margarita and would cause her terrible headache. All these ceremonies did not mean that Salome was now completely safe from the evil intention of her friend; moreover, she was given a *panagang* (an apotropaic) in case Margarita's sister would sorcerize her. She would know this when the capsule (.38 calibre) would leak and spill the oil which is contained in it. Once this happens, Salome was advised to see Anki right away, for then he would inflict the *barang de sombalik*¹⁸ causing the death of Margarita

18. *Barang de Sombalik* is a counter-sorcery which would cause a test of power of the two sorcerers. Anki believes that the best sorcery that the person of his trade could get is the *barang de calavera*, but he declared that he does not only possess this one but also the power of *San Anton*, hence, he declared, "walay gahum ning ibabaw sa yuta nga makalabaw pa niining gahuma." That nothing on earth could match his power.

and her sister. Salome was assured that nothing harmful would come to her while she wore the amulet or the apotropaic.¹⁹

Another illustration of the homeopathic or imitative magic is the *barang de monyika*.²⁰

Barang de Monyika is inflicting sorcery through the medium of a rag doll. To illustrate this method, a case is cited.

Lorenzo and his son came to the house of Tranquilino for medical assistance. The old man had been suffering from an apparently locked jaw for he could not speak and his tongue was acutely swelling and appeared as if divided into halves. The client declared that they had seen the army doctor (for his son was an army man) and two other private practitioners in the city, yet all their prescriptions had no effect whatsoever. Now that suspected that this was not a natural disease, that it could have been caused by *barang*. Now they would like to know if this was true. Anki replied that it would only be Saint Anthony who was in the position to tell them that. Thus Saint Anthony was consulted. This time, Tranquilino used another method to seek information from his mentor. As in the first case, the *perdon* was lighted, and after the *panghalad* was said, Anki proceeded to the *bintang* proper. A *nigo* (winnower) was the medium for information. He asked the old man to hold one handle of the scissors fastened to the mouth of the winnower, while he, Anki, held the other end of the handle. The ceremony goes thus:

Sor: "Bintang ni Senyor San Anton, mangutana ako kanimo sa tinu-od nga motug-an ka kon unsa ang hinungdan sa sakit niining imong anak nga si Lorenzo, sakit ba nga natural?"

This prayer is repeated thrice, and if the winnower turns around, that means that the sickness is as suggested. However, in this first attempt, the winnower did not move.

The second attempt then followed. This time Tranquilino suggested by asking "Gihabay-habay ba siya?" That is, "Has he been charmed or punished by the spirits of the fields?" This, too, did not have any reaction from the *nigo*.

19. The writer saw Salome three times, everytime he makes a call on Tranquilino. She declared that she wanted to make sure that her enemy has not sorcerized her. She said that although the capsule never leaked, it is good to take precautions. "Maayo nang managana," she said.

20. Lieban calls both the *barang de calavera* and *barang de monyika* in his report as *paktol*. However, this is not the case in this barrio. Crispina Tan reports that this practice is also found in Bohol and they call this by same name as the Cebuanos. Crispina Tan, *A Study of Popular Beliefs and Practices on Death and Burial in Rural Cebu* (Thesis on file USC, 1962) p. 34 ff.

This time, a third attempt was tried, suggesting if this was caused by *barang*. At the mention of the word *barang*, the winnower suddenly freed itself from the arms of the two (client and healer) and whirled around fast. The same question was again repeated to check if the information given was really true. And for the second time, the winnower turned around very fast. Tranquilino then declared that Lorenzo had indeed been *gibarang*.

Anki then inquired who the culprit was. It was learned that a neighbor of their's who possessed the power to sorcerize had been irritated because the carabao of Lorenzo destroyed some of his neighbor's crops. Anki said this was understandable. However, what should console the father and the son was the fact that the sorcerer did not bury a *pahubas*²¹ in their house, otherwise, the entire family would have been destroyed.

Despite the assurance of no *pahubas*, the son insisted on punishing and counter-sorcerizing the culprit. Thus Anki took out his rag doll and informed his clients that he would simply cause the culprit's conscience to be bothered and thus lead him to withdraw his sorcery. As in the first case cited, Tranquilino never killed a sorcerer without giving him a warning. However, since, the deed had to be done at the insistence of the client, Tranquilino took out a pin and prayed the *credo* thus:

<i>Credosum</i>	<i>Free V. Translation</i>
Credosum Christum	I believe in
Etium Dominostrom	Our Lord Jesus Christ
Vestram selem	(Vestram nonsense) conceived by
Meatam Maalem	(Meatam nonsense)
Virginem Portam	Mary the Portals of heaven
Crucifisus. . . ! Amen.	and He was crucified. Amen!

At the word *crucifisus*, Tranquilino shook the doll's head vehemently thrice and pricked the ears slightly until Anki declared that the culprit it now suffering from pain as caused by sorcery just performed.

The old man however, keeps complaining of the pain he is suffering, hence, Tranquilino gave him a glass of *ilimnon contra sa barang*.²² While the old man Lorenzo was drinking the prepared drink, Anki

21. *Pahubas* comes from the Cebuano term *hubas* meaning to dry out, to consume, to use up, etc. *Pahubas* is contained in a bottle filled with the agents of the *barangan*. It is believed that once a *pahubas* is buried under one's house, the entire family dwelling there will be destroyed.

22. This is a special drink which is a decoction of several herbs and plants soaked in a pitcher which contains the following: a shrunken skull, three pieces of fresh water shells. The color of the water if it stands for sometime changes from crystal-clear to "alka-seltzer" white with all the effervescence.

accompanied it with prayer:

"Ginoo kong Jesucristo,
Ec nos benedictos loria
Beati pauperis spiritu
Es reghum ecce colorum. Amen!

O Lord Jesus Christ
We praise and bless Thee
Bles your people O Holy Spirit,
Thou Who reign
In Heaven. . . . Amen!

With this act of drinking and the accompaniment of Anki's prayers, Lorenzo vomited profusely as had been earlier signified to him by the healer-sorcerer. Anki explained that Lorenzo has now vomited out the *barang*.

After a while, Lorenzo appeared to have felt better. However, he could still hardly speak. Tranquilino promised him that if he would back on a Friday, everything will be well, that is, if the culprit will withdraw his *barang*. Otherwise, Anki will be forced to use his power to destroy the culprit. Lorenzo was guaranteed however, that no further harm would come to him while he took the decoction which was a *panagang*.

Contagious magic on the other hand finds illustration in another widespread belief: that harm or good done to something once closely associated with an intended victim, say hair clippings, dress, urine, faeces, or even footprints or the site where the intended victim used to urinate—all these when used in sorcery will affect the individual.²³

Bansol is an example of this magic where the sorcerer inflicts his charm by using either the prospective victim's footprints, or the spot where he urinated. The case cited here was told by the informant, who claimed to be a sorcerer and who inflicted sorcery by making use of the second medium.

Tranquilino is from Siquijor, an island in the Visayas noted for this art of witchcraft and sorcery. As a young man, he could still remember when he fell in love with the first girl from a neighboring barrio. Anki said that this girl was very proud and often snubbed him. Young as he was, Tranquilino already learned the trade from his father. Thus he decided to teach this girl a lesson. On one occasion, he had watched the girl urinating on the ground and right there and then after she left, he pricked the ground with a *bagakay* and the girl nearby shouted and cried with pain. This Anki says might even cause the girl's genitals to rot, but he did not go that far, it was enough to teach her this lesson.

La-ga is one of the common practices of contagious magic. However, this second one, is the use of any belonging of the prospective

23. This is similar to *hilo* as cited by Lieban, *Cebuano. op. cit.* pp. 54-55.

victim as the medium for sorcery. It is said that a dress, fingernail, or hair clippings would suffice to inflict sorcery. This is done by boiling any of these belongings with seven scoops of sea water taken during high tide.

It is believed that as the tide rises, the belly of the victim would also swell abnormally. And as the sea recedes, the victim's belly would also become deflated. That is why the pot which contains her belonging should continuously boil so that the belly would never deflate. And if the sorcerer wishes to kill the victim, all that he has to do is to break the *bagyang* leaves which are used to cover the pot rightly.

These are some of the many practices of the malign magic of sorcery here in Barrio Agusan. Although an individual may be both a sorcerer and healer at the same time, he generally seems to devote more time to healing rather than malign sorcery.

Summary:

The general folk medical practitioner known by the Agusanons as the *mananambal* has varied and complicated roles. First of all he is the herbalist and pharmacologist who prescribes the kind of herbs, plants, shrubs and bushes necessary in treating certain types of diseases at a given condition. It cannot be denied that there are a good number of herbs, roots, and seeds of plants that are indeed widely accepted as effective as tested by experience. This cannot simply be put aside as unscientific. After all much of the modern medicines or drugs we have today are extracted from these herbs and plants after long and thorough experimentations. What is perhaps unscientific is the method by which these medical herbs are prepared. For instance, a decoction of herbs and plants needed for a tonic drink must be properly prepared in a manner that leaves and roots of plants must be thoroughly cleaned before they be taken orally. Most often bugs, worms and microscopic bacteria are abundant along the ribs of these leaves, and thereby introducing other types of ailments into the human body. Thus, there is the risk of introducing another disease into the patient since the hastily prepared medicine abounds in germs.

Another role of the folk healer is the masseur. He is widely accepted to be skilled in resetting disjunct and fractured bones. There is no doubt that certain people are suave in giving muscle massage. But certainly, when bones are fractured, this is beyond the masseur's power to restore what has been internally cut asunder. It is fallacious to think that physicians have no knowledge over this case. On the contrary, through the aid of the modern scientific inventions today, he is able to see all the more beyond the externals. The writer is referring to the power of the X-ray where the therapists could study the case closer and better. Fractured bones need an operation where a surgeon

has been specially trained to reset the physical condition of what has been internally distorted.

The third role of the healer is being a midwife. It is an accepted fact that most of us, Filipinos, have been brought out into this world through the aid of midwives (local). Therefore, there is much that we should be thankful and grateful to them.

However, the case presented by Iya Pipay on how she acquired her power of healing, and particularly being a midwife, has to be taken as they say "with a little grain of salt". For truly, like most men of the past, they were very curious and fearful when illness struck their family and loved ones. This curiosity led them to find some reasons to explain these contingencies in life. However, sadly enough their curiosity exceeded their capacity to know the whys and wherefores of things and events presented to their senses. This curiosity in the face of ignorance, gave them impetus to imagine things and to look up a number of theories to explain these things. Later, they began to personify objects and see spirits of saints in their dreams. Eventually, they have developed the sense of messianic motivation until finally carried out into their system.²⁴

Fortunately enough, there has not been any report regarding high neo-natal mortality caused by unlicensed midwives in this area, as opposed to the case in the Ilosos according to the report of Dr. Juan Flavier of the PRRM.²⁵ However, much to the satisfaction of everyone in the barrio, there must still be a serious measure to educate our local midwives to insure better security to our mothers.²⁶

The fourth function of a *mananambal* is that of a *mananawal* or *orasyonan*. The case previously cited about Ciriaco's ability to cure snake bites came from the mouth of the healer himself. Hence, this is not to be taken as an absolute truth. This is characteristic of every healer interviewed that he recounts a few of the happy moments in his life where his power and medicine were proven effective. At any rate, the case just cited is an example of a dangerous and fallacious attempt to treat a snake bite. There is nothing to the knowledge of the writer that can cure snake bites except the shot of an anti-venom serum by a physician. While biblical parables recount the fact of so many healings on account of one's strong faith in our Lord, we cannot deny that our Lord in so many instances had stressed that faith without charity is

24. Explained by Rodolfo V. Guiang, *Philippine Medical Superstitions Told in Parables*, (Lingayen, Pangasinan: Gimalid Press, 1960), Intro. p. xiv.

25. Juan M. Flavier, "Some Suman Obstacles to Rural Development Projects" in *Human Factors in Philippine Rural Development*, ed. Francis C. Madigan, S.J. (Cagayan de Oro, 1967), pp. 267-268.

26. *Vide* Chapter V.

nothing. In this regard the writer believes that while it is possible that the healer has a strong belief of the power vested upon him by the ancestors and his mentors, still he lacks charity in running the risk of losing the life of his client, for the healer himself accepts that his medicine is as good as when God grants him the necessary grace to make his medicine effective. The famous expression “kung buligan sa Kahitas-an” is often heard from the healer’s mouth. Yet, we never realize that God’s grace abounds in the works of man, the product of long study and scientific researches and discoveries.

The most weird and feared role of the healer is that of being a sorcerer-healer. Here cases were cited to illustrate some of the various methods as practised by the sorcerer-healer. Although weird and frightening the practice may seem, still sorcerers are employed for seemingly supernatural illnesses. While it may not be true that a person can really be harmed by imitative or contagious magic, the clients are however promised of security and understanding of his troubled mind. On the other hand, Lieban concludes in his report of Cebuano Sorcery that sorcery provides means of settling social discords in cases where legitimate social sanctions are inadequate.²⁷ He further stressed that sorcery may also be resorted to as to whether or not there is the presence or absence of this social sanctions but as to whether they are needed to keep peace and order. So that as found in his study of Cebuano and Sicbunan societies, “as long as there are strong expectations by those disadvantaged in an economic situation that there should be redistributions of existing wealth to benefit them, behavior which contravenes these views threatens discord, and sanctions that can effectively inhibit such behavior are significant elements of social control.”

27. Lieban, *Cebuano, op. cit.*, pp. 149–150.