

Stewardship Towards God's Creation Among Early Filipinos: Implications to Inculturated Faith

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Abstract

An integral inculturated faith is anchored to the Filipino cultural heritage and identity. Primal cosmic beliefs and practices carried the holistic customs of stewardships towards God's creation where it embodied the union and mutuality of the natives to nature rather than control and subordination. The research utilized primary materials written by Spanish ethnographers in the 16th-17th century. Although their observations were from the colonizers' perspectives, it still revealed beliefs and practices at that time common among early Filipinos. One needs to filter and decipher those accounts to unearth early Filipinos experiences of *oikenomous*. Although the study was limited to the Tagalogs, still the dynamics of power-relations between the inhabitants and nature were demonstrated using the lenses of Foucault's discourse on power. The findings of the research could have implications to inculturated faith given the open atmosphere of the Church for its renewed evangelization that includes stewardship towards God's creation where harmony and communion with Mother Earth strengthens our bonds with God and find each other in a place we truly call a home.

Keywords: Stewardship, Early Filipinos, Power-Relations, Inculturated Faith

Preliminary Remarks

Stewardship can be viewed as an engagement to manage a household. Literally this is what its etymology implies. The Greek word *oikonomos* which is the origin of stewardship denotes that a person only manages but not owns the household. In stewardship we have been entrusted with resources – creation, people, talents, money and even time.

The Church is challenged to re-examine its agenda on the integration of stewardship and inculturation. The Second Vatican Council in 1965, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1992 and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines push for an inculturated stewardship that is an integral aspect of holistic spirituality involving how to be disciples of Christ in the modern world. Inculturation is “the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.” (Pope John Paul II, 1987).

A dialogue with the cultures of early Filipinos deems important in a study of inculturated stewardship since the rich heritage of a caring community provides valuable lesson on how to integrate best practices of stewardship among our ancestors and the Christian perspective of *oikonomos*. The research explored the notion of stewardship among early Filipinos as manifested in their beliefs and practices of the cosmic gods. There is an abundance of beliefs and practices yet to be explored from our forefathers that allow us to look at our past with so much dignity and pride. A usable past which utilized the values and traditions on stewardship towards God’s creation can be integrated to form an inculturated stewardship that blends early customs and Catholic concepts.

As a qualitative research, the study employed library and archival work. It uses primary sources from the works of Spanish ethnographers Chirino, Plasencia, Loarca and Morga, Colin, and the Boxer Codex who wrote their observations about the culture of the natives in the 16th and 17th centuries. Selected ethnographic and cultural studies about Philippine mythology on gods and goddesses among Tagalogs that are mentioned in primary sources were used to enrich on understanding of stewardship among God’s creation. The study is limited to primal beliefs and practices as narrated by early Spanish ethnographers among the Tagalog natives only.

The findings were correlated to Michel Foucault's concepts on power-relations, and interpreted how the exercise of power ensured stewardship towards God's creation in such context. The study concluded with the implications of the findings towards an inculturated faith.

The core idea of Foucault on power is its application, character of network and the manner it threads and extends everywhere as articulated in the diagram below:

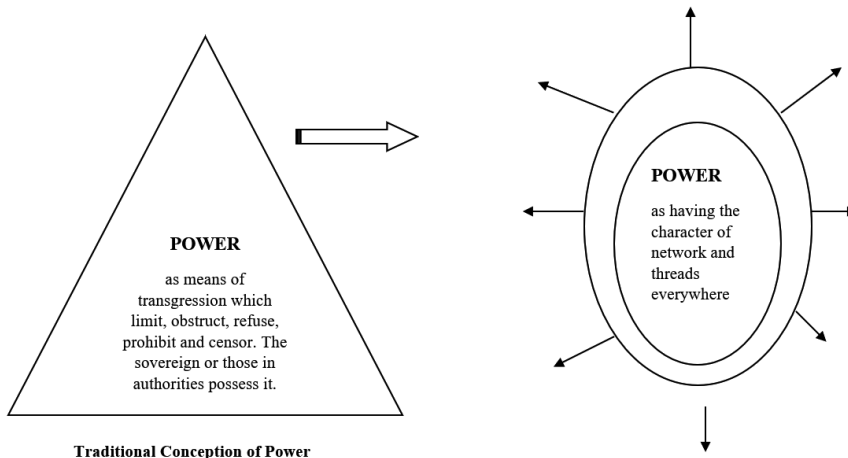


Figure 1. Foucault's Paradigm Shift

Traditional Conception of Power

Foucault deconstructed the usual question of 'Who had power?' or 'What intentions or aims do power holders have?' to the processes by which subjects are constituted as effects of power. In line with Foucault's shift from the traditional conception of power as possessed to its exercise in the network of power-relations, the researcher mapped out his analysis of the data on the beliefs and practices of the cosmic gods among early Filipinos where the stewardship towards God's creation was embodied. From the findings, the researcher concluded with implications to an integral renewed evangelization of the Catholic Church.

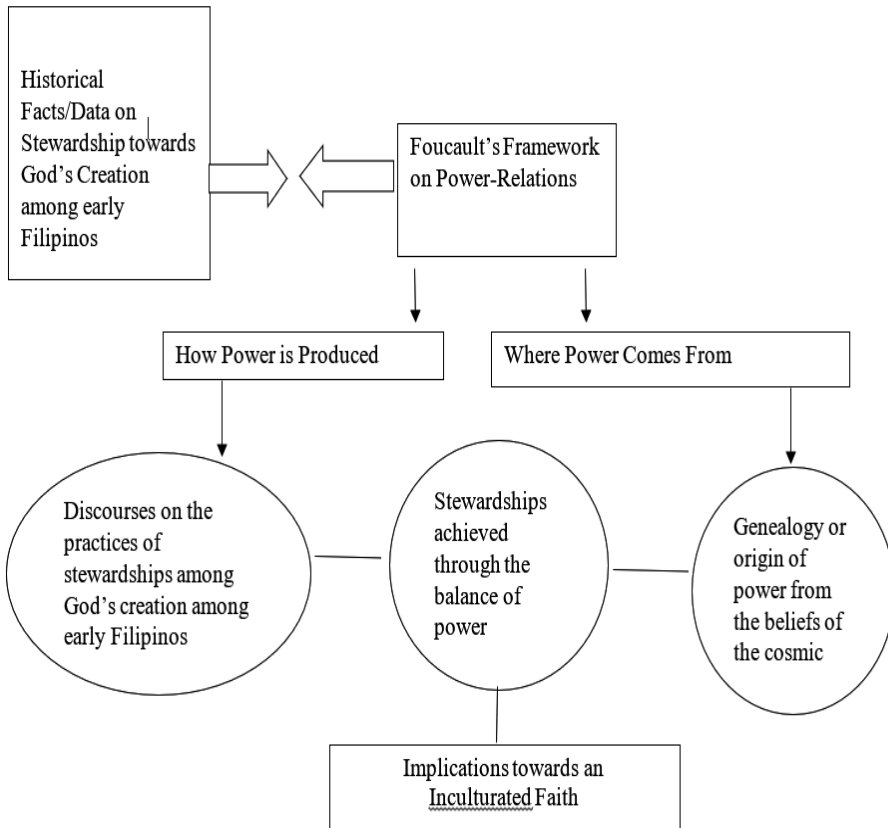


Figure 2. General Paradigm: Creative Exploration of Engaging Historical Facts with Conceptual Frameworks on Power-Relations

There were minimal studies about the beliefs in and practices relating to the cosmic gods and its manifestations of stewardships towards God's creation among early Filipinos using 16th century Spanish primary sources. But there are notable works that should be seen to find the existing research gap related to the topic.

William Henry Scott popularized the life of the early Filipinos in his works entitled "Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History" (1981), "Pre-Hispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History" (1984), "Looking for the Pre-Hispanic Filipino: And Other Essays in Philippine History" (1993) and "*Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society*" (1994).

There are works related to cosmic gods and God's creation in the form of myths and symbols. The researches of Francisco Demetrio

(1981) attempted to describe the existing myths and symbols in the Philippines. Demetrio made a follow-up study about Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs in his volume two, *Encyclopedia of Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs* (1991).

Rene Villanueva and Joaquin Fernandez studied about “Maria Cacao, and *Diwata ng Cebu*” (2002) which revealed how goddesses destroyed the order of society when they were displeased by its actions. The fairy was said to live in Lantao Cave and should not be disturbed by any human being or a wrath would be given.

Seekers of documents on early Philippine history should examine sources related to the Hispanic world. Spanish and Latin American studies have increased their data on their “*Colecciones de documentos*”. Among existing documents are the 42 volume work by Martin Fernandez de Navarrete and its sequel by Cesario Fernandez Duro entitled “*Coleccion de documentos ineditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones espanolas de America y Oceania*” and “the many compilations of *Coleccion de viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los Espanoles desde fines del siglo XV*”.

There were scholars who went to Spain and other countries to do the mission of gathering primary source materials that reveal the life of early Filipinos. Famous among them are the following: Wenceslao E. Retana published the “*Archivo del Bibliofilo Filipino*” in Madrid in 1895-1898. He also authored the *Aparato bibliografico de la historia general de Filipinas* based on the sources collected by the “*Compania General de Tabacos de Filipinas*”. Jose Toribio Medina, a Chilean scholar collected contemporary source documents in his “*Bibliografia Espanola de las Islas Filipinas*”, and printed it in 1898 at Santiago de Chile. The documents catalogued all books up to 1810. Francisco Colin, S.J., and Pablo Pastells, S.J. wrote the “*Labor Evangelica de los Obreros de la Compania de Jesus en Filipinas*”, 3 Vols., Barcelona, 1906. This collection presents the missionary enterprise of the Jesuits and their struggles in the early period. It contains letters, correspondents and descriptions of missionaries' evangelical work. Fr. Pablo Pastells, S.J. authored the opus, “*Historia general de Filipinas*”. Pedro Torres y Lanzas and Francisco Navas del Valle (Editors) had the “*Catalogo de los documentos relativos a Las Islas Filipinas existents en el Arhivo de Indias de Sevilla*” (1493-1572) printed in 1925-1936, Barcelona, Spain. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, Filipino scholar provided an excellent index of books for Philippine History in his “*Biblioteca Filipina*”, published in 1903 in Washington D.C.

The most useful ones available to students who are not well-trained in 16th century Spanish documents are source documents translated in English. It proves to be very beneficial to writers and researchers on topics about early Filipino society. It reveals the ethnographic reports of Spanish chroniclers. These are shown below:

Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson edited, collected and translated primary source materials entitled, *Philippine Islands: 1493-1898*. This is otherwise known as Blair and Robertson (B and R), which is considered the largest and most popular compilation of documents in 55 volumes, published in Cleveland, Ohio from 1903 to 1909. This compendium contains important documents ranging from papal bulls, royal decrees, chronicles describing their observation on the islands, letters of the governor-general or other officials to the king, correspondence with the viceroy of Mexico, decisions of the Royal Court on certain queries and problems of the archipelago, complaints on the injustices committed against the natives, demand for salaries and other improvements in the country and other stories that would help researchers the many possibilities in analyzing the context and dynamism within the years of Spanish rule. For this research, B and R offered primary sources written by Spanish chroniclers and ethnographers which provide descriptions of early Filipino customs, traditions and social milieu.

Starting in the 1960's efforts have been made to expose the primary documents to the public since the B and R copy has become too costly for students in history and such compilation is hard to find. In this connection, the Filipiniana Book Guild selected documents from the B & R, added some data not found in this B & R, and reprinted it for easy access to the public. At the end of 1969, they produced 14 volumes. The most notable among these that is directly related to the research is the "First Voyage Around the World" originally written by Antonio Pigafetta in 1522, which reveals early Filipino cultural practices and beliefs.

Gregorio F. Zaide in his *Documentary Sources of Philippine History*, which consists of 14 volumes, compiled, edited and annotated primary source documents mostly taken from B & R, and added data not seen in B & R, from *Archivo General de Indias*, *Archivo Historico Nacional* and other archives abroad. It was published by National Book Store in 1990. This contains primary source materials that speak about early Filipino society.

Recently, the dissertation of Karl Geverza entitled “*Philippine Mythology*” (Geverza, 2014) provided a deconstruction of cosmogony, cosmology, conceptualization of the soul and the deities associated with Philippine mythology and gave the creatures new classifications and meanings.

Stewardship towards God's Creation Manifested Among Early Filipinos in their Beliefs and Practices on the Cosmic Gods

Settlement Patterns and Socio-Economic Life Among Early Filipinos.

Settlement patterns among early Filipinos were clustered villages lined along sheltered bays, coastal areas and mouths of big river systems. The near coastal embraced the lowland areas of most islands (Fox, 1966). In the interior, settlements were usually located at the headwaters of big water systems of their tributaries. The inhabitants ranged from 50 to 2,000 people ((Loarca, 1582).

The villages were lineally constructed. It was rare to see a compact nucleated type similar to the present day towns and big barangays. The lineal community arrangements predominated along the coast in Cebu, Leyte, and Bohol. Some of those encountered by the Spaniards spanned the length of about a league and a half along the beach (Jocano, 1975).

In the highlands, there were few houses on top promontories and steep ridges. The distribution of settlement was influenced by the way they used the land, economic activities, protection from enemies and the degree of political development. This was exemplified by the *Sulod*, a mountain people in Central Panay where the community had watchtowers for foraging animals that haunted the field. (Fox, 1966).

Economic factor was the major reason in residential preferences. Coastal villages favored settlement where they had easy access for food and transportation. River system was important in trading system since the movement of people and goods was up and down through the course of the water. (Fox, 1966)

Early Filipino society was fragmented. In his anthropological studies, Jocano attributed it to the way they used the land. This unnucleated pattern of settlement was due to the “*slash and burn*” agricultural practices throughout the islands. Socially, it resulted to the mobility of farmers where they looked for places where trees grew abundantly and the soil was free of grass. This mobility attributed to

land use caused the impermanence of settlements and communities. The development of unified large tribes was hampered by such population dispersal. Social units were based on kinship comprised of a number of extended families. The lack of permanent residence and huge aggregate of people to support a strong political figure did not develop as the way it had in Indonesia or in the Middle East. There were no megalithic structures and temples like those in Cambodia, India or China. Jocano argued that to speak of temples and kings in the early Philippines is to exaggerate the sociological contexts of historical records or to refuse to consider the implications of the ecological setting on which early Filipino society was anchored. (Jocano, 1975).

Another major factor that affected residential mobility among pre-Spanish communities was the belief in the active participation of the spirits in the lives of people. If there was sickness or death, they believed that the spirits of the field had been offended and therefore the residents should move out. They left their dwellings or burnt these before departure (Jocano, 1975). This is an important part of the stewardships of God's creation since nature and environment acquired power for people to take care and be careful with their actions to it.

In the middle of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century rapid changes happened in the archipelago. A homogenous society emerged when Chinese merchants and Muslim traders set the motion drawing people from the mountains to coastal areas. Natives from the highland left their homes and established residences in the trade centers. A good example was Manila where nucleated settlements began to develop along the banks of Pasig River. Some of these communities were surrounded by palisades and protective devices to shield them from enemies. Fox (1966) reveals in his studies that the same kind of adjustment occurred in Eastern Mindanao. He found out that "*a number of dwellings were built on the high ridge or hilltop*" (Fox, 1966, p. 14). This is the situation that the Spaniards saw upon their arrival in the islands. In his chronicle, Morga had this observation:

"they found its settlement in the seashore, near a large river, and under the rule and protection of a chief called Rajamora. Opposite, on the other side of the river, was another large settlement named Tondo, which was likewise held by another chief named Raja Matanda. These settlements were fortified with palm trees and stout arigues (wooden post) filled in with earth and very many bronze culverins and other pieces of larger bore." (Morga, 1609, p.53)

Early Filipinos' Beliefs on the Cosmic Gods

Early Filipinos believed the Supreme Being. The Tagalogs called him *Bathala Maykapal* which means "God the Creator" (Plasencia, 1589). *Bathala* is the one God revered as the "maker of all things." *Bathala* dwelled in *Kaluwalhatian* along with lesser gods and goddesses. He also sent his *anitos* in order to assist people in their daily lives. (Boxer Codex, 1570). The Visayan counterpart for *Bathala* is "*Laon*" or antiquity (Chirino, 1603), although in the dictionary of Philippine mythology, it is *Kaptan* as claimed by ethnohistorians and anthropologists who studied its oral traditions.

Something remarkable was revealed in the analysis of Mananzan (1988). He postulates that the word *Bathala* "does not have sexist connotation. In the primitive Tagalog script, the word "god" is made up of three consonants *Ba-Tha-La*. The first consonant is the first syllable of the word *babae* (woman) which symbolizes generation. The third consonant is the first syllable of *lalake* (man) which symbolizes potency. They are joined by the middle consonant, an aspirated *H* which means light or spirit. The word "god", therefore means the union of man and woman in light. And when one reads the word backwards, it reads *LaHatBa*, meaning total generation, total creator" ("to do" "creator"). In other words, the concept of god among the ancient Tagalogs was more closely linked with woman; and when linked with both the concepts of man and woman there is a nuance of union and mutuality, not subordination." (Mananzan, 1988).

The study of union and mutuality among the gods and goddesses of Philippine mythology and non-sexist Filipino beliefs of *Bathala* provided a supplementary enrichment to the importance of harmony instead of subordination in the dynamics of the relationship between people to people and people to nature. Tables 1,2 and 3 present the Tagalog deities arranged according to generation. Each tradition had a set of beliefs about the offspring of gods (Jocano, 1968). Presented in Table 1 is the first generation who resided in *Kaluwalhatian* or ancient Tagalog skyworld.

Table 1.
The First Generation Deities

Name	Sex	Typology	Description and Function
<i>Idiyanale</i>	female	labor and good deeds	Early Tagalogs called her for guidance to attain success in their works. Her husband <i>Dimangan</i> had two offspring.
<i>Dimangan</i>	male	good deeds and good harvest	He was the husband of <i>Idiyanale</i> with two offsprings from her.
<i>Amanikable</i>	male	hunting	He was the god of hunters but in modern oral narratives he was known as the ill-tempered god of the sea after he got frustrated upon the failure of his love for a mortal maiden woman <i>Maganda</i> . In effect he swore vengeance against humans by sending turbulent waves and horrible storms to wreck boats and drown people.
<i>Ikapati</i>	female	land cultivation	She was considered as the kindest and most understanding deity helping humans in agriculture. She represented fertility of harvests. People loved her because she was a benevolent giver of prosperity and food.
<i>Mapulon</i>	male	Seasons	He was the god of seasons who was married to <i>Ikapati</i> . They had a daughter named <i>Anagolay</i> , goddess of lost things.
<i>Lakapati</i>	hermaphrodite	fertility	<u>She was a major fertility deity to whom farmers offered sacrifices like “<i>Lakapati</i>, feed this thy slave: let him not hunger”. (San Buenaventura 1613, 361).</u>

Table 2.*The Second Generation Deities*

Name	Sex	Typology	Description and Function
<i>Mayari</i>	female	moon	She was the goddess of the moon and daughter of <i>Bathala</i> from a mortal woman. <i>Tala</i> and <i>Hanan</i> were her sisters.
<i>Tala</i>	female	stars	She was a daughter of <i>Bathala</i> from a mortal woman, and the goddess of the stars.
<i>Hanan</i>	female	morning	She was the daughter of <i>Bathala</i> from a mortal woman, and a goddess of morning.
<i>Anagolay</i>	female	lost things	She was the goddess of lost things, who was the only child of <i>Ikapati</i> and <i>Mapulon</i> .
<i>Anitun Tabu</i>	female	wind and rain	She was the daughter of <i>Idiyanale</i> and <i>Dimangan</i> , and goddess of wind and rain who was considered to be fickle minded.
<i>Dumakulem</i>	male	mountain	He was the son of <i>Idiyanale</i> and <i>Dimangan</i> and brother of <i>Anitun Tabu</i> . He married <i>Anagolay</i> , the goddess of lost things. He was described as a strong agile god of the mountains.

Table 3.
The Third Generation Deities

Name	Sex	Typology	Description and Function
<i>Apolaki</i>	male	sun	He was the son of <i>Anagolay</i> and <i>Dumakulem</i> who was the god of the sun and patron of warriors.
<i>Divan</i> <i>Masalanta</i>	female	love, conception and birth	She was the daughter of <i>Anagolay</i> and <i>Dumakulem</i> who was the youngest of all the gods and goddesses. She was a goddess of love, conception, and childbirth. She was always there to protect lovers.

Harmful Tagalog Deities

Gods and goddesses opposed to the goodness of Bathala caused destruction, harm and death. They resided in *Kasamaan* (Tagalog for the underworld) (Jocano, 1969). In his narrative, Plasencia wrote:

“They said also that in the other life and mortality, there was a place of punishment, grief, and affliction, called casanaan (Kasamaan), which was “a place of anguish;” they also maintained that no one would go to heaven, where there dwelt only Bathala, “the maker of all things,” who governed from above. There were also other pagans who confessed more clearly to a hell, which they called, as I have said, casanaan; they said that all the wicked went to that place, and there dwelt the demons, whom they called sitan.” (Plasencia, 1689)

Table 4.
The Gods and Goddesses of Kasamaan

Name	Sex	Typology	Description and Function
<i>Sitan</i>	male	demon	He guarded <i>Kasamaan</i> where he resided and kept bad souls. He had four agents that led a person to sin and destruction.
<i>Manggagaway</i>	female	disease	She was one of Sitan's agents who was blamed to be the cause of disease. Sometimes, she disguised as false healer in human form. She used a magic wand to kill..
<i>Manisilat</i>	female	family destruction	She was Sitan's agent assigned to break and destroy a happy and good family.
<i>Mangkukulam</i>	male	fire	He was Sitan's only male agent tasked to emit fire at night especially during bad weather. He could also transform into a healer and create fire at a victim's dwelling place.
<i>Hukluban</i>	female	desire	As an agent of Sitan, she could assume various forms, and kill or heal anybody as she desired.

These gods and goddesses caused disease, destruction, fire and desire that destroys the harmony of the world. They were led by Sitan who perpetuated harm and evilness.

Beliefs in the *Anitos*

Early Filipinos believed in *anitos*. *Anitos* were nature-spirits, spirits of deceased ancestors, nymphs and *diwatas*. Animism was the prevalent belief system where the environment was animated by the *anito* and their presence felt in trees, rocks, bodies of water and animals. The way to communicate to *Bathala* was through the *anitos* who spoke to *Bathala* in behalf of people. They were like *Bathala*'s servants who acted as ministers and assistants to help humans on earth. Loarca narrated in his chronicle:

“When the natives were asked why the sacrifices were offered to the anito, and not to the Bathala, they answered that the Bathala was a great lord, and no one could speak to him. He lived in the sky; but the anito, who was of such a nature that he came down here to talk with men, was to the Bathala as a minister, and interceded for them. In some places and especially in the mountain districts, when the father, mother, or other relative dies, the people unite in making a small wooden idol, and preserve it. Accordingly there is a house which contains one hundred or two hundred of these idols. These images also are called anitos; for they say that when people die, they go to serve the Bathala. Therefore they make sacrifices to these anitos, offering them food, wine, and gold ornaments; and request them to be intercessors for them before the Bathala, whom they regard as God.”
(Loarca, 1582)

Beliefs in the Life after Death and the Destination of the Soul

The experience of uncontrollable forces like natural calamities and death propelled pre-colonial Filipinos to believe in a continuation of earthly existence and the immortality of the soul. Thus all the wealth, clothing, gold and porcelain if any were buried with the dead. Slaves were killed and buried when the chief died so that their service continued in the life after death. If the dead was a seaman and great chief, he was put in the ship with slaves at the oars for his security (Loarca, 1582).

Loarca (1582) in his accounts narrated that good men who died an honorable death proceeded to heaven called *langit* by way of arch formed when it rained. They eventually became *anitos* or good spirits. The wicked are destined for *Kasamaan* and imprisoned in the infernal regions (Loarca, 1582). The memory of their ancestors were carved in

idols of stone, wood, gold or ivory called *likha* or *larawan*. They believed that these ancestors could guard them, and could bring or remove illness. (Loarca, 1582)

Beliefs in Faith Healing, Fortune Telling, Divinations and Superstitions

Early Filipinos used divinations and magic charms to guide them in their activities. These could be in the flight of birds, barks of a dogs or sound of a house lizard which could be interpreted as good or bad omen. The howling of a dog at night could be a sign of tragedy or death of a person. If someone sneezes on the way to the battlefield, it was a clue for defeat. If a hunter met a lizard, he just needed to go home since there would be no catch. An ill fortune was coming if a crow or raven cried *uac uac*. Visitors were coming if the cat rubbed its face with its claws. (Boxer Codex, 1570)

They also believed in amulets for fortune, good health and protection from enemies and animals. "These amulets were embellished with the eyetooth of a crocodile, a man-shape stone, the hair of a *duende* (gremlin or goblin), favored herbs or seed or root of a tree. (Boxer Codex, 1570)

There were prevalent beliefs in malevolent spirits like the *asuwang*, *mangkukulam*, *mangagaway*, *tiyanak*, *tikbalang* and other alleged being. *Asuwang* was a person who could transform to an animal at nightfall and victimize pregnant women. *Mangkukulam* or witches could inflict harm by pricking an image or object of an intended victim. The *mangagaway* could destroy someone by using herbs and other medicinal plants. The *tiyanak* looked like an innocent young child but could suck the blood of unborn babies. The *tikbalang* was harmless and yet misled travelers in their journey at night and made fun of them. (Plasencia, 1589)

Early Filipinos' Practices on their Rituals to the Cosmic Gods

Early Filipinos practiced the *maganitos* or offering and prayers to their gods and anitos. Temples and churches were not around but instead they had caves, cliffs, or the special room adjoining the houses as venues for the rituals and sacrifices (Colin, 1663).

Priests or priestesses officiated the sacrifices offered to the anitos for a special purpose or necessity. Tagalogs called them *catalonan* while

Visayans referred them as babaylan. Most of them were women or feminized men (*asog or bayok*). They could contact and interact with the *anitos* and spirit world. As spirit guides, their main role was medium during the ritual (Colin, 1663).

“their manner of offering sacrifice was to proclaim a feast, and offer to the devil what they had to eat. This was done in front of the idol which they anoint with fragrant perfume such as musk and civet or gum of a storax-tree and other odoriferous woods and praise in a poetic song sung by the officiating priest, male or female who is called a catalonan. The participants made responses to the song, beseeching the idol to favor them with those things of which they were in need and generally by offering repeated health, they all became intoxicated” (Plasencia, 1589).

Loarca had his own version of the appearance and practices of the *catalonan*:

“the priestesses dress very gaily, with garlands on their heads, and are resplendent with gold. They bring to the place of sacrifice some pitarillas (a kind of earthen jar) full of rice-wine, beside a live hog and a quantity of prepared food. Then the priestess chants her songs and invokes the demon, who appears to her all glistening in gold. Then he enters her body, and hurls her to the ground, foaming at the mouth as one possessed. In this state she declares whether the sick person is recovered or not. In regard to all matters, she foretells the future. All these takes place to the sound of bells and kettle-drums. Then she rises and taking a spear, she pierces the heart of the hog. They dress it and prepare a dish for the demons. Upon an altar erected there, they placed the dressed hog, rice, bananas, wine and all other articles of food that they have brought. All this is done in behalf of the sick persons, or to redeem those who are confined in the infernal regions” (Loarca, 1582)

The sacrificial ritual was followed by eating and drinking. Those in attendance were obliged to offer gold, cotton birds or other things according to their capacity and wish. Although this would make the *catalonan* appear generally rich and well-dressed, they did not enjoy honor and esteem after their performance and nobody gave special attention. (Colin, 1663)

The *maganito* performance was a fertility ritual for a good harvest. “*Before planting their grain some hold maganitos,, other make offerings to the anito, asking that the fields be fruitful and that the harvest be not lost. Later if the field suffers from either lack of work or too little water and the rice yield affected , they turn again to make offerings and to celebrate their maganitos*” (Boxer Codex, 1570).

In summary, pre-hispanic era had an agricultural socio-economic context. Their life was intertwined with nature and their religious concepts linked with deep respect to the environment. This was rooted in their beliefs of how the spirits participated in their day to day activities. The rituals called the *maganitos* were held to appease, seek help and protection, and ask for a bountiful harvest and for well-being.

Stewardship among God's Creation in the Light of Foucault's Power-Relations

Within the framework of Foucault power circulates and threads like a network. It is not a commodity to be possessed or controlled. There is a need to demystify or deconstruct the idea of power over nature which is its subordination to human beings. As articulated in the study, we should have union and mutuality with nature and respect for it as the dwelling place of the sacred.

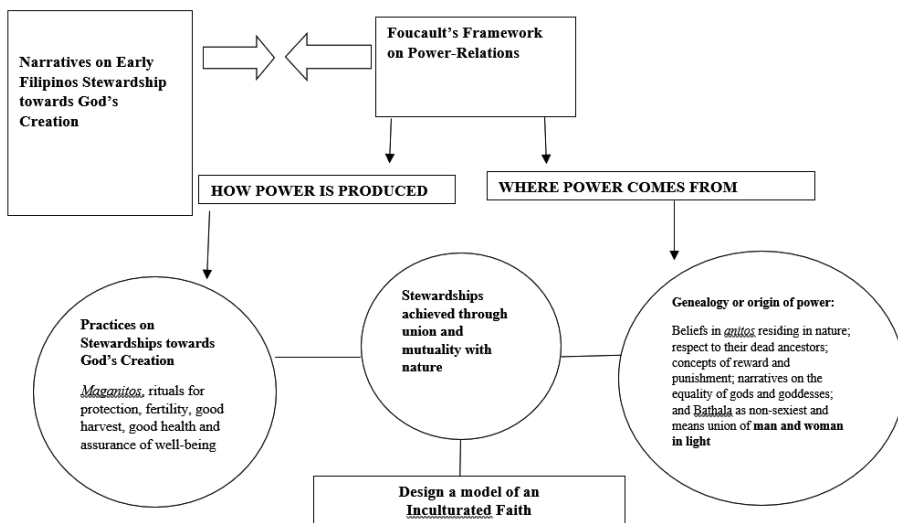


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Where Power Comes From

The genealogy of power came from the belief that *anitos* resided in nature and their surroundings. Natives should have deep respect for nature as not to provoke the wrath of the spirits and suffer the consequences of a miserable life. Nature had a lobbying power in this belief. Human beings are forced to enter into union and mutuality rather than subordinate nature, manipulating and controlling it based on their disposition. Nature was not seen as a property. Rather, it was managed with care. This was a heritage that early Filipinos offer to its next generation, to define *oikenomous* as a way to build a home on earth where each person is only a part of. Harmony with elements of nature, be it spirits, mountains, seas, minerals and other resources was vital to achieve stewardship of God's creation.

The respect to their dead ancestors provided power to nature that humans should value to preserve its link to their beloved ones. Any form of violation against nature was a disgrace and insult to their dead who were then part of the *anitos* to guard and watch over their lives.

The narratives of early Spanish chroniclers in the 16th-17th century provided the earliest writings about the beliefs and practices of early Filipinos. Although it has a condescending slant in judging their customs as idolatrous, one can filter the elements of how our ancestors valued nature, the equality of sexes and community solidarity in living together the *oikenomous*. They had concepts of rewards and punishments like beliefs of major religions in the world. *Bathala* resided in the *Kaluwalhatian* while *Sitan* the counterpart in the underworld dwelled in the *Kasamaan*. Good actions brought a person to *Bathala* and became an *anito*, while wicked ways pushed someone to the infernal region of punishment with *Sitan*. Nature obtained the power to be taken care of since a neglect of it can mean punishment even in the life after death.

Anthropological studies on Philippine mythology and their meanings further supplemented analyses on the role of the gods and goddesses. It has been observed that their typologies represent good harvest, nature, moon, stars, morning, disease, fire, destruction among others. These had direct connection to stewardship towards God's creation since a gesture of respect and honor to them means a balanced life with nature. Equality among the gods and goddesses was apparent in how they complemented their role and task. The Supreme Being *Bathala* had a non-sexist nature where a scrutiny of its name meant male and female union in light. The dynamic interdependence and mutuality

showcased the strength of stewardship among our ancestors that could be a fertile ground for an inculturated *oikenomous* today. The power came by the belief that without union, elements on earth would be disintegrated, life would become imbalance and productive life would not be realized.

How power is produced

Power circulates through early Filipinos practices on stewardship of God's creation. Nature could have power through *maganitos* where early Filipinos surrendered themselves to the spirits that lived in the surroundings through prayers, sacrifices and offerings. Rituals brought into memory the power of nature and the spirits. Whenever they ritualized, they re-lived and constantly reminded themselves of the need for union and mutuality rather than subordination of the earth and exploitation without minding adverse effects.

Maganitos instilled both fear and responsibility. Fear was the outcome of how the power of nature offered them a mystery that was overwhelming and fascinating. Sometimes when they violated nature, they trembled since they knew its rage. Offerings and prayers were performed to appease, to seek help and ask for protection. These values ensured harmony with the environment and served as a mitigating factor to abuse the earth. When they had their incantations and dances they even imitated the movement of the wind, the birds, the clouds, fire and other elements that identified them with nature and the spirits. These music and dances became a symbol of cultural identity that they belonged to a worshipping community celebrating the bounty of life and the guidance of Bathala and the *anitos*.

When harmony was achieved with nature and the spirits, the community was empowered. Every person realized that balance was attained not in domination and power-control but in powerlessness to allow oneself to listen to the sound of nature and be able to read the signs where cooperation was needed to attain union.

Life's cycle from birth (fertility) to death should be attuned not only to the physical but to the spiritual world. Its synergy through the practice of *maganitos* transformed the imminent realities to transcendence. This could be used to enrich our search for an incultured faith.

Conclusion: Towards an Inculturated Faith

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II, 1992) envisioned a church renewed through a discipleship in the community where there is communion, unity in diversity, equality in dignity and a community in mission. This can be realized in integral evangelization that is Christo-centric (person for others), rooted in the word of God and authentically Filipino and systematic (PCP II, 1992).

Authentically Filipino faith means Christian practices and rituals should not be alienated from the worshipping believers but anchored to their cultural heritage and identity. This calls for a holistic approach that views all of life as worship. It has an intimate connection with political, economic, and social life including the day to day encounter humans have with their surroundings. Renewed worship means to celebrate rituals that are rich in cultural values that empowered people “*to be generous and sacrificing in witnessing to their faith.*” (PCP II, 1992)

Early Filipinos before the coming of the colonizers anchored their deep spirituality to primal religion. Primal religion was based on their understanding of nature and human being’s frailties thereby pointing to dependence on divine power to ensure well-being. There was a converging point between the universal teachings of Christianity and early Filipinos’ primal religion that made them easily embrace the new religion. Both found blessings from a power beyond themselves, and this expedited the integration of the new culture to their system.

Early Filipinos’ beliefs and practices in stewardship of God’s creation propels an inculturated expression of faith where lives would be in union and in mutuality with nature. It is not just respect for God and our ancestors; it is also allowing the spirits of the environment to teach us how equality in dignity and community solidarity are essential components for well-being and authentic discipleship in Christ.

In the context of Pope Francis’ call for stewardship of God’s creation embodied in his *Laudati Si* which literally means “*Praise be to you O Lord*”, there are strong implications to care for our common home. Early Filipinos exhibited that care when they were in harmony with the spirits and anitos, which is a value orientation on our need to embrace nature as our partner in life not below us and not subject to abuses. We should dance the rhythms of life along with it as our ancestors managed to attune themselves with that union in their incantations and rituals. St. Francis of Assisi expressed our “common home” like a sister or brother in a canticle: “*Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs*”. (Laudato Si, 2015)

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