REVISITING THE *ULAHINGAN* EPIC OF THE LIVUNGANEN-ARUMANEN MANOBOS

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ABSTRACT

This paper revisits the trailblazing research on the **Ulahingan** epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos spearheaded by the late Dr. Elena G. Maquiso in 1963. In particular, the paper focuses on one of the numerous unpublished manuscripts of the **Ulahingan** epic, the *kepu'unpu'un*. Scheduled for publication as Series 6, this transcribed version of the original translation of the epic recounts the migration of Agyu and his clan and their ordeals. In attempting to provide an update on the succeeding initiatives to continue the **Ulahingan** Research Project after the demise of Dr. Maquiso, this paper aims to draw the attention of folklore scholars and students to this unique Filipino cultural heritage.

Introduction

One of the pleasures of studying history in a multi and interdisciplinary manner is the endless discovery and rediscovery of materials for research and investigation. This paper revisits the research spearheaded by the late Dr. Elena G. Maquiso four decades ago on the **Ulahingan,** the epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos. This research project originally intended to publish ten volumes in a series. The first came out in 1977 and the fifth volume in 1994. The sixth volume was scheduled for release in 1995 but the untimely demise of the principal researcher/ transcriber and other circumstances ended the research work. At the time of Dr. Maquiso's death, the project had already recorded 3,380 hours of chanting, equivalent to 18 months and 6 uninterrupted hours a night of chanting. The more than twenty years of recording, transcribing, transliterating, and editing had produced voluminous materials for further study. To date, the

collection remains a mine of information practically waiting to become many more graduate theses or research reports.

This paper will try to examine Series 6 that was originally scheduled to come out in 1995. It deals with another version of the *kepu'unpu'un* by Jose Silay, and has already been edited and reviewed by Dr. Edith Tiempo, National Artist for Literature. In discussing this prospective volume, the paper will focus on Silay's *kepu'unpu'un* version entitled "Slavery to Freedom". To set the discussion in context, the paper opens with a brief background of the epic and its transmission and then proceeds to provide notes on the earlier volumes. Finally, the paper concludes by underscoring the urgent need for further studies on this immensely important piece of cultural heritage.

The Ulahingan Epic

The **Ulahingan** is the Manobo epic that deals with the story of creation, the life and exploits of Agyu and his people before reaching Nelendengan, and their subsequent life in a paradise on earth. In this epic, Agyu, also known by his heavenly names as Begyasan and Mendayawi, is one of the two sons of the first family chosen by the Supreme Diwata (God) to do his bidding on earth. The other son is known by his earthly name as Yugung and by his heavenly name as Pemulew. The epic also deals with the story of Beyvayan, the son of Agyu/Begyasan/Mandayawi.

According to the story, Beyvayan and his followers did not go with Agyu to heaven to receive the blessings of immortality and promise of paradise from the Supreme Diwata as a reward for being faithful. Wandering around the world, he and his followers were overtaken by hunger during a drought. The story goes that in the midst of this crisis, Beyvayan, chanting in a poetic style, prayed for food under a Kereis tree. No sooner had he finished chanting and food indeed fell from the tree. In the Manobo belief system, Beyvayan's style of praying by chanting in a poetic manner came to be known as *ulahing* and the particular prayer for food rendered in the form of a chant became the first *ulahingan*. It is said that after this miraculous incident, Beyvayan and his followers

ulahing every time they prayed for food. Today, Manobos believe that only those on earth who have been inspired by Beyvayan can chant the *ulahingan*. Thus was born the "**Ulahingan**".[1]

Literally, the word *ulahingan* is a contemporary indigenous Manobo version of the ancient Manobo words *uyegingan, lungbaton,* and *umanen,* which all mean "the chanting of the epic in the language of the gods". Nowadays, it refers to the widely known epic of the Livunganen-Arumanen residing in the Libungan river valley in North Cotabato.[2] The person who chants the epic is called the *tala 'ulahingan.* In the strict Manobo tradition, chanting is only performed in the evenings because it is believed that daytime destroys the spell and charm of the epic.

The epic has two parts, the *kepu 'unpu 'un* or the beginning and the standard history of Agyu and his relatives, of which there are different versions; and the *sengedurug,* an episode or episodes that continue the story of Agyu and his relatives. The *kepu 'unpu 'un* tells the story of the chosen people's life on earth and this includes the story of the creation, the establishment and growth of the community, the people's submission to slavery and eventual freedom through the help of the gods, their wanderings and trials, and finally their claim of immortal life in a promised paradise here on "earth which is not of this earth" as a reward for their steadfast faithfulness. In this sense, the *kepu 'unpu 'un* deals with the past of Agyu and his people.

On the other hand, the *sengedurug* continues the story of the chosen people and their present life in paradise. In this narrative, Agyu and his relatives move from the plane of mundane existence to a utopian realm. So long as the belief that the chosen people lead immortal lives in paradise persists, and so long as there are versatile and imaginative *tala 'ulahingan* to keep this belief alive, new episodes about their ancestors' celestial lives will be composed. As a consequence, there can be as many versions as there are traditional chanters, depending on their creativity and on the entertainment needs of the audience. The persistence of this belief makes this epic an infinite story for as long as there are chanters to *ulahing*. The **Ulahingan** is probably the Philippines', if not one of the world's, longest epics. [3]

At important feasts and occasions, people gather and listen to the chanting of their sacred story. Traditionally, the chanting of the epic follows a sequence starting with the *andal,* a sort of introduction in which a community member, acting like an emcee, gives the reasons for the gathering. Part of the task of this emcee is to moderate the chanting, at times to provide an intermission number to keep the entertainment level for the audience, or to relieve a tired *tala 'ulahingan*. The next part is the *pamahra* or prayer, which is basically an invocation to the Supreme *Diwata* for guidance during the chanting. Here, in addition to invoking the blessing of the deity to make him a worthy medium, the chanter also propitiates the *diwatas* around to insure that no disturbance takes place during the chanting. It is also here that he asks for apology from the audience for errors that he may commit during the chanting. The *undayag* is primarily an idiom or phrase used by the chanter to keep the listeners attention. Also used as a form of transistional expression when the chanter forgets or does not know what to chant next, the *undayag* may appear anytime during the chanting. The most common phrase is *edey edey Andaman,* which literally means, "oh, oh the chant goes on."

The Ulahingan Series

The **Ulahingan** first came to the attention of the late Dr. Elena Maquiso in 1961 when she was gathering materials on ethnic music for her dissertation on indigenous hymns that relate to Christian Education. Samaon Bangcas,[4] a Livunganen-Arumanen Manobo seminary student in Silliman University at that time, was the first person to mention this epic to her. Her interest grew as more information shared by two other Manobo students became available.

Although Dr. Maquiso's main interest at that time was the musical aspect of the epic, she later became fascinated with the text. Subsidized by the Divinity School, Samaon Bangcas made the first recording during the Christmas vacation in 1963. By the next school year, Dr. Maquiso took a leave of absence to carry out full time research in North Cotabato with funding facilitated

by Dr. Paul T. Lauby. Financial constraints hindered the research project for a decade until new funding enabled Dr. Maquiso and her team to conduct a follow-up field research in the second semester of school year 1974-75. Since then, funding support from Silliman University, Toyota Foundation, and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) sustained the research efforts until Dr. Maquiso passed away in 1995. Subsequently, despite various efforts to continue the research, funding issues and other circumstances have stalled the systematic study of the epic.[5]

Dr. Maquiso's pioneering efforts resulted in the publication of five volumes, which came to be known as the **Ulahingan Series**. The preparation of a series involves a six-phase process. The first phase begins with the recording of an epic material as chanted or recited.[6] The second phase is the transcription of the taped materials. In the third phase, the transcribed materials are turned over to a transliterator who goes over the text and provides English transliteration. The fourth phase involves the translation of the transliterated material into a syntactically and semantically understandable English version. The fifth phase is forming the English version into seven or eight syllable line count to adhere as closely as possible to the original Manobo text. Finally, the sixth phase is the publication of the material.

It is interesting to note that the five published series are more reflective of the way the research was conducted than the systematic presentation of the epic itself. It has been observed that this outcome, though obviously not intentional, mirrors closely the Manobo belief that "God moves in his own time", the philosophical underpinnings that permeate the epic. Perhaps anecdotal in some sense, this serendipitous turn of events was further strengthened by the "chance" circumstances surrounding the beginning of the research project when the epic was first introduced to Dr. Maquiso. This set things in motion and resulted in the preservation of the epic, then on the brink of extinction. Dr. Maquiso's pioneering efforts later paved the way for the appearance of the epic in the mainstream Philippine folk literary

tradition, as well as in Philippine literature courses of various universities.

When the first series was published in 1977, it contained only an introduction of the epic, as well as an account of the first nine prose versions of the earthly sojourn and pilgrimage of the chosen community. These materials were part of the *kepu'unpu'un* recounting the community's earthly existence, at that time considered to be the beginning of the epic. The initial presentation of the epic suggested that the Manobo tribe drifted down the waters of the Pulangi River and were scattered along the valleys of its tributaries. Four versions of the *kepu'unpu'un*, and one *sengedurug*, entitled "The Visit of Lagaba'an to Nelendangan," are included in this first series. The *sengedurug* alone took 9 years to complete.

Funded by a grant from the Toyota Foundation, Series 2 came out in 1990 and contained two *sengedurug* entitled "The Adventures of Impehimbang and Nebeyew" and "Begyasan's Visit to Insibey". The first is about the story of the toddlers Impehimbang and Nebeyew who fought the invaders. This *sengedurug* carries a moral lesson that problems faced by mankind are results of their own doing, and that invading other nations is a sin against the Almighty. The second is an episode about the old king Layunlayun who disguised himself as an infant and took up arms against his own kingdom because the women made fun of him and the men took him for granted. In the end, after much fighting, peace was restored with the lesson that old men should not be taken for granted because they keep the vault of wisdom.[7]

Series 3 was published in 1992, and like the previous series, also contained two episodes entitled "The Dream of Begyasan" and "The Golden Tree". These two *sengedurug* are the compositions of Pasid Mampayanang and Demetrio Bangcas, the same chanters who furnished the two episodes in Series 2.[8] These two *tala'ulahingan* were considered the last surviving members of the "old guards". The first episode is about the dream of Begyasan warning the people of Yendang about the coming of the invaders. The story describes the arrival of an honored ancestor

who disguised himself as a black villain in order to teach the people the ways of war and peace. The wisdom he imparted to them was that peace is better than war; nevertheless, they must be prepared to protect their land at all cost if enemies threatened to invade it. The second episode is about the story of Begyasan who became gravely ill as a result of the loss of the Golden Tree. To cure him the tree must be retrieved by Pinuklew from another kingdom. After many hardships, Pinuklew was able to retrieve the tree but only after a great battle and only with the intervention of the god Lagaba-an who arrived to tell the people to end the fight because they were only disturbing the peace of the land and that the tree was for everybody to appreciate. The lesson imparted at the end is that coveting what belongs to someone else will only lead to trouble.

Series 4 came out in 1993 although, by virtue of its narrative content, this should have been the first publication of the **Ulahingan** series. This series deals with the creation story or the *kepu'unpu'un* by Gobalia Silay and consists of 17,563 lines. The series is divided into three parts. The first part describes the story of the creation itself. The second part narrates the Supreme Deity's act of summoning all the deities to remind them of their responsibilities in taking care of humankind. The third part dwells on the stories about the building of the community and the spread of the population.

Its late appearance, however, was due to the fact that no creation materials surfaced when the research started 29 years earlier. Presumably, nobody mentioned or gave the impression that the epic should start with the genesis of things,[9] or that the chanting should follow a certain order. A more convincing reason, however, points to the nature of the Arumanens as being generally protective of their tradition and are consequently averse to sharing their sacred story with an outsider. Purportedly, the Arumanens believe that the Supreme Being, "Yegpinted (God), the Spirit, moves or acts in his own time." Hence, as explained by the Manobos themselves, the discovery of the creation materials at a later date was part of the divine design. Following this view, it is

believed that Yegpinted had finally given his permission to allow the researcher into the tribe's literary world and had provided the gateway for it. The appearance of the creation portion of the **Ulahingan** has finally placed the epic in its proper context.

Series 5 came out in 1994. Unfortunately, this was to be the last published series out of the many materials that have been recorded, transcribed, transliterated, and edited in the **Ulahingan** Research Project. Like the previous series, this material is about the *kepu'unpu'un* except that this series features four distinct versions of the creation stories by four chanters who recited their versions neither from a book nor from memory, but from their individual fluid and fertile imagination and artistic skill. As such, even if the theme is the same, each version is as distinct as each singer, reflecting the individual imagination and creative skill of each chanter. It should be noted, however, that since these versions of the epic have been handed down by oral means, it is possible that changes and additions have taken place in the course of time. Nevertheless, the same traditional forms, mythological motifs, and narrative plots used by each *tala'ulahingan* are evident in this published version. The translated version shows that each chanter had taken the liberty to expand his repertory through alterations and improvisations. As a result, certain motifs and events may be comprehensively chanted by one singer and only cursorily mentioned by another who in turn might focus on the description of other details and events.[10]

Slavery to Freedom (Series 6)

As mentioned earlier, although the project was supposed to publish at least ten series, only five series were completed, notwithstanding the fact that a lot of recorded and transliterated materials remain. In 1994 the Manobo Research Project was revived in the College of Arts and Sciences to carry out the original research project of Dr. Maquiso. Headed by Dr. Ceres Pioquinto, this group was charged to prepare for publication as Series 6 another *kepu'unpu'un* by Jose Silay. Funded by the National Council for Culture and the Arts, the publication project included

not only the text of the *kepu 'unpu 'un,* but a critical preface as well. In preparation for this task, the group, with funding from the government of Luxembourg, spent a ten-day fieldwork in December 1994 among the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobo community, which was in time for the Manobo Samayaan Festival. Results of that fieldwork were meant to constitute the papers for the critical preface of Series 6. Unfortunately, bizarre bureaucratic hurdles prevented the group from exercising full autonomy over the management of this project, which stalled its development. In the end, needless politics not only put an end to the planned Series 6, but also killed the creativity and the enthusiasm that animated the revival of this project during its brief life. Consequently, one of the products of that research, an article entitled "The Samayaan as Public Liminality: Some Ethnographic Notes" by Dr. Ceres Pioquinto, was instead submitted for publication to Silliman Journal (vol. 37:2, Second quarter 1994). This scholarly ethnographic article discusses the Samayaan Feast of the Manobos, which is an important venue for the chanting of the **Ulahingan** epic. Proceeding with a systematic argument from postmodernist, anthropology of performance, and cultural studies perspectives, the article discusses the Samayaan as public liminality.[11]

In revisiting the **Ulahingan** project, this present paper is a modest attempt to introduce the unpublished version to the public for the first time after a slumber of almost a decade.

In translating the 5,560 lines of this version for discussion, I was fortunate to work with Rev. Samaon Bangcas, the person who introduced the epic to Dr. Maquiso in 1961 and who was also the Manobo text editor of this version. This *kepu 'unpu 'un* was chanted by Jose Silay who came and volunteered to share the version with Rev. Bangcas in 1988, and recorded and transcribed by Jose Humabad in Barongis, Libungan, North Cotabato in the same year. The transliterator was Abraham Saliling and the translator was Rhoda Montes. Rev. Bangcas completed the editing of the Manobo text in May 18, 1991 and Nona Magtolis typed the original draft. According to Rev. Bangcas, this version is authentic and clearer to understand than the previous versions.[12]

What is special about this version is that it narrates the beginning of the Manobos by depicting them as originating from a place called Aruman. According to the story, the Manobos left Aruman for Cagayan, only to return to Aruman shortly after. Part of the text is a puzzling line describing Aruman as a place not found in the map.[13] Another significant aspect of this version is that although it carries the whole *kepu 'unpu 'un* version, it does not include a creation story, which is rather unusual.

This version narrates the migration of the Manobos from Aruman to Hulihuli – a place near Cagayan de Oro. It is said that in the course of their wandering along the river system, they met some foreigners although who these were is unclear in the story. According to the story, the foreigners established good relationships with the Manobos, accompanying them in all their journeys and offering to educate their children. However, shortly after he agreed to send their children to the foreigners to be educated, the chieftain Pamulew learned that the children were being beaten and whipped by "a tough elastic rod". When they protested against this cruel treatment of the children, some of the Manobos ended up being imprisoned by the foreigners. Oddly, the story records that despite this untoward incident, the Manobos continued to view the aliens as their "happy oppressors".[14]

The story continues that the Manobos, chased by their oppressors, fled, with the help of the gods, to the place of their ancestors. Upon their arrival, however, they found their old place already under the rule of the Maguindanawon Datu. Negotiating with the new ruler, the Manobos offered to supply forest products in exchange for clothing materials and food. But they soon found out that the barter system was not fair and that they were being cheated into the bargain. A spokesperson by the name of Kuyasu was tasked to talk with the datu. In the ensuing discussion, Kuyasu got mad, threw a spear at the datu and fled, leaving the spear on the datu's body. It is said that, learning of the incident, Agyu became furious because the spear Kuyasu left behind was a thing of great value to the tribe. Setting out to retrieve the spear, Agyu instructed his people to prepare to move out.

Disguising himself as a healer, Agyu offered to treat the datu on condition that nobody should be inside the room when the healing rites were taking place. After informing the Sultan's followers that healing could only be performed in the evening, Agyu also demanded food and clothing materials as payment for his services. As the story goes, Agyu, instead of curing the datu, pushed the spear even deeper into the datu's body, killing him in the process. It is described that when Agyu finally managed to remove the spear, pieces of the datu's internal organs also stuck to the sharp-shafted edge of the spear. Moving in haste, Agyu managed to make his escape, unnoticed by the datu's followers. With the spear back in his possession, he and his people moved out to begin another journey again.

At length, this version proceeds to describe the exploits of other important characters on their journey to Nelendangan (paradise), their various dreams and visions, as well as the appointment of Beyvayan as the leader of the people who will continue to inhabit the earth.[15] Stories such as these about endless wanderings, divine interventions, exploits of the people, various adversaries they met along the way, vivid descriptions of other kingdoms they encountered, the eventual promise of settling in paradise, and the planting of the bamboo as the gateway between heaven and the "place on this earth which is not found on this earth" are similarly told in the earlier versions.

The adventures of Beyvayan, who was initially barred from entering paradise because of his failure to participate in some important feasts, are also narrated in this version. According to the story, Beyvayan led his followers into many sojourns around the world. It is said that running out of provisions and encountering hunger one day, Beyvayan performed the first *ulahing* in supplication to the Supreme Deity, resulting in the miraculous appearance of rice wrapped on a leaf with viand by the side. From that day on every time his people needed food, Beyvayan performed the chant. The story concludes that Beyvayan and his followers were eventually ferried by a *sarimbar*[16] to paradise where he was given the eternal task of inspiring mortals to perform the

ulahing so that the exploits of Agyu and their ancestors will not be forgotten.

Concluding Notes

Inter and multi-disciplinary studies provide one of the most productive approaches in understanding the texts and textualities of a folk literature such as the **Ulahingan.** A cursory look at the epic reveals so many thematic and narrative strands that require the diverse methods and approaches of many fields of study. Like other native literary expressions in the country, here one finds theology, anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, language, music, literature, art, and others, each one adding a different perspective to the discussion and enhancing understanding of the lives of indigenous groups and their rich cultural heritage. Although five volumes have been published, many more materials have remained unexplored pointing to the urgent need for more research work.

The historical frame of the epic shows the Manobo as a people, particularly the process of acculturation that they underwent as they established contact with other groups both within and beyond the confines of their territory. That the tales present the Manobos as labeling their enemies as "happy oppressors" may point to one fundamental truth about them as a peace-loving people who fought only to defend themselves and protect their identity and freedom. The intrusion of the "happy oppressors" in the various epochs of the tribe's collective history is indicated by the way the presence and influence of these foreigners are interwoven in the various episodes of the epic. One will find here references to the coming of Islam, the Spaniards, the Americans, and migrants from other islands in the archipelago, but the extent of the influence of these various groups on the life of the Manobos still need to be scrutinized.

A cursory look at how far the contemporary Manobos have progressed in their aspirations for freedom throughout history reveals the sad fact that their struggle continues to this day. The unabated cultural and political pressures that hound the tribe's

existence remain the biggest threat to their very existence. Indeed, complicating the Manobos' response to these challenges are the underlying motives of the various groups and government agencies that are trying to help them. In the end, as Karl Popper puts it, "there are unintended consequences of intended actions." Needless to mention, these systemic interventions have only created havoc on the aspirations of the indigenous group.[17] Whereas in the epic their ancestors always triumph in the end with the help of the gods, hence the title "Slavery to Freedom,"[18] contemporary Manobos have little to look forward to but a bleak future. At the same time, the image of this paradise and its splendor and perfection provides a stark contrast to the impoverishment of their present life and the scarcity of their everyday existence. Thus, for the Manobos, Nelendangan will always be "a mythic past as well as future yearning".[19] In view of the present circumstances and in the context of the dynamics and power play in the area, freedom will remain for the Manobos an elusive dream.

Because the ultimate dream of the tribe is to preserve their history, tradition, and identity, the Agyu epic and its reminders of the Manobo vision of paradise will always have an enduring appeal. Appropriately, the usual reference to "finding place on this earth which is not of this earth" is a concrete manifestation of this aspiration. As the epic chanter recites, the Arumanen will never stop until they have "arrive[d] into the room of the mansion".[20]

A close reading of the texts reveals that the original language of the epic has been altered in the process of retelling, in all likelihood, owing to the nature of oral transmission. In many places in the texts, Cebuano terms can now be found, possibly due to the interactions of the tribe with other ethnic groups. It is equally possible that new words or terms may have entered in the process of translation. Yet even in translated form, the kaleidoscope of themes and motifs unique to the indigenous Manobos' concept of faith, culture, values, and worldviews have the power to transport the reader into another realm.

It is interesting to note that the concepts that deal with the environment, integrity of God's creation, human relations, and

practical moral lessons which have universal application can also be found. In one instance, the epic deals with the concept of boredom, which is explained as the result of the lack of entertainment and recreation.[21] Another aspect associated with human relations is portrayed in the male-oriented concept of entertainment, explicitly described in the line: "watching bathing naked maidens is one of the best forms of entertainment."[22]

However, in reading the printed text of a chanted tradition in translation, one has to be aware of the possible errors or biases in translation, some of them inadvertently introduced as a result of the peculiar cultural background of the translators and interpreters of the text. A case in point is illustrated in the translation of these two lines:[23]

Te uyangu ne kem' eman	This headwear of the 60's
Ne tubew ne kelima'an	This headdress of the 50's

Although at a glance nothing appears to be wrong with the translation, a closer look, however, reveals a glaring inconsistency. Since the epic deals with a timeless world, why are there specific dates? If this was correct, what century? Providentially, the Manobo text editor was around to explain the lines as referring to the style of wearing the Manobo headdress.[24] The word *kem 'eman* means six times, thus referring to the number of times a piece of cloth is wound around the head; *kelima 'an* means five times, thus to wind a headdress around the head five times. Whether this varying style is purely a question of fashion or has a more symbolic significance in tribal hierarchy, for instance, is a matter of speculation and warrants further study. Given these peculiar problems, there is a dire need for further research on this epic as well as studies of it from different perspectives.

The challenge therefore is tremendous and this is an opportune time to exhort folklore scholars and enthusiasts, especially the Mindanao-based, to do further studies. As the significance of the **Ulahingan** epic as a cultural treasure suggests, there is an equal need for a systematic study of the traditions of other indigenous

Filipino communities. Such systematic studies, however, recognize the importance of active community participation in the preservation of its own traditions. Consequently, the preservation of Filipino epics and other folk literature in general should be a priority for the entire nation and not just for the individual ethnic groups. In the age of globalization, there is an even greater, more urgent need to concern ourselves with our history, tradition, and identity. It reminds us of the richness of our heritage in the midst of our diversity.

Needless to repeat, the study of the epic is unfinished. Other materials are still expected to surface and new perspectives and approaches will become available as research tools. What is essential is to encourage research initiatives in this area and to sustain these initiatives. In this light then, it is time that a study of all the epics relating to Agyu, such as the **Olaging** of Bukidnon, the **Tulalangan** of Cotabato, the epic of **Agyu** of the Ilianon, and the epics of other cultural minorities in the area, are gathered for in-depth study and comparison.

Finally, the **Ulahingan** is the epic story of the Livunganen-Arumanen Manobos, their way of life, and that of their ancestors. Conveyed by simple folks, the epic expresses the Manobos' own unique social, political, religious, and ritual contexts and provide a picture of their aspirations, values, and goals. Yet, despite being an epic of a distinct group of a cultural community, the **Ulahingan** offers texts that shed light not only on the identity of the ancestors of this group, but on their relations with other Manobo tribes as well as with other cultural communities in Mindanao. The story of Agyu and his people contains the typical elements of folk literature but embedded in it is the story of a people driven away from their ancestral lands on threat of physical and emotional pains caused by injustice, human greed, and cultural dislocation. Long been part of the dynamics of current Philippine society, these factors continue to influence the development of Mindanao to this day. While the preservation of the epic will remind the Manobos of the importance of the **Ulahingan** in the development of their cultural identity and self-confidence, their indigenous belief in the

sacredness of all things in the cosmos can teach us a view of life that is holistic, where meaningful human relations stem from respect for one another and for all of God's creation.

Notes

[1] Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 2. (Dumaguete City: Negros Chronicle Press, 1990). P. 6.

[2] Another epic is the **Tulalangan**, about the adventures of Tulalang and his brothers who were cousins of Agyu. See Jesus Amparo, The Manobo Epic , Sunday Times Magazine , January 3, 1965 p. 43. It is also closely related to the epic of **Agyu** of the Ilianon. See. CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art vol. IX Philippine Literature, p.380.

[3] Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 1. (Dumaguete City: Silliman University Press, 1977). P. 1.

[4] Pastor Bangcasis now retired from Silliman University, having served as Museum Curator and Instructor of Sociology and Anthropology. He served as consultant and translator for this paper as well. He willingly reviewed the Kepu'unpu'un of Jose Silay.

[5] Interview with Philips Munar, who once served as proofreader, and Bernie Aranas, who once served as encoder for the Ulahingan Project, Katipunan Hall, Silliman University, Oct 7, 8, 10, 2003. The author also interviewed Dr. Christopher Ablan, who was Research Director of Silliman University when the Ulahingan Project was revived by Dr. C. Pioquinto and her team on September 15, 2003. I thank him for providing me the draft for printing of the Kepu'unpu'un. See also 'The Ulahingan Episodes: The Creativity of the Manobos," **Silliman Journal**, 4th quarter, 1969, pp. 360-374.

[6] Referred to as **Mantukaw** versions.

[7] Maquiso, Elena G.. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 2. (Dumaguete City: Negros Chronicle Press, 1990).

[8] According to the Dr. Maquiso's notes, the decision to publish the series was not a deliberate choice but because these materials happened to be ready for publication earlier than the others. See. Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 3. (Dumaguete City: Silliman University Press, 1992). P. 5.

[9] The author noted that when the research team inquired why there were no creation materials recorded earlier, their sources told them that these were not provided because these were not asked for in the first place. Apparently

in the Arumanen culture, they do not volunteer information. From the unpublished notes of Dr. Maquiso found at the Special Filipiniana Collection of the Silliman University Main Library. The librarian, Mrs. Selah Golosino, is the niece of Dr. Maquiso and is the one responsible for keeping all her materials. See also Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 4. (Dumaguete City: Caballes Press, 1993). P. 1.

[10] Maquiso, Elena G. Ulahingan An Epic of the Southern Philippines Series 4. (Dumaguete City: Caballes Press, 1994). P. vii.

[11] Pioquinto, Ceres E. "The Samayaan As Public Liminality: Some Etnographic Notes." **Silliman Journal,** 2nd quarter, 1994, 27 - 37.

[12] Interview with Rev. Samaon Bangcas, October 9, 2003 at the SU-PAEF Office.

[13] Bangcas explained that the line "it is on this earth but not of this earth" simply means it is a place that is not in the map but is existing.

[14] Line 810

[15] An attempt to make the **kepu'unpu'un** versions of the Ulahingan become more popular and readable was made by Melchizedek Maquiso in 1968. See Maquiso, Melchizedek, "An Edition and A Critical Study of the Manobo Epic, Ulahingan Part I For Use in Philippine Literature Courses In College." (MA Thesis: Silliman University, 1968). This material includes a popular version of the epic and the writer feels that incorporating the edition and the version of Jose Silay will indeed enrich the epic for popular reading.

[16] Boat

[17] Based on the conversation with the Manobo timu'ay (Frank Bidangan). I know Frank quite well because we are both in the executive council of the NCCA.

[18] It was the chanter himself who provided the title.

[19] Melendrez-Cruz, "Introduction," *Agyu*, **Anthology of ASEAN Literatures: Epics of the Philippines.** Jovita Ventura Castro, *et al.*, (eds.) 1983: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, p. 191.

[20] Line 5560, This incidentally, is the last line of the Silay version.

[21] Line 4170

[22] Line 4320

[23] Lines 3494 and 3495

[24] In Manobo, this is a triangular piece of cloth known as "tubao".

WRITING IN A TIME OF TERROR and the (mis)management of grief[1]

Charlson Ong

An artist without an art form is a dangerous person, reads a line from Toni Morrison's *Sula*. And indeed many of the characters in Morrison's works, especially her women, seek to transform their own lives into art. Amid the squalor of slavery and post slavery, denied the possibilities for decent livelihood, much less self expression, these characters often defy convention and follow the urgings of an inner spirit to produce a life that if not, arguably, well lived or well remembered is at least *remembered.* At the end of her short life, Sula—ill, alone and despised by her neighbors—says to her best friend Nel, "but my lonely is *mine*". Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Now ain't that something? A secondhand lonely?

Rebellion in art, says Albert Camus, is the refusal to be a victim. In and through art, the victim's tale sees the light of history or becomes its own history. In this light, there are many histories rather than a single narrative so that the notion of an End to History becomes absurd for the tale that Francis Fukuyama claims to have ended is but the one he chose to tell.

I do not, agree, however, with the notion that all truths are equal. Certainly, the planet earth I think I live on is roughly round, the heaven above me is about 100 kms of polluted air. And the hell below, mostly molten rock. The artist or writer as historian must tell his or her tale in the light of reason as much as revelation, clinical data as well as tradition. It can only be a story of his or her time, suspect to both past and future.

When the artist is ready, society may provide the means for the telling of the tale: in song or in dance, in water or in stone, in print or celluloid, by body or by spirit, mummified or digitized. But what of those whose circumstances preclude any non-violent mode of expression?

Is destruction, including self-destruction, the obverse of creation? Is there a suicide bomber lurking within every artist? To the Chinese the God of poetry, Guan Yu, is also the God of war. To

Hindus, Brahma the creator and Siva the destroyer are two Gods of the cosmic triumvirate.

I think it was Henrik Ibsen who said that the fantasy of any writer, at least for a certain season in one's career, should be to torpedo the Ark - that is, Noah's Ark- rather than to pick the survivors a la Noah.

No doubt the events of 9/11 and their consequences have cast a shadow over our work as writers. Already, fictionists like Salman Rushdie and Haruki Murakami have responded with important works. As a nation, we have been victim to political and sectarian violence even before the catastrophe in New York. People in Mindanao have had to live with war or the threat of it for many decades. But now, our involvement in America's 'war against terror' threatens to engage us in a broader conflict.

Historically, conflict and catastrophe often bring out the best in artists. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* deal with the drama wrought by profound changes in Russia at the end of the 19th century. WW II spawned such novels as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, and Stevan Javellana's *Without Seeing the Dawn*. The Spanish Civil War inspired Picasso's *Guernica*. Lu Xun wrote *Ah Q* during the 1920s as China suffered imperial collapse, strife, and foreign aggression. So too the excesses of the 'Cultural Revolution' of 1960s became the subject of the new wave of Chinese cinema as well as the work of Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian. Apartheid in South Africa was the canvas across which Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetze painted their intimate literary portraits.

Political strife and terrorism often make for good fiction. One of my favorite stories, and one which I often teach in class, is the "Management of Grief" by Bharati Mukherjee. It is the story of Shaila, an Indian-Canadian woman who along with her neighbors in Toronto have just lost their loved ones as a plane enroute from India explodes in mid-air. They are the victims of the very sectarian violence they had left India in order to avoid. Shaila too has lost her husband and son but being among the more Westernized of the community, Shaila is recruited by the social worker Judith Templeton to help the other victims deal with the catastrophe.

Shaila's most urgent task is to convince an old Sikh couple to sign documents which will entitle them to the benefits left behind by their son who was aboard the flight. The couple refuse to do so as it remains their duty to hope for their son's survival. Shaila realizes the futility of trying to explain one side of the cultural divide to the other. Grief, after all, like anger and hatred cannot be managed in the manner a modern bureaucracy wishes they could. In the end, Shaila manages her own grief by returning to Toronto after a brief sojourn in Calcutta, in order to 'carry on' what she and her dead husband had begun. Though seemingly affirmative, the story's ending suggests darker possibilities.

The management of public emotion, as much as war technology, is a task confronting political leaders whenever nations face adversity. Has the war on terror been mainly to flush out Bin Laden, or seek out weapons of mass destruction, or to assuage the anger and salve the pain of the American public? Are emotions being allowed to boil over across Central and West Asia?

In Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, the Hindu girl Lata, pained by the suffering caused by the violence between India's Hindus and Muslims shortly before that nation's partition in 1949, gives up her own desire for her Muslim suitor, Kabir, and marries instead her co-religionist Haresh, who is himself forced to give up his suit for a Sikh girl. Two victims of tradition decide to forsake passion, which has wreaked so much havoc, in order to do their bit in restoring decency in their world.

There is little wonder that works which deal with political and cultural strife are often written by authors of multi-cultural backgrounds. More than others they appreciate the view from opposing camps; more than others, they court the displeasure of those who brook no re-valuation of their own beliefs, as in the case of Rushdie.

His work in the French resistance during the Second World War led Jean Paul Sarte towards the existentialism for which he is best known. Reflecting on Nazism, Sarte declared that,

> *Evil is not an appearance...knowing its cause does not dispel it...it is not opposed to Good as a confused idea is to a clear one...it is not the*

> *effect of passions which might be cured, of a fear which might be overcome, of a passing aberration which might be excused, of an ignorance which might be enlightened...it can no way be diverted, brought back, reduced, and incorporated into idealistic humanism. Perhaps a day will come when a happy age...will see in this suffering and shame one of the paths which led to peace. But we are not on the side of history already made. Therefore, in spite of ourselves, we come to the conclusion, which will sound shocking to lofty souls- Evil cannot be redeemed.*

A challenging thought, certainly, in these times of terror and counter terror and evil mongering. Still, the problem of evil is one that writers always deal with. Every short story, every novel or drama is about Good and Evil though not necessarily in Biblical or religious terms. But what differentiates our work from that of the sociologist is the moral choice that our characters must make at the climax of the tale.

It is the terror of that decision that confronts every story. The terror of the void that annuls all meaning. In the face of that terror the writer only has language and memory.

A writer is an editor of memory. Writing well is the best revenge, someone once said. In writing you can stand up once again to the school bully or steal kisses from the school beauty this time with better results. In writing we make the loves we should have made, wage wars we should have waged. It doesn't always make up for the real thing, but it does have its rewards.

Remembering is the only way to learn, the only way to grow. The fear of death is not the fear of losing the future but of losing the past. It is the fear of forgetfulness, of Alzheimer's. But remembering is also the great problem of politics. When a big power wants to dominate a smaller one, says Milan Kundera, it uses the method of 'organized forgetting'.

To be deprived of memory is to be orphaned. And being an orphan, says a character in Arturo Perez-Reverte's erudite thriller, the *Seville Communion*, "means being a slave. Memories give you some security; you know where you are going. Or where you're not going. Without them you are at the mercy of the first person who comes along and calls you daughter. To defend one's memories is to defend one's freedom. Only angels have the luxury of being spectators."

Every song, every story is a hedge against death, against forgetfulness. We remember for ourselves, we remember for others.

There are no formulas for writing or writing well. Anyone who says otherwise is just trying to earn a living. But I have always gone by what I call the four Ms of writing- Myth and Memory, Magic and Metaphor. If you are true to your memories, the myths will reveal themselves. If you serve well your metaphors, the magic will descend.

Discover your terrain as a writer. Philippine literature is a banquet being laid out continually. What do you intend to bring to the table? There is a line in Sam Mendez' film "Road to Perdition," wherein Paul Newman's character says to Tom Hank's character: "This is the road we have chosen. There is only one thing certain—none of us will see heaven."

Well, writing, like mobstering, may or may not be the road to perdition, but it often is the path to penury so you best be prepared for the worst.

We live in dangerous times. I do not say that art salves all pain or that the politics of hate is anyone's franchise. One person's martyr is another's mad bomber. But the stakes are too high for us to leave the management of emotions and perceptions around the world to politicians, clerics, terror mongers, or to CNN. We must do our part. As writers we must stand by the integrity of the word, we write as well for those who cannot speak, for where words may not be heard, says the anonymous poet of Palestine, bombs rejoice.

When I was as young as most of you I said that I wrote because it was the only way I knew how to live. And that remains true today. I write the way I do because it is the only way I know how. Often, I find no other cause for writing except to echo James Baldwin that although the tale of how we suffer and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be told. There is no other tale to tell, it is our only light in all this darkness.

But I say the writer today must also be an interpreter of grief. In the end, like Shaila, we too might find it impossible to be a bridge between cultures, to translate meanings, to hold the center. Life might just be too powerful for art. But the attempt should be worth the effort. I have no more desire to torpedo the ark, to fancy myself a Brahma or Shiva, but only a Vishnu, a preserver.

In days of anthrax and HIV we might be reminded, by the master storyteller himself, Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, how the human spirit has always prevailed over the ravages of time, bombs, and viruses.

Finally, as the main preoccupation of any writers' workshop is really to gossip about writers, let me share this anecdote about two of our great fictionists. When Manuel Arguilla was executed by the Japanese during WWII, Francisco Arcellana was so pained he wrote that Arguilla had no business dying. "I will never forgive him his patriotism," wrote Arcellana. "He was no patriot, he was a poet, we have many patriots," Arcellana lamented, and "too few poets." I pray that I will never have to recall those lines in memory of anyone of you here in this gathering.

But that's not the story. This, according to Franz was what Manuel Arguilla wrote in his dedication to Arcellana when he had his copy of Arguilla's book signed: "Dear Franz, more life in your art, less art in your life."

I suggest the same for all of us.

[1] Keynote Speech delivered at the opening of the Annual Iligan National Writers Workshop of the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, April 26-30, 2004, Iligan City.

NOTES ON A VANISHING HERO

Luis H. Francia

On April 27, 1521, LapuLapu and his men slew Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese navigator in the service of the Spanish crown, and a few other members of his fighting party. Today, on Mactan Island, not far from the beach where the battle took place, stands a statue of LapuLapu, paired with the earlier monument to his vanquished foe, that is very much in the heroic mode. LapuLapu here has a perfectly developed physique (though marred by a tacky necklace), with six-pack abs, muscular lats, and terrific quadriceps—this LapuLapu is clearly a gym rat, oversized *kampilan* in hand to match his oversized body and fierce determination oozing from his every pore.

By slaying Magellan, Lapulapu unknowingly inscribed himself in history as the first pre-Hispanic inhabitant of the archipelago to resist the incursions by a colonizing Spain. That martial derring-do made him into a mythological someone who in all likelihood bears little resemblance to the flesh-and-blood man. Who knows what LapuLapu really looked like? I have yet to read an account that describes him in any detail. Not that it would have mattered. For the popular imagination is an irresistible, transformative force, more often oblivious of facts than heedful, so that the representation of LapuLapu in larger-than-life terms—as, for instance, embodied in the Mactan statue—is inevitable. The pop LapuLapu is as we want, need, him to be: a quasi-Hollywood creation—noble, beautiful, uncomplicated, an accomplished warrior of integrity and extraordinary bravery. A romanticized makeover, this LapuLapu is one way of mediating how we would like to view ourselves as Filipinos. If he did not exist, we would have had to invent him.

As with that of every hero, LapuLapu's image acts as a kind of tabula rasa. Here is someone whose legend, if not actual life, has made me aware, almost 500 years after, of how that

event on April 27 resonates as a metaphor for the very same things we as true postcolonial Filipinos contend with, most notably, how to deal with the incessant Westernization, and its implied (if conventionally so) erosion of the indigenous, already and greatly affected and even irrevocably altered, by several centuries of exposure to the winds of change. When we were kids my late father used to tease us that we were descended from this Mactan warrior. Did LapuLapu's name just spring suddenly into my father's mind? Did he mean to offer this heroic figure as a model? I would like to think so, but can't really say. It is reasonable to believe that the historical LapuLapu may not have recognized his own legend. Then again he might have. After all, he must have been a supremely confident man to square off against Magellan, who had, by then, gotten pretty much his way with Rajah Humabon (or Humabad, in some accounts), chief of the larger, wealthier Cebu (a few miles across the straits), who had bowed to the Spanish crown.

Some years ago I started writing a long poem, with the Mactan battle as the central event around which I could explore its principal characters: LapuLapu, Magellan, Enrique (the navigator's Malay slave), Antonio Pigafetta (the expedition's Italian amanuensis), and Humabon. I have since proceeded in fits and starts; the work is far from finished, and I continue at it. Subsequently, I also thought to write a play, so last winter I began sketching scenes for a drama with the same characters, but this time with Enrique as the dramatic focus. If LapuLapu stands for the Filipino as a proto-nationalist, then Enrique is he who has come, by force of circumstance, to an accommodation, albeit uneasy, with both the West and East. He is our version of La Malinche, the noble-born Aztec woman who served as Cortez's interpreter and bridge between two formidable empires, the Spanish and the Aztec. She also, for a short while, shared his bed, and bore him a son, a mestizo named after his father and considered to be the first Mexican.

Viewed this way Enrique emerges as a more mysterious, certainly more complex, character than LapuLapu, who did not

need to deal with any kind of cultural fusion—at least, not one at the tip of a sword—only with defending native turf and his indigenous way of life. In contrast, Rajah Humabon, by converting to Christianity and being christened Carlos (after the then Spanish king), lays down the seeds for Spanish conquest of the archipelago and the eradication of much of pre-Hispanic culture, though he surely did not foresee the latter. But Humabon's acquiescence, though perhaps not Queen Juana's, is a prudent gesture of realpolitik, meant to placate the savage Spanish breast. In contrast, we find no moral ambiguity in the case of LapuLapu, no clay feet—just concrete and steel. Isn't that how we like our heroes? It's certainly how we've treated them, tending to avoid any discussion of their warts, their foibles, their humanity—something Nick Joaquin recognized in his study of legendary Filipinos, *A Question of Heroes*.

This interplay of the imaginary with the actual has always fascinated me. To mark clearly the borders of either one however is not my intent; I find that counterproductive. The blurring, the merging, at the same time the elucidation of that state between dreaming and waking—that is what I find most exciting. In 2003, courtesy of an Asian Cultural Council grant, I spent the summer at the University of San Carlos's Cebuano Studies Center, going over its materials, aided by its director Erlinda Alburo, and by the writer/scholar Resil Mojares. What I found was a wealth of creative and factual works dealing with that period. But very little historical records on either LapuLapu or Enrique, due mainly to the paucity of accounts from the islanders' side.

Certain facts about that particular encounter between East and West are not in dispute, principally because of Pigafetta's journals. However, I temper that assessment with the knowledge that this Italian narrator had his own point of view, not to mention cultural biases, that came into play. So while it is fairly safe to conclude that he did witness what he says he witnessed, not as much certainty can be ascribed to his interpretation of events. On one hand, he is a keen observer, with a practiced eye, whether

describing the Cebuanos' sexual mores or Humabon as "a short man and fat, [who] had his face painted with fire in divers patterns." He has a fine ear, too. Many of the words he transcribed we recognize and still use today, e.g., *ilon, baba, matta, acin, itlog, balai*. On the other hand, as a European, an imperialist, and a Catholic, his views of peoples of color have a distinctly Orientalist outlook, long before Orientalism was even acknowledged to exist—a worldview consistent with travel narratives from the West concerning the mysterious East (a point of view that, by the way, is far from passé). Content as an observer, he doesn't question the values undergirding Magellan's mission, the manner in which it is being carried out, and so his account betrays little irony and certainly no skepticism.

Otherwise, so many aspects remain unknown and will likely always remain so. Was LapuLapu, for instance, descended from the legendary 10 datus said to have emigrated on their barangays from Borneo to the islands circa the 11th century? Was he a follower of Islam? Had he sailed from Mindanao with his men and lay claim to the island of Mactan? Or did he and Humabon conspire secretly against Magellan—a kind of good cop, bad cop routine—so as to neutralize his superiority in firepower? How many men did he actually have arrayed against Magellan and his small band of about 60 volunteers? (Magellan, aware that many in his expedition saw the impending confrontation as unnecessary meddling in the natives' internal affairs, wanted only volunteers for his war party.) Pigafetta states unequivocally that there were 1050 warriors arrayed against them. This is doubtful. He may have had the inclination but certainly not the time to count enemy ranks. He was intensely loyal to the Captain-General, having grown to respect and admire him, with excellent reasons for doing so. But the Captain-General had boasted to Humabon that each of his men could handle a hundred natives. It would be a letdown for posterity had LapuLapu's force been, even if numerically superior, less than overwhelming. So it is perfectly understandable for Pigafetta to, as Blair and Bush did

with Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction, sex up the facts.

With regards to Enrique, did he in fact come from, if not Cebu, one of the surrounding islands—Negros? Bohol? Mactan? We know that Magellan had purchased him from the slave markets of Malacca, but he could very well have been captured elsewhere in Southeast Asia. And if he did come from the Visayas, we could claim then that he, rather than anyone on Magellan's expedition, was the first known individual to circumnavigate the planet, as many have suggested. What happens to him in the aftermath of Magellan's death and the subsequent slaughter of several officers and men at a banquet given by Humabon—a feast of vengeance probably proposed by Enrique? And there's the priest who goes along to the banquet, but whose life is spared, as apparently he had helped cure one of the rajah's subjects early on. How would things have turned out had he too been put to the sword, and the icon of the Holy Infant smashed by the rajah's chief consort? As for Pigafetta, he would normally have gone along to the banquet as the ever-curious chronicler but, wounded in the fray against LapuLapu, stayed on board.

By the time of the encounter, Magellan proved the acuity of the Greek belief, that he whom the gods would destroy they afflict with hubris. Full of himself, the brilliant navigator, battle-hardened soldier, uncompromising leader, turns arrogant, and greedy. Already envisioning himself as the Spanish viceroy in these islands, he thinks the insolent Lapulapu and his followers are no match for even a small crew made up of his men and himself. He turns down Humabon's offer of his own warriors but invites him to come along and watch as he dispatches his friend's foe. He turns a deaf ear to the advice of his own men, forgetting the primacy of his mission—to discover a new route to the Spice Islands and afterwards sail back to Sevilla. And this wily strategist and survivor of so many harrowing ordeals gets suckered in by LapuLapu, who requests that he wait until dawn before commencing battle. Why? Because he is *awaiting reinforcements*. Magellan, as any right-thinking

military commander would, suspects a trap and resists the temptation of immediately attacking, before those reinforcements arrive. He waits until dawn; by then, the tide has gone out, forcing the ships to drop anchor farther from shore and thus putting the beach out of range of the ships' guns, and forcing Magellan and his men to wade a considerable distance from the rowboats. LapuLapu may have spoken the truth after all—the last thing Magellan would have expected from an enemy on the battlefield. And on that beach the valiant but foolhardy navigator and soldier breathes his last, a long, long way from home, prompting Pigafetta to pen one of the most lyrical lines in his chronicles: "...They slew our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide."

Magellan's and LapuLapu's bones lie in that vicinity, if not underneath Mactan soil. Or they may have been washed out to sea. As though echoing similar Homeric scenes, Humabon offers to ransom the navigator's body but LapuLapu refuses. It isn't, I don't think, so that he can mutilate Magellan's corpse (as Achilles does when he drags the vanquished Hector's body with his chariot) but rather because he respects a worthy foe, and deems the lifeless Magellan a worthy talisman to hold onto. Pigafetta: "They intended to keep him as a perpetual memorial."

That battle, as I have said, thrust LapuLapu into our collective memory. Nothing else of his life seems to have been recorded—the case of the vanishing hero. But history's deficit is the creative writer's asset. In the case of LapuLapu this tabula rasa is something I intend to utilize fully. Nevertheless I must resist, even if not completely successfully, the impulse to project onto him, or the *thought* of him, the motivations and ideas I so fervently wish for him to have. To do so would be a betrayal of him, and ultimately of my art. I need to flesh out, infuse him with blood: to paraphrase Marianne Moore, in the imaginary garden of literature, LapuLapu has to stand on his own, as a real person, warts and all.