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The Dynamics of *lennawa*: Exchange, Sharing and Sensorial Techniques for Managing Life Substances in Ifugao

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Abstract: For the Ifugao of Northern Luzon, the Philippines, life, health and well-being depend on the containment of the life force called *lennawa* within the body. The life sustaining *lennawa*-body relation is, however, inherently unstable. Hence, there is a need to engage in practices that sustain the *lennawa*-body relation. While, as also previous studies have shown, exchange and sharing are ways in which this is achieved, I argue that the containment of the life force within and its eventual release from the body depend on the sensorially enacted relations with other humans and spirits. I describe how the Ifugao use olfactory, auditory and tactile techniques to manage relations with other humans and spirits and how performing these sensorial techniques properly stabilizes the *lennawa*-body relation. When this relation is weakened, the Ifugao I worked with engaged in elaborate therapeutic rituals, the purpose of which was to retrieve the *lennawa* and ensure that it was rejoined with the body. The rituals took the form of exchange of *lennawa* between humans and spirits, and this exchange too was brought about by various multi-sensorial means. In sum, I discuss how Ifugao techniques of containing life must be understood within a framework that acknowledges the sensorial enactment of relations.

Keywords: life force, senses, smell, auditory, rituals, the Philippines

1 Introduction

During my fieldwork in a small rural highland village in Ifugao, the Philippines, I passed by the house of one of my friends one day. In the shadow under his stilted house, I found Ramon, busy preparing rice to pound for the day's meals. His old, stoop-shouldered mother was there too, helping out by peeling rice off the straws. I knew that she was a bit hard of hearing, and as I bent towards her to talk loudly into her ear, I could see that she had draped what seemed like a thin, green grass straw over her left ear. I thought perhaps she had put it there to

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adorn herself, but Ramon explained that she had placed the plant there to avoid hearing her deceased husband talking to her. She had lost her husband a few years back, and lately she had felt increasingly weaker. One of the village's ritual experts had told her that this was probably due to her deceased husband trying to get her life force with him into the death world. He advised her to wear a piece of *buyut*, a chickweed plant,¹ around her ear, as it would prevent her from hearing him. This would help her regain her life force and thus sustain her life at least a bit longer.

Ramon's mother's way of avoiding an auditory experience of her late husband indicates the importance of sensorial techniques for controlling life forces in Ifugao. Ramon and his co-villagers need such life force in order to live, but because it could easily leave them, they have to constantly take care to contain it. However, for their rice and animals to grow and for spirits to be satisfied, the life force must also be allowed to circulate. The dynamics created by these two opposing demands depend on how relations between humans and between humans and spirits are enacted, and it is on the practices through which these relations are constituted, transformed and – as done by Ramon's mother – avoided, I focus here. These practices include exchange and sharing, but also and quite importantly, a variety of sensorial techniques. By drawing on what is known as the anthropology of the senses and the idea that sensing is a social activity,² I argue that smell, sound, taste, vision, and tactility are integral to the relations between humans and spirits and that both the containment and circulation of life force are mediated by sensorial practices.

Ramon and his mother live in a village situated deep into the precipitous Cordillera Mountains of northern Luzon, the Philippines. The steep mountainsides in which their village is located are carved into terraces of irrigated pond fields where they cultivate wet-rice.³ In the mountainsides they also make swiddens where they grow fruits, legumes, and sweet potatoes. In addition to the chickens, dogs and pigs that most families keep, this landscape is also the home of a large number of various kinds of spirits that in this part of Ifugao are generally known as *ba'i*. They include place-specific spirits who inhabit large stones, trees, river creeks, waterfalls and mountaintops, spirits of various meteorological phenomena and illnesses, protection spirits, as well as human ancestors.⁴

1 *Drymaria cordata*. Barton 1946: 73, relates this use to the spirits who are known to approach the recently dead in order to betraying their living kin into their hands.

2 Chau 2008; Ewart 2008; Howes 1991, 2007; Hsu 2008; Ingold 2000.

3 While traditionally, one crop was harvested every year, they now harvest twice a year. However, they perform agricultural rituals only for the crop considered the traditional one.

4 Barton 1946 lists more than 40 different classes of spirits, each containing numerous sub-types.

The relations the villagers have with spirits are highly ambiguous. On the one hand, spirits control the success of their agricultural effort. They provide fertility to the rice fields. On the other hand, they may prey on humans, depriving them of life force and kill them. For many of the villagers, the Christian God is also included in their world. Those who belong to the Catholic Church, combine their Christian practices with those related to the spirits. Those who have converted to Pentecostalism, however, attempt to distance themselves from the spirits as they see them as representatives of Satan. I stress, however, that the spirit-related practices in no way belong to a long gone past, and neither is it a timeless tradition. The spirit-related practices are indeed living practices in Ifugao today, but other social forces such as education, tourism, and ethno-political processes as well as the relatively recent introduction of Pentecostalism⁵ also contribute to shaping them.⁶

I begin this article by addressing how life force must be understood through a notion of the self that extends beyond the human and into the land, wet rice fields and the animals that belong to the homestead. I then show how sharing and exchange influence on the movement of life force within this extended self and how these practices allow life force to be accumulated so that one can extend oneself even further. Next, I discuss how these practices must be understood in relation to the social effects of sensory experiences; how seeing and being seen, smelling and being smelled, hearing and being heard, and touching and being touched have consequences for the relations between humans and spirits, which again impinge on how life force flows. Towards the end, I discuss how the introduction of Pentecostalism has shaped, challenged and transformed the relational consequences of sensorial perceptions.

2 Selfhood and the paradoxical demands of *lennawa*

Similar to many other people in Southeast Asia,⁷ most Ifugao hold that all living beings – humans, plants, animals and spirits – contain a life force which is

⁵ The first Pentecostal congregations were established in the area in the late 1990s.

⁶ The research on which this article is based was conducted in the province of Ifugao, the Philippines, in two long-term fieldworks, one in 2003–2004 and another in 2007–2008, totaling two years. During both periods, I conducted participant observation in a large number of rituals as well as in people's everyday life. I also conducted numerous semi-structural and informal interviews with both ritual experts and non-experts, with young and old, men and women.

⁷ For instance Endicott 1970; Howell 1989; Rosaldo 1992; Janowski 2016; Sillander 2016.

crucial to their survival. In Ifugao, this life force is called *lennawa*, which is a quite complex term with a variety of interrelated meanings. In some cases it refers to a normally invisible substance as part of the body, *odol*, which in some instances is compared to the Christian “soul”. But it may also refer to a more general life force that suffuses the world and circulates among humans, animals, plants and spirits.⁸ In addition, the term may refer to ancestors.

For humans, *lennawa* is acquired already at conception, and as the born child grows older, *lennawa*’s attachment to *odol* grows stronger and must remain integrated with *odol* through life. Upon dying, *lennawa* leaves *odol*, but hovers around the village for a year or more. When a secondary burial is performed, *lennawa* is guided to the death world and eventually continues living as an ancestor.⁹ Throughout life, *lennawa*’s relation to *odol* is inherently unstable. A child, whose *lennawa* has not yet grown strongly attached to *odol*, is particularly prone to lose its life force, but also during adulthood may *lennawa* temporarily depart from *odol*. Dreaming is one way this occurs, and as long as the separation between them is brief, no harm is done. If *lennawa* does not return and the separation becomes prolonged, *odol* will get ill and eventually die.

The slippery character of the *lennawa-odol* relation influences both human-spirit relations and interhuman relations. Humans and spirits belong to two co-existing worlds that are somehow spatially separated, but which also partially overlap.¹⁰ Humans and spirits have different *odol*, but both have *lennawa*. Their different *odol* causes them to experience the world in a different, and in some cases, inverted way.¹¹ For instance, what humans see as wild pigs and rats, the spirits see as their domestic pigs and chickens. As long as humans’ *lennawa* remain in place, this “relativity in perception”¹² poses no threat, but the tendency of *lennawa* to leave, implies that humans face a constant risk of losing their specific perception of the world and being overpowered by the perspective of spirits.¹³ Such perspective transformations are dangerous to those who experience it since they, if they are not countered in some way, will lead the

⁸ Barton distinguishes between *lennawa* as a soul and *alimaduan* as a soul stuff that provides the entity containing it desirable qualities (Barton, 1978: 141). My informants did, however, not distinguish these and referred to *lennawa* only. This difference might be due to cultural changes that have occurred since Barton did his research in the early part of the twentieth century, or they may be related to the significant differences between the Kiangon district where Barton conducted fieldwork and my fieldwork location in Central Ifugao.

⁹ Beyer and Barton 1911; Lambrecht 1938.

¹⁰ Cannell 2001: 84.

¹¹ Cannell 2001: 84.

¹² Howell 1989.

¹³ Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2004; Cannell 2001.

metamorphosis of the victim into a spirit. Any contact with spirits carries with it this risk, so it is crucial for humans to enact relations with spirits properly by balancing carefully between closeness and distance.

In relations with other humans, it is the force called *paliw* that poses the most immediate threat to the *lennawa-odol* relation. This is an inherited force that may be activated, also against the will of those who possess it, by talking to someone – particularly relatives and friends – in a way that may be interpreted as expressing envy.¹⁴ The general effect of *paliw* is the temporary loss of *lennawa* in those whom one talks to. Maintaining relations devoid of envy with those with whom one is close is therefore vital.

It is only in terms of enacting relations with other persons – humans and spirits – in a proper way that the potential of *lennawa* to leave *odol* can be obstructed and selfhood be achieved. However, a wider notion of self seems to be at play here as well; one that includes also a person's rice terraces and swiddens, the plants cultivated in them, the prestige gained by them and the pigs fed by their produce. For these aspects of the self to be productive, *lennawa* needs to circulate between them.

Two major types of rice are grown in the terraces; one that is eaten as staple food and another sticky variant that is primarily used for fermenting rice beer, *lipog*. Both types of rice are held to have *lennawa*, and it is crucial for their growth that *lennawa* flows from the persons owning the rice fields, via animals and spirits and back into the rice fields. Pigs and chickens are fed weeds from rice fields and swiddens, and when planting and harvesting have been done, some of the animals are killed as offerings to the spirits. The spirits receive the *lennawa* of the animals and reciprocate by infusing *lennawa* into the rice fields.¹⁵ Eating rice thus brings *lennawa* back to humans again, who can then use their life force to continue cultivating rice and raising animals. Barton¹⁶ suggests that the headhunting the Ifugao used to practice was involved in such a flow of *lennawa* as well. Although headhunting was related to revenge between families, by bringing back the head of victims “the whole region has gained

¹⁴ *Paliw* seems to have a lot in common with other such mystical influences in the Philippines, for instance the forces *usog* and *daog* among the Bicol, see Cannell 2001: 82. However, it is worth mentioning here that no one seriously would claim to have *paliw*, and in cases where *paliw* is identified as the cause of illness, uncertainty regarding who the offender might be often remains unsolved. *Paliw* thus operates more as what Rio 2003 calls an absented third person.

¹⁵ The specific spirits to receive offerings vary according to the purpose of the rituals held, but the spirits from whom humans received domestic animals and rites (*matungul*) and those specifically able to multiply life and produce fecundity (*ma'nongan*) are usually targeted. See Barton 1946: 27, 43.

¹⁶ Barton 1930.

life; not an individual life, but life that is diffused throughout the fields to better the crops, life that will vitalize the domestic animals, life that will make the folk themselves more nearly what they want to be".¹⁷

The sticky rice plays a particular role here. *Lipog* is served at all rituals as it is held to attract spirits, and their presence at the ritual is crucial for them to receive the *lennawa* of the offerings of animals. In addition, children are often allowed to eat the leftover rice at the bottom of the beer jars. Although some adults find the resulting drunkenness among the children a bit worrying, they claim that the stickiness of the rice strengthens the children's *lennawa-odol* relation.

Furthermore, the terraces are also the main basis for prestige. Villagers are differentiated into three specific ranks according to the size and quality of their rice terraces. Rank does not generate much in terms of formal political leadership, although the owner of the most prestigious field in the village is also its *tonong*, agricultural leader. The *tonong* decides when the village should start planting and harvesting, something which contributes to the important synchronization of the wet rice cultivation. The terrace-based ranking of villagers does not consolidate into fixed ranks, however. While based on terrace land ownership, rank must also be followed up by slaughtering pigs, the size and numbers depending on one's rank. The ability to acquire pigs rests on one's influence and network of relations but also, and quite importantly, on access to money to buy pigs. The actual ranking of villagers is highly dynamic, ambiguous and constantly under negotiation. Prestigious people who need expensive medicines or hospital treatment are sometimes forced to sell some of their terraces. This enables people who have access to money but less terrace land to buy these terraces and thus enhance their prestige base. Less prestigious persons also attempt to claim higher prestige by pushing the boundaries of the acceptable number of pigs they slaughter, and highly prestigious persons who may lack money to buy the number of pigs required, easily lose prestige and rank.¹⁸

In sum, then, two opposing demands are put on the management of *lennawa*. On the one hand, one must restrict the movement of *lennawa* out of *odol*. On the other hand, *lennawa* must also circulate through the relations that constitute the wider notion of self. Only by satisfying the spirits by giving

¹⁷ Barton 1930: 195. See also Barton 1978: 197.

¹⁸ As such, the slippery character of Ifugao hierarchy resembles what Scott 1985 described for pre- and early colonial Philippines, a dynamic debt obligation system that consisted in gradations of debt-bondage between aristocrats, freemen and commoners. And as Scott and Rafael 1988 underlined, this dynamic took a reciprocal form in which positions were highly mutable and the elite were dependent on their followers' deference. See also Cannell 2001 on the dynamics of power relations in Bicol.

them pigs, or other things they ask for, can this circulation be ensured. For this to occur, humans and spirits must come together in rituals. However, in these encounters humans risk becoming overpowered by the perspective of the spirits,¹⁹ which means their *lennawa* becomes separated from their *odol*. Life can only be sustained, then, by managing the tensions generated by these two contradictory demands on *lennawa*. There is no consistent use of specific Ifugao terms for referring to these demands, however. Their significance appears through practices and informal comments on them and varies from occasion to occasion. Barton mentions how in headhunting rituals, the Ifugao would ask spirits to let them “not cease flowing”²⁰ so as life is sustained. In the following I therefore use the terms containing, retaining, and integrating interchangeably when it comes to the demand of keeping *lennawa* in place within the *odol*, and circulating, flowing, and moving to refer to the other demand on *lennawa*. In the following two sections, I argue that practices of sharing and exchange along with a series of sensorial techniques are crucial for managing the dynamics created by these tensions.

3 Sharing and exchange

Whenever I passed by my neighbor Nestor’s house, he called “mangan!” (let’s eat) and offered me a share of whatever was on his plate. Sharing of one’s food and other items occurred regularly among villagers and was clearly central to the enactment of relations with other humans and spirits.

In his analysis of sharing and exchange among the Buid of Mindoro, Gibson contrasts sharing with exchange by its denial of indebtedness and promotion of egalitarian values.²¹ In a society where the potential for envy generated *paliw* is integral to all ranked relations, sharing may serve to counteract this danger. Apart from the ubiquitous invitations to sharing food and drinks, sharing is most clearly seen in the everyday practice of betel nut chewing. Almost every person from the age of the early teens carry with them a *butung*, a small woven cloth or plastic bag containing betel leaves, nuts and lime powder, which they mix and chew at every social gathering.²² Although everyone usually has enough betel ingredients for own consumption, they often share a leaf or a nut from their

¹⁹ Viveiros de Castro 2004: 468; Cannell 2001: 97.

²⁰ Barton 1930: 194.

²¹ Gibson 1986, 2011.

²² As Weckerle et al. 2010 point out, the slightly stimulating effect of betel nuts may account for the heightened social mood of these chewing sessions.

butung with the other humans present. Sharing betel ingredients is closely associated with friendship, and cross-sex sharing is often accompanied by jokes about sexual intentions. Indeed, a man can propose marriage by sending the girl's parents a package of betel nuts, and in myths chewing together is used as euphemism for sexual intercourse.²³ Refusing to share betel ingredients amounts to showing animosity and is held to easily provoke *paliw*, which would threaten the *lennawa-odol* relationship of the one holding back ingredients.²⁴

Sharing thus contributes to inhibiting the partition of *lennawa* and *odol*. But sharing is also involved in controlling its flow. For instance, whenever Nestor and I shared a bottle of gin or *lipog*, he would spill some on the ground as a share for the spirits. As Nestor explained, "they too like gin" and would be angered if they caught us drinking without them. They would retaliate by causing illness and unsuccessful rice harvest. Furthermore, after periods in which hunting expeditions for wild pigs had been successful, they returned skulls and bones of the animals back to the forest where the spirits, who are considered the owners of wild animals, received them so they could renew the animal's *lennawa*.

Managing the tensions regarding *lennawa* is also done through exchange, although here the debt integral to relations makes it take a different shape. Wigan, a middle-aged man who lived close to Nestor, had experienced illness lately. According to the ritual experts, it was the deceased father of Wigan who had lured Wigan's *lennawa* with him to the death world. Wigan therefore arranged a healing ritual in which he killed several pigs. Wigan explained that by doing so, he would give the *lennawa* of pigs to his father and hopefully receive his own *lennawa* in return.

The pigs killed at the ritual were cut into specific pieces and distributed to the relatives of Wigan and his wife, Appeng. These pieces are known as *bolwa'* and are absolutely central to the enactment of kinship.²⁵ Wigan and Appeng's relatives ate some of the *bolwa'* themselves but distributed also parts of them further to their relatives again.²⁶ Through these distributions, Wigan and Appeng spread their meat throughout a wide network of relatives that reached

²³ Barton 1969: 12.

²⁴ Barton 1946: 52 claims that sharing betel nuts with enemies would result in illness caused by the *hidit* spirits. In his account of betel chewing among the Hanunóo of Mindoro, Conklin 2007: 271 relates that ritual experts forbid betel chewing to people who have become sick because the spirits dislike their practice of concealing and holding back betel ingredients.

²⁵ Exchange of meat is used both to activate already existing consanguine kin relations and to establish kin-like relations with friends and allies. See Remme 2014a: 33–44 and McKay 2010: 332.

²⁶ Ifugao kinship is reckoned bilaterally.

far beyond the village, even to cities such as Baguio and Manila.²⁷ The meat would be reciprocated later, but as Wigan explained, the pieces of pork they would receive in return had to be either larger or smaller than the ones they had given or else “it would cut the relation off.” Kin relations are thus inevitably involved in shifting debt relations, and this dynamic engendered a flow of meat and life force among their kin.

However, pigs were expensive and Wigan could not afford enough pigs to make sure everyone was satisfied. Wigan and Appeng therefore carefully selected who would receive their due this time round and who could wait. They risked provoking envy and *paliw* among those who felt they had been given a raw deal, and the only thing they could do to avoid the potential lethal effects of *paliw* and other such powers, was to assure the dissatisfied friends and relatives they would be given more next time.

Also relations with spirits are managed and transformed by exchange. Myths are replete with exchanges of fire, rice and pigs between humans and spirits,²⁸ and reciting myths are a gift to the spirits who are expected to reciprocate by multiplying rice and life.²⁹ In cases where *lennawa* has been lost, as in Wigan’s case, the spirits receive the *lennawa* of the pigs and are expected to return the lost *lennawa*. In agricultural rituals, the spirits will reciprocate the offerings of pigs by infusing *lennawa* into the rice fields.

While both sharing and exchange are involved in the relational practices through which the two opposing demands on *lennawa* are mediated, the debt element of the exchange practices gives this dynamic a particular dimension. The relation between exchange and debt relations has been a perennial theme of debate among scholars working in the Philippines, and particularly so the notion of *utang na loob*, “debt of gratitude.” Hollnsteiner³⁰ claimed that lowland Philippine societies were held together by an array of relations of reciprocity and patron-client relations in which subordinate parties in patron-client relations could never pay off their debt. As others³¹ have shown, however, these debt relations are far more dynamic, and as Rafael³² has convincingly argued in his radical rethinking of the notions of exchange and *utang*, the inside of a person, *loob* and the selfhood it generates, is created and maintained

²⁷ Conklin 1980: 83 surveyed the network extending from one single ritual and found that over 1,000 persons received meat.

²⁸ Barton 1946; Beyer 1913.

²⁹ Stanyukovich 2013.

³⁰ Hollnsteiner 1973.

³¹ Gibson 1986; Iletto 1979; Cannell 2001.

³² Rafael 1988.

through relations of exchange. Engaging in exchanges with other humans, and as among the Ifugao, also with spirits, is thus a way through which selfhood is achieved, upheld and expanded.

These aspects of managing *lennawa* clearly occupied earlier scholars working in Ifugao,³³ and I agree with the importance of exchange and sharing in securing selfhood and the circulation of *lennawa*. However, as Cannell notes, neither *utang* nor *loob* dominated the ways in which the Bicol talked about their relationships with the spirits. Rather, she suggests, they emphasize experience and feelings such as pity, reluctance, oppression, affection and desire. “The spirits are seen as pulling people who cannot ‘manage’ (...) them into the invisible world with an almost hydraulic force, an almost *audible* suction,”³⁴ she states, thus showing how human-spirit relations are experienced in a quite different register than exchange relations alone. Two points are worth noting here. First, Ramon’s mother’s auditory way of avoiding relations with her deceased husband shows us that sensorial perceptions are central to the enactment of relations between humans and spirits. Second, harmful contact with others is often referred to in the idiom of talking. *Paliw* is explained as the “power of mentioning”. Being contacted by a spirit is referred to as *tomyaw*, which is a form of greeting, which interestingly also involves the act of requesting or demanding a gift or service. The auditory acts of talking and greeting combine thus with a demand to share or exchange. Hence, sensorial perceptions, hearing other’s talk included, may be central to the enactment of relations in Ifugao. In the following, I show how these sensorial aspects of social relations are drawn upon to transform relations and influence on *lennawa*’s movement.

4 Sensorial techniques

Sensing is a social activity and sensory perceptions often have consequences for social relations. As Hsu³⁵ argues, it is “through the senses we experience, enact, shape and express ourselves in social relations.” Much work on Southeast Asian human-spirit relations recognizes these sensorial aspects of relations. Particularly the visual seems to play a central role. Humans and spirits are held to belong to realms invisible to each other.³⁶ The Chewong of Peninsular

³³ For instance, Beyer and Barton 1911, Barton 1930, 1946, 1978; Lambrecht 1932, 1938; Newell 1993; Stanyukovich 2013.

³⁴ Cannell 2001: 106. My emphasis.

³⁵ Hsu 2008: 441. See also n2.

³⁶ For instance Wiener 1995.

Malaysia distinguish humans from spirits in terms of their different eyes,³⁷ and the Bicol refer to the spirits as people we cannot see.³⁸ However, relations between humans and spirits are also enacted in terms of other sensory perceptions such as smell, sound and touch.³⁹ As I will show here, a variety of sensorial perceptions are at work when enacting relations with both humans and spirits. It is through these relations that the opposing demands on *lennawa* are handled.

4.1 Olfactory techniques

As Gell once pointed out, smell “is distinguished by the formlessness, indefinability and lack of clear articulation” and has a particular quality of always escaping the object it is emitted from.⁴⁰ This quality makes it particularly suitable for enacting relations that cut across the boundaries between humans and spirits.

After Wigan and Appeng killed their pigs, the guests helped out singeing the pig carcasses with rice straws that were burning (Figure 1). This made it easier to scrape off the hair, but also produced a sharp, distinct smell called *munapiit* that the spirits were asked to smell so that they knew offerings had been made.⁴¹ The smell was also said to attract the spirits and would keep them around so that the exchange of *lennawa* could take place. Since contact with spirits easily led to the loss of *lennawa*, the presence of spirits was also highly dangerous to those humans who were present at the ritual. To counteract such dangers, the guests had to refrain from producing the *munapiit* smell for a few days after the ritual. This restriction also included eating other items such as fruit, fish, and vegetables that were held to smell *munapiit* as well. Any sensing by the spirits of the smell would bring them back, and without having any offerings for them, they would surely be angered and take revenge by stealing Wigan’s *lennawa* again or refusing to let *lennawa* into his fields.

³⁷ Howell 1989.

³⁸ Cannell 2001. See Sprenger 2016: 37–40, for a discussion of the dynamics of visibility of Southeast Asian human-spirit relations.

³⁹ Bubandt 1998; Telle 2003; Novellino 2009.

⁴⁰ Gell 1977: 27.

⁴¹ Barton 1930: 189, relates that during headhunting preparation rituals, the spirits are asked to take the odor of sacrifices to the enemies so that their smell may reach them just like their spears. Just as receiving betel nuts from an enemy is harmful, smelling the sacrifices made by an enemy is dangerous.



Figure 1: Singeing sacrificed pig.

The relation between the *munapiit* smell and the exchange of *lennawa* with humans and spirits can also be used actively in order to fool and confuse spirits. A man called Duntugan told me he had been hunting in the forest and suddenly had felt dizzy and disoriented. He was in a part of the forest that he knew very well, so he reckoned a place-specific *pinadeng* spirit⁴² tried to take his *lennawa*, which led to his disorientation. “I picked a hair from my head and burned it with a match, and I felt normal,” Duntugan explained. His burned hair smelt *munapiit*, and Duntugan assumed the *pinadeng* took the smell as an offering and returned Duntugan’s *lennawa*.

Smell is also prevalent in techniques for stimulating the circulation of *lennawa*. For instance, worms that damage the terrace walls and insects that eat rice panicles may obstruct the flow of *lennawa* into the fields. Constant weeding and maintenance of the terraces contribute to preventing this, but the villagers also used a form of herbal insecticide for this purpose. They went into the mountains and collected a bundle of specific herbs, and submerged them at various parts of the terrace system. If rituals and other rules related to

⁴² These are spirits who inhabit large stones, waterfalls and other specific places in and around the village. They are also the owners of wild animals.

the gathering of plants had been followed correctly, the herbs would emit a smell that drove the worms and insects away thus removing the most immediate threats to the dissipation of *lennawa* into the fields.⁴³

As mentioned, *lennawa* of deceased persons will linger around for a while after their death and try to get the *lennawa* of their spouse to go with them.⁴⁴ So when Mario died, his spouse Carmen had to take precautions. In order to establish the necessary separation and distance to her husband, she moved house and avoided washing herself and her cloths for months. The smell of her unwashed body and her dirty clothes were expected to be repulsive to Mario.

Finally, when I travelled together with my co-villagers to neighboring villages, we always carried each a piece of ginger in our pockets. Pinching the ginger as we entered into the villages, we produced a smell that hindered that the local *pinadeng* spirits could smell us. The *pinadeng* are particularly infamous for their inclination to smell humans and abduct their *lennawa*, and my traveling companions claimed that the strong smell of ginger would obstruct the *pinadeng* spirits' sensorial perception of us.⁴⁵

4.2 Auditory techniques

When Ramon's mother draped the *buyut* chickweed around her ear (Figure 2), she was doing something similar, although in this case she was avoiding a relation with her deceased husband by an auditory technique. The *buyut* plant is sometimes used instead of ginger when visiting neighboring villages, and when worn around the ear the plant prevents against *tomyaw*, having spirits talk or whisper into one's ear and thus cause illness. The sound of the talking spirit is usually not audible to humans, but harmful nevertheless.

A particularly interesting auditory technique for avoiding harmful relations with spirits is related to naming. When a child is born, it will usually first be called just "baby" or "*unga*". If the child looks like or behaves like one of its deceased ancestors, the child is sometimes held to have inherited the *lennawa* of that ancestor and is named after him or her. If not similar in any way to others, the child is simply given a name. This name can be changed if the person experiences *lennawa* loss caused by a spirit. One woman in the village had

⁴³ See Remme 2014b.

⁴⁴ Cannell 2001: 82 explains how this is related to the pity the deceased feels for the bereaved. Although also the Ifugao recognized that dead person might feel pity for their spouses, they rather talked about this as a desire on the part of the deceased for having a companion.

⁴⁵ Barton relates how Ifugao headhunters rubbed their face and arms with ginger to "keep vision clear, the head cool and the arms steady" 1930: 190.



Figure 2: Woman with buyut.

become ill and upon consultation with the ritual experts, they found out she had been secretly married to a *pinadeng* spirit who had taken her *lennawa* with him to his domain. The ritual experts prescribed a ritual sacrifice in which they would exchange the *lennawa* of pigs for the woman's *lennawa*. The ritual was successful, but to avoid that the *pinadeng* returned to hunt for his lost spouse, they advised her to change her name so that he would not find her. Changing one's name to protect oneself against *lennawa* loss is also crucial during mourning periods. Carmen also temporarily changed her name after Mario died, waiting till Mario had gone through a secondary burial before taking up her original name again.⁴⁶

One man in the village was an example of the creative ways in which the auditory relations between humans and spirits were mediated. Most of the villagers had two names, one that was of Ifugao origin and another of biblical, Spanish or English origin, called "native name" and "school name" respectively.

⁴⁶ See Remme 2014a: 121–124.

This man, however, was known for having only a “school name”. He told me that the reason for this was that when he was a child, he had been seen playing with an invisible friend whom his parents took to be a *pinadeng* spirit. At the time, he was rather thin and weak, and his parents feared that he might get worse and die. Fortunately they had not given him a “native” name yet, so in order to fool the spirit into believing that his playmate had disappeared they asked a visiting missionary to give him a Christian “school name” and never gave him any “native name”.

Auditory techniques were also used when we visited neighboring villages. While walking along the mountain paths, we had to pay close attention to the twittering of a particular bird, called *idaw*. This bird is sometimes held to bring messages from the spirits and is in some cases an actual spirit who has metamorphosed into a bird form. Encountering such an *idaw* bird was held to be dangerous, so by making noise while walking along the trail we could scare them away. At journeys of particular importance, such as returning from a headhunting enactment ritual in the mountains or when carrying a dead body back from another village, a couple of men walked ahead of us playing loudly on metal gongs.⁴⁷

While these auditory techniques are thus crucial for keeping the *lennawa-odol* relation intact, such techniques are also applied for securing a productive movement of *lennawa*. When the ritual experts invoked the spirits during rituals, the sound of their voices was effective in bringing the spirit to the house. In fact, the mentioning of spirit names outside ritual contexts could be dangerous, as the mere sound of their name would attract them, expecting to receive an offering. If the family owned a set of gongs, these would be played too, and sometimes wooden rhythm sticks were used as well. The sound of these instruments, along with the sound of the humming of several ritual experts invoking the names of spirits would attract the spirits to the house and thus enable the exchange of *lennawa* with them.

⁴⁷ Headhunting enactment rituals are performed when someone from outside the village kills someone from within the village. A group of men will then go into the mountain, make a mock person out of grass straws. While inciting the *lennawa* of the deceased to copy their actions, they will spear the grass figure and decapitate it. The head is carried in a ritual backpack back to the village, while gongs are played, and at the house a ritual sacrifice of pigs is held.

The corpse of a deceased is carried to the house of his or her relatives. The corpse is kept there for a few days, allowing the family to offer pigs to the deceased, before it is taken further to another relative’s house. This goes on from three days up to three weeks depending on the prestige of the deceased.

4.3 Tactile techniques

The most evident tactile technique is seen in the practice of tying the knot called *pudung*. This is a simple knot which everyone knows how to tie. Usually some plant material is used, either grass or rice straws. The *pudung* is attached to things to protect them against thieves and other ominous influences. The knots are considered effectual in themselves, but people who know specific prayers related to guard-spirits, *hamleng*, may use these to enhance the effect of the knot.⁴⁸

While most of the techniques mentioned so far aim to contain a *lennawa* which is already integrated with *odol*, the practice of tying the *pudung* knot is also related to the insertion of *lennawa* to *odol* at birth. When children are born, the mother and child are usually kept within the house for a couple of weeks. The *lennawa* of the newborns are particularly prone to leave, and it therefore needs particular protection. To avoid attacks by spirits, a bunch of grass straws are tied into the *pudung* knot and placed at the entrance to the yard. This will announce to the spirits as well as to eventual guests that a newborn is inside the house and that entrance is prohibited. Guests cannot enter as they may have encountered omen animals on their way and may therefore bring with them ominous influences which may hinder the fastening of the *lennawa* in the child's *odol*. The *pudung* knot ties *lennawa* and *odol* together, a tie that is vital for the child's sustenance of life.

When the child and mother eventually come out from the house, knots continue to have importance. Mothers keep their infants tied in a blanket around their back or waist. In relations to spirits, it is held that the *ma'nongan* spirit carry humans in a similar way as mothers carry their children. Barton reports that in headhunting preparation rituals, they used to appeal to the *ma'nongan* to "make fast the knot of our carrying-blanket in order that there be no carrying away (no bad omen) of the life of those who are going head-hunting".⁴⁹ When a person dies, the corpse is eventually placed inside the family's burial cave, or as has become more common these days, a single cemented tomb. The one carrying the body into the cave or tomb is never closely related to the person, since the spirits inside the cave as well as the deceased are less likely to feel pity or revengeful towards them. Being inside the cave or tomb is nevertheless considered dangerous. The *lennawa* may easily be lost. To secure that the *lennawa* of the carrier does not remain inside the tomb when he comes out, those standing outside stick a runo straw tied into a *pudung* knot into the opening and draw it out. An eventual lost *lennawa* will attach to the knot and thus be easily retrieved.

⁴⁸ Barton 1946: 55, refers to the *hamleng* spirits as *pili*, protectors of property.

⁴⁹ Barton 1930: 189.

The tying of *pudung* knots is also used for keeping the *lennawa* of other items such as animals, rice beer, and rice in place. Similarly to how *pudung* knots are used to protect newborns, *pudung* knots are attached to the yard entrance when piglets and chickens are born. When brewing rice beer, the rice is roasted and mixed with yeast and water before set to ferment in a banana leaf wrapped basket. After some days it is transferred for further fermentation in a porcelain or clay jar. During the fermentation period, any ominous influence will damage the beer. To protect the beer, they tie rice straws into a *pudung* knot and put them on top of the lid.

When Duntugan had finished planting his rice field, he put up a fence of *pudung* knotted grass straws around his field to protect against the retrieval of the life force of the rice by malicious forces (Figure 3). According to Duntugan,



Figure 3: Pudung knot protecting field.

the knots would counter any attack by *paliw*. They would serve as a mirror casting the *paliw* back to the perpetrator and cause damage to his or her *lennawa-odol* relation. If the attacker was an actual human trying to steal or do damage to the field, the *pudung* knots would make the perpetrator unable to move away until Duntugan released him and her. To enhance the effect of the *pudung* knot, Duntugan recited a prayer over it, calling the *hamleng* spirits to oversee the knot as well.

Whenever the entire agricultural area has been planted, the village arranges a three-day celebration called *ulpi*. During *ulpi*, the agricultural leader, *tonong*, prohibits entering into the fields. At the major paths into the village people put up *pudung* knots to close off the village to outsiders. By enclosing of the village *lennawa* can flow freely while at the same time remaining within the confines of the village's rice fields. In the headhunting days, such attempts at harnessing *lennawa* were also done by ritual appeals to the *binudbud* or "tying" deities.⁵⁰ The *binudbud* were said to be able to tie up the new rice, tie up appetites so that they did not consume the rice too fast and could also tie up the anger of enemies who planned to attack the harvesters.⁵¹

4.4 Multisensorial inverse perspectivism

As the above examples demonstrate clearly, sensorial perceptions are integral to human-spirit relations in Ifugao. Smelling, hearing, and tactile experiences have relational effects that influence how *lennawa* is either kept in place or allowed to circulate. Sensory perceptions are thus actively mobilized for bringing certain relations into being and for transforming those that are considered harmful. While invisibility is a more or less constant element of human-spirit relations, these relations are enacted also through a much wider multi-sensorial register that include olfactory, auditive and tactile experiences.⁵² There is no privileging of either of these in differentiating between humans and spirits. Which of the sensory perceptions is emphasized as mediator between them varies contextually. Hence, Duntugan resorted to the *munapiit* smell when he became disoriented. Yet it was through the sound of the *idaw* bird that spirits may have appeared to us when we walked outside the village. Moreover, similar to what Bubandt has termed "perverse perspectivism",⁵³ humans and spirits may

⁵⁰ Barton 1946: 88.

⁵¹ Stanyukovich 2013.

⁵² See Santos-Granero 2006 for a similar critique of the dominance of vision in Amerindian perspectivism.

⁵³ Bubandt 2014: 124.

sensorially perceive the world differently. Bubandt describes how witches on the Indonesian island of Halmahera perceive reality from an inverted point of view; “foul smells are sweet, and sweet smells are repugnant” and an “apparently distant sound from a *gua* [witch] means that it [the witch] is really close by”.⁵⁴ In Ifugao, these inversions may even cut across sensory experiences making spirits taste as pork what humans smell as singed pig hair. This may be one reason why Barton⁵⁵ suggested that the *buyut* plant made the wearer invisible to the spirits, while Ramon explained that his mother had draped the *buyut* around her ear “so she could not hear her husband”.

5 Pentecostals’ sensorial re-tuning

The relational and sensorial dynamics of managing *lennawa* have in the recent three decades been given an additional dimension by the establishment of several Pentecostal congregations in the area. Since their arrival in the late 1990s, the number of converts to Pentecostalism has grown slowly but steadily. Spirit related practices still remain strong, however. The Ifugao have thus not experienced such massive conversions one finds elsewhere.⁵⁶ However, Pentecostalism has nevertheless had great implications for the ways in which the paradoxical demands on *lennawa* are handled.

Members of the Pentecostal congregation where I participated most⁵⁷ claimed that they did not believe in the spirits any longer. However, they also admitted that they saw them as dangerous and refused to have anything to do with them. They did not attend rituals in which the spirits were present and refused to receive pork from pigs that had been sacrificed to the spirits. They saw spirits as representatives of Satan, demons that he sent to intervene in their relations with God. Encountering them in any way and engaging in relations with them was highly dangerous. For their non-Pentecostal relatives, their refusal to attend rituals and receive pork was often taken as a sign of disrespect. It hindered their enactment of kin relations and the circulation of *lennawa*. In addition, for many Pentecostals, following the decrees of the *tonong*, the

⁵⁴ Bubandt 2014: 124.

⁵⁵ Barton 1946: 73.

⁵⁶ See e. g. Knauft 2002; Robbins 2004.

⁵⁷ In the majority of my 2007–2008 fieldwork period I participated in the religious life of a Pentecostal congregation, visited their weekly Saturday evening prayer meetings and Sunday morning services. I also spent time with them outside services and visited several other Pentecostal congregations in the area.

agricultural leader, about when to start planting and harvesting was sinful as well. They said the *tonong* was too closely associated with the spirits. They therefore often planted whenever they liked, did not sacrifice anything during planting and harvesting, and disregarded the restrictions on entering the fields during the post-planting *ulpi* celebration. According to the *tonong*, the Pentecostals' refusals to follow his orders intervened in the vital flow of *lennawa* from spirits into the fields, and he explicitly blamed the Pentecostals for the decreasing water supply and rice yields.

However, few of the Pentecostals claimed to live sinless lives. They occasionally did attend sacrificial rituals and planted their fields according to the *tonong's* schedule, even though they knew they should not. They often tried to make up for their sinful behavior by praying vigorously, but in some cases their involvement with the spirits eventually turned into a dangerous transformation of their *lennawa-odol* relation. They would become possessed. Demons possessed their *odol*, and the only way to solve this and reintegrate their *lennawa* and *odol* was to go through a deliverance ritual in which a group of pastors would, with the help of God, exorcise the demons by prayer.

Exchanging, sharing and sensorial ways of relating with nonhuman beings, God included, remain important when people convert to Pentecostalism, although the relational effects of these practices with spirit and sensory perceptions of them change. Indeed, the main purpose of Pentecostal rituals – prayer meetings and services – is to enact relations with God and engender a sensorial perception of God's presence. It is primarily through testimonies, prayer and singing of praise and worship songs that this is brought about, and both auditory and tactile techniques are drawn upon. In the beginning of the service, converts stand up and tell the congregation about their experience of God's help or simply sing a song. Members of the congregation told me that they saw these small acts as gifts to God and that they expected God to give something in return, for instance healing or solution to their financial problems. The Pentecostals pray in a combination of English and Ifugao, sometimes interspersed by words and sentences in Ilocano. A good prayer should sound like an uninterrupted flow of words. Such flow is difficult to achieve, and can only be done by the help of God. The bodily sensation of hearing one's prayer flowing and sensing the ability to produce that sound, are thus both auditory and tactile perceptions of God's presence. These sensorial perceptions of God are even more pronounced in the praise and worship part of the service. Here the congregation stands up, sway back and forth and clap their hands to the music played by a small band. Many of my Pentecostal friends emphasized the particular auditory atmosphere created by the singing and music and referred to this when differentiating themselves from the other congregations in the area. "We are the noisy ones," one pastor

explained and contrasted that to the Evangelicals further up the road who sung “solemn hymns.” The sound of singing loudly not only set the congregation apart, but also contributed to the sensorial enactment of relations with God.⁵⁸ The singing and the swaying combined to give sound a particular tactile quality⁵⁹ by inciting a sensorial perception of being “touched” by the spirit. “Did you feel God’s presence,” the pastor often ended the singing sessions with, and told converts to sing louder and pray harder if they did not.

While sound and tactility are central to the Pentecostals’ enactment of relations with God, these sensorial techniques are also drawn upon to transform and avoid relations that threaten their soul. One pastor in the village told me how she, upon seeing demons, repeatedly uttered the “In Jesus name”. This would detract demons. Furthermore, converts often refrained from using their “native” names as their Christian names would be unrecognizable to demons. Converts who provoked their relatives by declining to receive meat of sacrificed pigs sometimes attempted to cleanse the meat of demon influence by reciting a prayer over the meat.

The importance of exchange, sharing and sensorial perceptions of God had consequences for what conversion became for my Pentecostal friends. While in other cases converting to Pentecostalism involves a radical break with one’s past,⁶⁰ converting was for these Pentecostals rather an enduring relational practice that involved attempts at both breaking off relations with demons and realigning with God.⁶¹ Engaging repeatedly in exchange relations with God and staying out of any social contexts in which one could become entangled in exchange relations with demons were ways to achieve this. However, there was always the threat that demons could make themselves perceptible, by becoming visible in dreams or by making converts pray too eloquently or speak in tongues too loudly and too often. Conversion required thus not only a realignment of one’s exchange relations. Conversion also necessitated a retuning of the senses.⁶² The new orientation in world that they were seeking required establishing and maintaining a new sensorial habitus.⁶³

58 Engelke 2007: 202–207.

59 De Witte 2011a: 152.

60 Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004.

61 Chua 2012.

62 Engelke 2010; Lindhardt 2011: 9; De Witte 2011b; Lührman 2012.

63 Csordas 1997: 65.

6 Conclusion

Ramon's mother eventually recovered and removed the *buyut* plant from her ear. But even if she no longer needed to apply this technique of keeping distance to her deceased husband, she had to – as all the villagers did – keep on balancing carefully between diminishing her *lennawa*'s tendency to dissipate from her *odol* and allowing *lennawa* to transcend the boundary of her *odol* and circulate in the network consisting of her rice fields, animals and ancestors. Only thus could she secure her health, well-being and agricultural fertility.

Exchanging and sharing properly, balancing closeness and distance to spirits by sensorial means; these practices were definitely at the core of my Ifugao friend's concerns and worries. Not dealing properly with the paradoxical demands on *lennawa* had consequences for their own health and well-being, but also for their families and even for the entire village. Breaches to the rules prescribing exchanging and sharing properly, balancing closeness and distance to spirits, following the *tonong*, and respecting ancestral traditions were sanctioned by cosmological means. They resulted in breakdowns of the life sustaining perspectival differentiation between humans and spirits. Exchange, sharing and the various sensorial techniques thus became important for upholding their own *lennawa-odol* integrity and for ensuring the village's continued reproductive ability. Problem was, however, that the evasive and unruly character of *lennawa*, its paradoxical demands on human-spirit relations, infused these practices with a continuous ambiguity and uncertainty. Too distant and too close, both could be detrimental, and in the space between them it was always hard to tell where the boundary was drawn. It moved and it changed shape, taking on different sensorial modes at different occasions. Deeply relational, the dynamics of *lennawa* made self-formation as fragile as the rice terraces through which it flowed, both demanding constant delicate attention and care lest they crumbled and collapsed, causing detrimental damage to life.

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