Oral Traditions in Insular Southeast Asia

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Lokaswara Nusantara

Edited by

Aone van Engelenhoven

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-6051-1
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6051-2

Figure 1: map of Southeast Asia (© Google Maps™ Mapping Service)

Legenda: the numbers locate the topics discussed in the correlating chapters.

1: Tagalog epic
2: *Parikan*
3: Malay *Pantun*
4: North Moluccan *Pantun*
5: Roti (a) and Fataluku (b) parallelism
6: Leti storytelling
7: Kalamang storytelling
8: Kotalama storytelling
9: Banda folk tales
10: *Didong*
11: *Penglipur lara*

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INTRODUCTION[1]

The title of this book, *lokaswara nusantara* covers a long history of term-making. In modern Indonesian *Nusantara* refers to the whole of the Indonesian territory (Hasan Alwi et al. 2008, 970), whereas in modern (Malaysian) Malay it specifically refers to the Malay Archipelago (Noresah Baharom et al. 1994, 935). The term *nusantara* originates from Old Javanese *nusāntara*, a compound of the Old Javanese morpheme *nusa* "island" and the Sanskrit morpheme *antara* "interspace" (Gonda 1952, 303). The term originally was used in the Majapahit empire as a toponym to refer to the tributary regions beyond the island of Java, hence its interpretation as "other island(s)", that is: the islands not being Java (Zoetmulder and Robson 1982, 193). Evers observes that the term has gained in popularity among the Malaysian and Indonesian younger generations for whom it appears to be apolitical and encompasses the nations of entire insular Southeast Asia (2016, 11). This latter interpretation is intended here; this book contains contributions that cover the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor-Leste. This volume offers a glimpse into the state-of-the-art on oral tradition research in insular Southeast Asia.

At the Third International Congress of Asian Folklore in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, the apperception of the poly-interpretability of the term *folklore* (see for example Ben-Amos 1998), inspired a discussion on its (in)applicability in an Indonesian context, where the line between folk culture and court culture is often very thin (see for example Santosa 2002). *Oral tradition* seems to be a less confusing term and can be construed from diverse academic contexts like history (e.g., Vansina 1985), literary studies (e.g., Saussy 2016) or cognitive science (e.g., Antovic and Cánovas 2016). In Indonesian studies, however, unanticipatedly from a Western point of view, topics like environment and traditional craftmanship also qualify as oral tradition (Banda and Jelantik 2022, 3). To avoid possible misunderstanding, the word *lokaswara,* coined from the

[1] I wish to express my thanks to Henriette van Engelenhoven and Joosje Wessels for their much appreciated help in the editing of this book.

Sanskrit morphemes *loka* "mankind" or "human race" [2] and *swara* "voice" or "sound" (Gonda 1952, 179), was proposed to cover the study of oral traditions from the perspective of Indonesian academia. [3]

The present volume offers state-of-the-art research on oral traditions in insular Southeast Asia. The book is divided into three sections. The first section covers oral poetry and contains four contributions. Chapter One, by Isa Lacuna provides an ecocritical discussion on meteorological phenomena as they occur in *Mahal na Passion* "The Holy Passion" and *Casaysasayan* "The History", two renditions of the *Pasyon,* a popular Philippine epic that narrates the punishment, suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Both versions are in Tagalog and were published in 1703 and 1814. The paper analyses and compares the perception of *panahon*, meaning "season" or "weather", in either version. The *panahon* tropes in the *Mahal na Passion* constitute two cycles. In the larger cycle God and His son are omnipotent and control the weather. The other, smaller cycle narrates Mary's submission to powers that are beyond her. This version of the *Pasyon* eventually fell into disuse because of clerical politics and its archaic language, which was no longer understood. Its successor is still the most popular version of the Passion epic today. Unlike its predecessor, which focuses purely on the Passion narrative, the *Casaysasayan* links it to the beginning of Biblical time in the book of Genesis, the Judgement and the Second Coming of Jesus. Catastrophic weather is explained as a Divine retribution in the tales from the Old Testament, whereas the tales about Jesus rather narrate about him calming the storms. This version adapts the role of Mary as a mother who wants to renegotiate the death and suffering of her son Jesus. A comparison of both *Pasyon* versions reveals that its weather tropes follow the imagination of the folk as can also be observed in different types of rhetoric. As such, the *Pasyon* epic displays a clash between introduced religious and indigenous folk perceptions.

Chapter Two by Tom Hoogervorst and Rully Aprilia Zandra is a partly literary and ethnomusicological discussion on the sung *parikan* and *kidungan* poetry in East Java, Indonesia. *Parikan* are small poems of four lines that contain a cross-rhyme scheme, which is optionally applied to the caesuras too. This type of poetry is closely connected to the *ludruk* folk

[2] Jones (2008, 184) rather interprets it as "world", hence stressing the sense of "location" in the Indonesian neologisms in which *loka* occurs.
[3] For a concise summary of the folklore – oral traditions conundrum in Indonesian academia, refer to Chapter Eleven.

theatre where it is abundantly performed, but may predate it. Initially having funny and erotic topics, *parikan* were also used to voice perceptions against or in support of political issues on both grass-root and government levels. Thanks to the media and cassettes this form of poetry eventually gained popularity beyond the East Javanese community. After the 1980-ies monorhyme was introduced to *kidungan* poems, which supported the comical qualities of the *ludruk* theatre. Modern *kidungan* divert from the *parikan* paradigm in that they tend to no longer adhere to a fixed syllable structure nor to the semantic split of the lines into an introduction and a content. Nevertheless, they largely adhere to figures of speech known from Javanese literature and oral traditions. Most texts are performed in the *ngoko* register of Javanese, which confirms them as expressions of the common people. To impersonate people from other ethnic groups, the poems may display translingual meshing in its otherwise East Javanese texts with insertions either from other Javanese dialects, Madurese, Chinese or even English. Indonesian poems with East Javanese insertions also occur. Notwithstanding its local character, *parikan* is becoming more and more cosmopolitan. Having itself firmly established in folk theatre, this type of oral poetry evolved into a strong expressive instrument of the common people.

Chapter Three by Aone van Engelenhoven provides an analysis of *pantun*, a short poem of four lines in Malay or Indonesian. Notwithstanding the long tradition of research, there are appears to be little overlap in opinion among researchers about this form of oral poetry. The first two lines are usually labelled "foreshadower", whereas the last two lines are referred to as "intention". The relation between both segments, however, remains a point of disagreement. After a concise introduction into mental space theory and its application to cognitive poetics, the paper combines the separate literary and linguistic perceptions into a unified semiotic analysis of a Malay and an Indonesian *pantun.* "Mango Shoots" is a Malay poem of which three versions are compared. All rhyming words belong to different categories, which therefore preclude semantic parallelism. Rather, they function as "sonic hooks" that impose a resemblance between the foreshadower and intention stanzas. The intention stanza projects two mental spaces that each parabolically link to the scene depicted in the last line in the foreshadower. Consequently, the poem displays a so-called "nested network" of two simultaneously and mutually opposing messages: forgetting people and the impossibility of doing so. "Many Grasshoppers" is an Indonesian poem by a Minangkabau author and was published on a *pantun* community website. Unlike the Malay counterpart, Indonesian *pantun* are performed in a multilingual setting, which may evoke

miscellaneous interpretations that depend on the addressee's first language. Both the foreshadower and the intention contain a contrast: "melon" versus "olive" and "literature" versus *pantun*, which represents oral folklore. The Indonesian poem is a combination of a blended network and a discursive mental space, which allows for a temporal sequence of the depicted scenes.

Chapter Four by Leontine Visser provides a literary discussion on *pantun* in Moluccan Malay and Ternatan as they occur in North Maluku in East Indonesia, specifically in Sahu on Halmahera Island. The paper compares poems collected in the 19th and 20th Century. Structurally, they are the same as the Malay quatrains. The texts discussed in the paper sometimes combine Moluccan Malay and Ternatan sentences. Alternatively, North Moluccan Malay or Indonesian words are used if the Ternatan original is not known. The poems are either recited or sung, while in the latter performance men and women alternate with each other, creating a chain of *pantun*. Love, longing and separation are the most common topics. The first two lines function to localise an action or an object in the regional geography and as such cause the North Moluccan variant to deviate from common *pantun* themes known from elsewhere in Indonesia. A comparison of poems from both centuries shows that they are very consistent, which feature distinguishes the North Malukan *pantun* from the ones outside the region. Texts by Christian performers in Sahu appear to be semantically more explicit and varied than those by Muslim performers and display word games and sound-meaning associations. The paper discusses poems about political-historical issues, which are understudied in North Malukan *pantun* studies, but are quite significant. Some *pantun* relate to the politics by the Sultan of Ternate during colonial times. Beside about the Sultanate's administration there are also texts that are about the wars between the Sultanate and the Dutch East Indies Company. The final section discusses Resident De Clercq's rectifications to Campen's translations of Ternate *pantun*. The paper has two addenda, which contain the full database of Ternatan and Moluccan Malay *pantun* underlying this paper.

Chapter Five by Bettina Mourik functions as transfer from oral poetry to oral storytelling, the focus of the second section. It proposes a linguistic account on the phenomenon of lexical parallelism, the P1-P2 Model, as it is attested in the oral poetry and storytelling of Rotinese, an Austronesian language at the western–Indonesian–end of the island of Timor, and in Fataluku, a Papuan language at the eastern tip of the island, which belongs to Timor-Leste. Where Fataluku allows one pair per line, in Rotinese verse up to five pairs are possible. Word pairs are fixed; a chiasm occurs in the latter segment if the parallels are the same in both segments. It is also

attested if there is a change of topic, or if the narrated event comes at its end. Unlike in Rotinese where poetry fairly consistently applies it, in Fataluku poetry 15% appears to deviate from the binary structure of parallelism. The paper discusses four devices that are used in performances. Names are mnemonic to performers and provide context to the audience. Artefacts can be natural physical objects or manufactured ones that are representations of a story. The actual performance can be either chanted or sung in either language. The rhythmic patterning of the text is a mnemonic device on its own. Lexical pairs are not constructed at random, but rather composed from categories: groups of words illustrating a two-level semantic opposition. A discussion on seven categories in the masculine-feminine opposition shows that the culturally most dominant word in Fataluku occupies the first position in the parallel, whereas in Rotinese it is in the second position.

Chapter Six by Aone van Engelenhoven introduces a semiological, or semiotic-linguistic, approach to oral narratives by means of a short tale in the Leti language, which explains the parallel name of Leti Island in Southwest Maluku, Indonesia. There are three narrative units. The episode is the largest unit, which is composed of at least one act. An act is composed out of at least one scene, which is the smallest narrative unit. Sememes are lexical meanings that are combinations of smaller semantic units, so-called denotational or connotational semes. Their selection determines the sense of the sememe and evokes a scenario, an imaginable set of actions, states etc. The text contains fourteen utterances, of which the constructional semantics are meticulously analysed. They are grouped into three episodes: a prologue, an amplification and an epilogue. Episode 1 contains two acts of one scene each that locate the narrative in narrative time. Episode 2 has eleven acts in total, in which the acts three through five, seven and ten narrate the travel to Leti Island. The narrational flow from act five to seven is interrupted by act six which contains additional information. Act eight contains a secondary strand on the fellow-travellers, while act nine provides side information on trade habits. Act ten narrates the arrival on Leti Island with act eleven explaining its trade function. Episode 3 contains one act of three scenes where the meaning of the island's parallel name is disclosed. Act fourteen is an affix that explains the term *kalura*, which the listening researcher did not understand. The paper concludes that a semantics-oriented linguistics must be the underpinning for any semiological analysis and semiotic follow-up elaboration of oral storytelling.

Chapter Seven by Eline Visser is the final paper in this section. It provides a linguistic analysis of the structure of oral narratives in Kalamang, an isolate language spoken on Karas Island, West Papua, Indonesia. Because of it being highly endangered and in the process of being replaced by Papua Malay, Kalamang has few oral genres left. The narrative structure of the fairy tale discussed in the paper, The Money-Defecating Cow, is explained and compared with the structure of the other narratives in the database. The opening is in Papua Malay, as in all narratives, except the stimulus-based ones. There are two ways to introduce a narrative's protagonist: by means of a generic category or by means of a generic category and the demonstrative *opa*. Alternatively, the protagonist is not introduced and referred to by a pronoun. Kalamang storytelling uses tail-head linkage, repetition and formulae to structure the narrative. Repetition is extensively applied, except in the stimulus-based narratives. Formulae can be songs or fixed phrases and often are in another language than Kalamang. They hardly occur in personal narratives and are not found in stimuli-based stories. The closing of the narrative maximally contains three parts: a closing formula, a summary of the story and a declaration of authority. Important topics in traditional narratives are the sea, the landscape and ancestors. The Money-Defecating Cow strongly resembles some Grimm fairy tales and as such shows that local storytelling may display outside influences. Kalamang traditional storytelling appears less structured than other East Indonesian oral traditions. It does show the community's long contact with neighbouring Austronesian peoples.

Chapter Eight, the final chapter of this section is by Joosje Wessels, who analyses the transcripts of seven interviews held in Kotalama village on Kisar Island, Southwest Maluku, Indonesia. The inhabitants of this village acknowledge to be descendants of the Dutch East Indies Company, and as such are seen as non-indigenous by the two other ethnolinguistic groups on the island. To validate their identity and existence on the island, the interviewees apply techniques that are distinct features of oral storytelling in Southwest Maluku. Narratives are composed of plot patterns, called "narrative chunks": names of a person, a location or a physical object, a so-called narrative artifact. Each chunk is validated by means of a poem or a physical object, which anchors the chunk's claim. Typical for Southwest Malukan storytelling is that a performance is never refuted or violated by the audience, but rather built upon in a following performance. Narrative chunks in one story are acknowledged and elaborated in another story and as such authenticate the initial story. Kotalama people are generally seen as non-indigenous, because they lack narrative chunks, which can connect them to times before the arrival of the Dutch East Indies Company on

Kisar Island. To appropriate outsider chunks is a common strategy in Southwest Malukan oral storytelling to validate one's own story with. Narrative annexation and its sub function narrative validation are important storytelling tools in Southwest Maluku, which requires further study in order to understand oral narratives in this regency.

Whereas the first two sections provided discussions on textual features in particular oral traditions, the final section contains three papers that deal with the appliance of oral tradition for something else. Chapter Nine by Muhammad Farid and Juul Sadée is a short report of the collaborative research of a historian and a visual artist on Bhoi Kherang, a heroine in the folk historiography of the Banda Islands in Central Maluku, Indonesia. Personally recorded folk stories are compared with information collected by other researchers. There are several narratives about this female warrior. Local folklore portrays her as a princess or a Muslim missionary. Alternatively, she is described as the illegitimate child of a Seramese princess and a soldier. She also occurs under the name of Adeka in a 19th Century Dutch literary epic poem and is adopted in both Bandanese and colonialist's folklore. Local tradition is unclear on how the person of Bhoi Kherang of Banda is related to another Central Malukan folk figure, Boi Ratan, as they are described as either sisters, or as daughter and mother. Although it is not possible to confirm Bhoi Kherang as a historical fact, her importance in Bandanese folklore endorses her inclusion in the list of female heroines in Indonesian histography.

Chapter Ten is a paper by Pudentia MPSS where she explains how the Indonesian government seeks to promote its national cultural identity by means of a *karya budaya* "artistic work of art", which can be registered as an *obyek pemajuan kebudayaan* (OPK) "object of culture promotion". Although OPKs are promoted by the ministry as candidates for a nomination as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) at UNESCO, the latter institution appears to have divergent perceptions on what intangible cultural heritage is. Only 12 of the 1728 OPKs acknowledged by the ministry are confirmed as ICH by UNESCO. The paper discusses the 13 features with which the ministry assesses the OPK candidacy of a cultural item. The ministry mentions three other requirements to qualify as an OPK: endorsement of cultural diversity in the Indonesian society, preservation of the natural environment and the context of the performance. These three characteristics are exemplified by an analysis of *didong. Didong* is an oral poetry performance in the Gayo language in Aceh on Sumatra Island. It is a competition between two groups that need to retaliate each other's poems. The poems discussed in the paper relate to historical events like the anti-

communist purge in 1965 and the tsunami disaster that took place in Aceh in 2004.

Chapter Eleven by Roslina bte Abu Bakar and Joosje Wessels briefly discusses the traditional Malay taleteller or *penglipur lara*. The paper begins with an introduction of the *lokawidya* framework as an alternative folkloristics for oral tradition research in insular Southeast Asia. The site of performance is the Batu Pahat district in Johor, Malaysia, which can be dated back to 16th Century CE. Beside Malays, the district is also inhabited by Buginese, Javanese and Chinese. *Penglipur lara* are traditional entertainers, who perform oral stories, jokes and songs, and also provide explanations on the Islamic faith. *Penglipur lara* are required to be language experts. Beside storytelling, they recite *karmina* and *pantun* poetry and showcase local martial art. Musical accompaniment occurs, but is not mandatory. Often the performers have exclusive clothes and wear a mask. *Penglipur lara* perform upon invitation, usually at family ceremonies. They cater different age groups at different times, because of which their schedules are quite jammed full. A performer is expected also to educate his audience by telling historical tales of the region.

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September, 2023

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SECTION I:

ORAL POETRY

CHAPTER ONE

WEATHER ON HIGH: EXPLORATIONS OF A PHILIPPINE ECOCRITICAL HERMENEUTICS IN THE *PASYON* OF THE LATE SPANISH COLONIAL PERIOD

ISA LACUNA[1]

Introduction

Catholic religion occupies a strange place in the Philippines, in the sense that it has been interpreted to be the source of both the culture's most lasting weaknesses and its most radical potential, and no narrative is as emblematic of this statement as that of the *pasyon*. Widely known and oft performed, the Philippine *pasyon* (from the Spanish *pasión*) refers to the epic poetry that is chanted as part of the religious devotions that make up Holy Week in the Philippines. It is the source text of a thriving living tradition, which means that the *pasyon*'s performance is continuously adapted and transformed by the people who hold it as a significant part of their lives (*Casaysayan* 1988, 5-6). While chimeric and mutable (it has been considered part of theatrical, musical, and literary genres by different scholars, and its performance continues to change even today), its narrative content remains quite familiar, especially for people brought up in the general Christian tradition, relating as it does the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. More than simply being a direct and simple adoption of a Spanish narrative, the Tagalog *pasyon* are interspersed at various turns by folk *aral* "lessons" regarding subjects—such as the meaning of proper relations with one's fellow man, the miraculous nature

[1] This article is part of a much larger work that investigates the ecocritical trajectories extant in mid to late Spanish colonial Philippine literature. The research was supported by the Australian Government's Research Training Program, the University of Western Australia's Postgraduate Award, the Patricia Crawford Research Award, and the Paul Laffey Memorial Prize.

of Christian salvation, the existence of sin in a world made by God, and what might be expected of life after death—that showcase native Tagalog creativity and agency in the reception of a Western text, an insight that can be found in different ways in a number of other Philippine postcolonial analyses (Javellana 1983; Javellana 1984; Ileto 1979; Lumbera 1986, 57-66; Mojares 1983, 50-53; Canell 2006; Lapeña-Bonifacio 1972; Irving 2010, 147-152). The *pasyon* and its many creative and local adaptations—under which one might include the *pabasa*, the *senakulo*, and the *penitensya*, amongst many others[2]—constitute a complex genre of study by all accounts, and has been a topic of academic interest as far back as the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. It has been called "the best-known Filipino book," (Mojares 1983, 50) and similar attestations regarding its popularity have been made as far back as 1892, in studies referring to it as "the most widespread [song], the one that is heard in all the Christian provinces of the archipelago, both in the north and in the south" (Walls y Merino 1892, 25).

The *pasyon*'s relevance to Philippine culture has been studied by many others and across a variety of noteworthy historical-critical, cultural, and anthropological trajectories, but my interest in it lies in its description of the

[2] The *pasyon* and its many offshoots can be studies across a number of different trajectories, such as transformations consequent to its language, the genre of subsequent adaptations, region of performance, and the authorship associated with its many different versions through time. For example, the *pasyon* has been translated across the many languages of the Philippines, which aside from Tagalog, includes Cebuano, Ilocano, Kapampangan, Hiligaynon, Ibanag, Bikolano, Samareño, and more. These in turn bring their own local distinctions and idiomatic expressions to the content of the narrative. If one focuses on Tagalog orientations, the narrative text is specifically known as the *pasyon*, while its chanting is referred to as *pabasa* "the reading". If one looks at the more famous versions of the *pasyon*, two are mentioned in this chapter, but another version exists, known as the *Pasyon ni Aniceto de la Merced* (titled *El libro de la vida* "The Book of Life" written in 1852, but that version never gained any widespread popularity. If one is to focus on genre, the dramatic rendition of the *pasyon*—complete with stage, actors, and theatrical costumes and props—is known as the *senakulo*. In other provinces, towns, or cities, the *Via Crucis* "Way of the Cross" part of the *pasyon* is re-enacted by way of a procession of flotillas or *karosa*. Elsewhere still in the country, the *Via Crucis* begins the performance of the *penitensya* "penitence" where devotees by choice share in the suffering of Christ by undergoing his physical suffering, which includes whipping themselves, carrying a literal cross, and then being crucified to it. There are possibly more adaptations that draw *pasyon* text than I have mentioned here.
For a short and general overview, one may consult the brief account in Irving (2010, 147-152). A more comprehensive and detailed account is provided in Javellana's (1988) introduction to the *Casaysayan*.

atmospheric imagination extant during the Philippine eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the writing of a history of storm tropes from and about the archipelago, it is impossible to ignore the influence of the *pasyon*, which can be traced to later literary and creative genres such as the *kundiman* and the revolutionary poetry and memoirs of 1896, making it a significant assemblage of tropic figurations. Moreover, not only is the *pasyon* the first native epic narrative poem written in Tagalog (Lumbera 1986, 57), but it is also a literary text whose storm tropisms few other bodies of writing in this period can match, much less outnumber. Its rendering of turbulent weather, unabashedly and over-determinedly religious as it is, nonetheless allows us to investigate how atmospheric representations function and signify in one of the stormiest countries in the world (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Authority 2017). Finally, if we follow the proposition that Philippine folk epics are composed as they are performed (Mojares 1983, 9), we might also ruminate on the constant re-compositions of the *pasyon*'s turbulent weather, and how such composed and decisive imaginings re-signify historical Tagalog atmospheric worldviews under the urgencies of a quickly warming planet.

This essay also contemplates the oft perceived dis/juncture between religious and contemporary worldviews. Religion is often cast as emblematic of a pre-modern imagination of weather, while climate change is often perceived as a distinctly contemporary phenomenon. This relation is worth examining in greater detail, especially when one considers the ways in which Christian ritual and prayer still function as observable responses to contemporary storm events, though not quite with the same significations they used to hold. Habermas has remarked on religion's endurance even in post-secular societies, saying that "religious forms intrude . . . into modernity as the most awkward element from its past" (quoted in Gordon 2016, 476). Concrete instances of such might be observed, for example, in the processions of the various Jesus statues by survivors of typhoon Haiyan in 2014, or how some residents of sinking islands in the Visayas articulate their desire to stay—in spite of the almost constant flooding—by way of their traditional celebration of the feast of San Juan, or St John the Baptist (*Racing the King Tide*, n.d.; Lopez and Cain 2014). These, to my mind, are specific iterations of the ecological and cultural dimensions of religion which Mike Hulme (2017) broadly gestures toward in his writing. The focus of this analysis then is to attempt to understand the varieties of beliefs that are activated and assembled by the contemporary experience of storms, and how they all might contribute to understanding the complex ways people rationalize or make sense of the world changing all around them. Species of faith might be further analysed in the Philippine paradigm as possible translations of

atmospheric realities: the literary metaphors of the *pasyon*, in this case, are not viewed as abstractions of reality, but as translated extensions of its material consideration.

Two *pasyon* are of particular interest to this study. The first is the one published in 1703 by Gaspar Aquino de Belen, titled *Mahal na Passion ni Jesu Christong Panginoon Natin na Tola* "The Holy Passion of Jesus Christ Our Lord in Verse*".* Lumbera (1983, 57-61) has argued that it is a strikingly Tagalog retelling of the suffering of Christ, filled with additions that describe a complex borrowing and adaptation of a Western text, and as this analysis will show, such is particularly observable in the text's imagination of weather. Aquino de Belen's *Pasyon* ran through five editions before being adapted into another *Pasyon*, known as the *Casaysasayan ng Pasiong Mahal ni Jesucristong Panginoon Natin na Sucat Ipag-alab nang Puso ng Sinomang Babasa* "The History of the Holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ that is Enough to Inflame the Hearts of Whoever Reads it" in 1814. The *Pasyon* of the *Casaysayan* remains the most influential and most widely circulated version in the Philippines, which attests to the appeal of the ideas it contains (Javellana in Aquino de Belen 1990, 9-10).

My argument proceeds by first providing some contemporary and historical contextual information to situate the analysis of the *pasyon* as postcolonial and ecocritical texts, and then close reads their language to describe the environmental imagination they narrate. The analysis then compares the storm and *panahon* tropes extant in the *Mahal na Passion* with its extensions in the *Casaysayan* by describing its operations across two simultaneous imaginations: one being the messianic, which is solar and centralizing, and the other through the Marian, which is marginal and seemingly submissive. The latter's imagination of storms is of greater interest to this paper, because it proposes a kind of fugitive radicality that remains productive for imagining a possible position by which one might respond to the entanglement of religious, postcolonial, and ecocritical concerns regarding climate change and Philippine culture.

The complexities of a hybrid atmosphere

In introducing the concept of "a greener faith," Gottlieb (2006, 7) remarks that "although in many cases, religions are now part of the solution to our environmental problems, it is also true that for a very long time they were part of the cause." This is quite an understatement, whether we think about it from a postcolonial perspective (Catholicism as an imperial Spanish

strategy in the Philippines[3]) or an ecocritical one (if we think about the anthropocentrism of the dominion mandate[4] of Genesis 1:28, for example). Still, the existence of a difficult history does not preclude the ability to construe radical possibility from it, and religions have always been immense enough to contain contradicting ideologies, proposing positions of both subservience and subversion, depending on the ways their texts are read and interpreted. In their own surveys of religious, postcolonial, and ecocritical theory, Timothy Burbery (2022, 70-74) and Kate Rigby (2017, 279) have commented that religious studies have consistently articulated a commitment to poor and marginalized groups and the need for social change, ideals it broadly shares with postcolonial and ecocritical scholars around the world. Michel Serres (1995), in a more extended gesture, points out that a postcolonial and ecocritical justice follows Christianity's two main laws: the first law, the love for the other; and the second one, the love for the world in which our gods and fathers lie. And so, a postcolonial (social) and ecocritical (natural) justice abides to this religious formulation, which allows him to quite provocatively state that: "there is nothing real but love, and no other law" (Serres 1995, 49-50).

Now, while the sharing of general ideals does not minimise the problematic historical baggage of religion—which the field must continuously confront and address—this analysis does not deny that it nonetheless represents a potential force for change in a world on the brink of climate catastrophe, particularly because it provides an alternative framework for understanding the environment that runs counter to corporate globalisation, capitalist overconsumption, and the technological manipulation of the earth. In religion, after all, do we find narratives that stress that humans are not the central power of the universe and in which they are subservient to natural forces they cannot control. There is a humility here which we might do well to revisit in these trying times.

We bear all these arguments in mind as we contemplate the history of the Tagalog *pasyon* and position them not only as an extension of Spanish paradigms but of precolonial folk ones as well. Others have already suggested that the ease by which Christianity and other Spanish elements

[3] For a brief overview of the history of Catholicism in the Philippines during the Spanish and American occupation, see (Mendoza 1984-1986, 52-57).

[4] The dominion mandate is a central topic in ecocritical hermeneutics, and is often brought up in analyses that acknowledge the complicated tendency of Christianity towards anthropocentrism. Different scholars such as (Rigby 2019; Burbery 2022; and Kiel 2022) contend with it in their analyses.

were accepted into the islands has much to do with the degree of compatibility of its worldviews with the network of beliefs already extant in the archipelago (Mojares 2002, 146; Irving 2010). Such arguments stress that Christianity should not be viewed as *simply* a Spanish imposition (though definitely there is an element of that in any colonial context) but that it *also* involved a *complex translation* of elements that paralleled in important ways native beliefs and mores. Syncreticisms, hybridisations, and derivations cannot exist without some initial form of mutuality and recognition, though the existence of such does not deny the unequal power relations that were extant between the Philippine colony and its Spanish coloniser.[5]

In the case of the tropes of turbulent atmospheres, Alvin Yapan (2019) comments on similarities between the folk and the Spanish religious paradigms. In his philological exploration of the word *sakuna* "natural catastrophe" and its tropisms in a number of Philippine folk legends and myths, Yapan proposes that what is shared between the pre-modern native and the early modern Hispanic is the conceptualization of an atmosphere governed by the gods, a view which is quite common for many ancient and pre-industrial societies (Bergmann 2021). In such worldviews, humans have no influence on the weather, and in the Philippine case, respond to *sakuna* by way of affective utterance. This partly explains why in the oldest Philippine *vocabulario*, the colonial dictionary, the term *sakuna* is not defined by external material destruction but by emotional devastation; it is *espina atravesada en el corazon* or "a thorn through the heart" (Yapan 2019, 90-91). However, while the Philippine folk worldview instantiates the possibility of a changed life and a new cosmic order after catastrophe, Catholicism begets the understanding of a world of death and precarity, wherein human existence is contingent on obedience to a moral code (Yapan 2019, 116). Storms now occur because of the existence of sin and religious misconduct, and are the direct consequences of angering a human-loving god.

We find this logic prominently described in the narratives of the *pasyon*. Storms first appear in Gaspar Aquino de Belen's *Nahal na Passion* as part of the *aral* "lesson" that follows one of the first beatings of Jesus after His

[5] Religious syncreticisms can be found in the imaginaries of many previously colonized nations. Madipoane Masenya (2022) speaks of it in the South African context, while Brent Blackwell (2019, 133) in the Mexican. In the Philippine colonial context but across a different creative genre, D.R.M. Irving (2010) speaks of similar borrowings observable in developments in early Philippine colonial music.

capture. The moral instruction of the *aral* has to do with the transience of all the good things that exist on Earth, and the importance of viewing life as simultaneously valuable and provisional:

232. Tantong ang daling malanta	232[6]. "Truly, virtue and beauty
nang cabutiha,t, nang ganda	wilt so easily.
panahon ang nagiiba	*panahon* changes all,
camatayan ang nonoha,t,	while death takes and
ongmaaco ng lahat.	seizes everything."
. . . . .	. . . . .
234. *Longmilipad ang arao*	234. "The sun of our life flies
dito sa ating pagpanao,	towards death,
ano pa,t, di ang catao-an,	what more the body
parang bayang nagobatan	that is like a village forested,
diladila na,y, sasamsam.	suddenly overtaken."
(Aquino de Belen 1990, 107)	

Atmospheric catastrophe in its folk sensibility is framed here as the volatile relation between *panahon* and planting. *Panahon* is the Tagalog equivalent term for the concept of "season, weather, time that can refer to both immediate and to expansive periods of it, depending on the context in which it is read".[7] Rene Javellana (in Aquino de Belen 1990, 48) has observed that *panahon* in the *pasyon* is usually translated into agricultural terms and the daily labours of native life, which is a poetic strategy that allows the author to explain abstract concepts (such as sin and the afterlife) in a paradigm lived by early Philippine society. In later verses, agricultural *panahon* is enlarged to encompass concepts of seasonal thrift as a moral virtue, and stormy weather becomes the perceptible punishment for those who decide to ignore this instruction.

598. *Imbotin mo itong arao,*	598. "Be prudent with these days
iyong iquinabubuhay,	of your life,
cun lomipas ang tag-olan	once the rainy season passes
uala nang pagyayarihang	nothing more will come
sucat mong pagtotoboan.	from planting."
. . . . .	. . . . .
744. *Ang matouid mong uicain,*	744. "Your honest words,
o loob cong nagmimiing	oh, grieving heart
ngayo,y, icao ay malaguim	anguished as you are
ang loob mong malalaying	your wilting soul
iyong diriligdiliguin	can now be watered"

[6] All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.
[7] *U.P. Diksiyonaryong Filipino* (*UPDF*), s.v. *panahon*.

745.*Nang luha,t, gauang magaling,*	745. "With tears and good work,
sa Dios mo ipinanimdim	ask mercy from the Lord
na cun sacaling domating	and when it arrives
ang araw ng iyong mosim	your monsoon day
opan icao ay may quitlin.	you may reap what you have sown."
746. *Sandaigdiga,t ang langit*	746. "You have invited
sa iyo,y ga nagagalit,	the rage of heaven and earth,
houag mong sondin ang ibig,	do not follow your desires
maboual ca,t maibolid	or you might be tumbled and thrown
sa bal-ong casaquitsaquit.	into raging waters."
(Aquino de Belen 1990, 138, 151)	

If we consider these six verses together, one might sketch the general contours of folk Christianity's atmospheric imagination. The most observable central trope herein is that of death, whose force is enough to govern even the movement of the sun of life. It is a proposition that not only is death inevitable, but that it has an aspect of confiscation too, one that revolves around the removal of value (verse 232). *Panahon* or "weather-time" here functions as the catalyst of that confiscation, because it *changes* everything, even what is initially described to be virtuous and beautiful, leading to a kind of implicit despoilment. *Panahon* is ruinous impermanence, and it is proverbially addressed through the practicality of *imbotin* "thrift", and in the imagination of a counter-investment greater than what is possible in the time of this life. This explains why the most valuable rationalisation in eighteenth-century religious doctrine is the worth of life *after* life, the imagination of a time *after* time that can be found in the Kingdom of Heaven, where everything and everyone luxuriates in the glorious permanence of infinite value without *panahon*, that is, a life without weather and without time.

This general logic, however, does not exist without contradictions. Tropes in verse 598 and verses 744-746 specifically figure *panahon* as the monsoon season, and water has the ambivalent figuration of being conceived as both punishment and flourishing. In verse 745, the connection to death is once again restated, and the flood, as the storm's epiphenomenon, is a metaphor for the universe's punishment of immoral desire. However, it is also through tears-as-rain that an arid soul might renew itself into productivity, and which might instigate the mercy of the divine. Here, contradiction speaks of the complex relation between external environment and interior affect, one which the Marian elaborates further in other verses.

The *pasyon,* however, is most religious when it figures *panahon* as the marker of divine authority. In verse 494 Herod's excitement to come face-to-face with Christ is based on the number of miracles He is said to have performed, including the raising of the dead, the return of disabled senses (the healing of the blind, the mute, and the deaf), the provision of relief to the sick and the suffering, and the miracle pertinent to our interest, the ability to calm raging storms.

494. I*cao daw nama,y maralas*	494. "People have said they have seen
macapalacad sa dagat,	you walk on the sea,
bag-yo,y, iyong sinasabat,	subdue storms,
at ang manga naghihirap	and give peace,
pinagiginhauang lahat.	to all those who suffer."
(Aquino de Belen 1990, 130)	

This figuration of *panahon* as atmospheric authority has a long history in the Christian tradition, and some have proposed the ways in which God the Father (or Yahweh) might have existed as an early weather god in the bronze age (Bergmann 2021, 57-58). Specific to the *pasyon*, the miracle of the storm details that Jesus has power over *panahon*, and that he has control not only over weather but the ravages of time itself. If *panahon* is the disfigurement of value, one of the miracles of Christ is that he can both return value that has already been lost (the healing of the sick), or that he can prevent these ravages from reaching the peak of their trajectories (death in a storm).

Yet even this is not articulated without some kind of thematic conflict. The most poetic figuration of catastrophic weather arises in the exchange between Mary and her son regarding the weather of sorrow. As Jesus is paraded across the town of Jerusalem while carrying his cross, he happens upon his weeping mother, who, upon hearing his cries of pain, offers to take his place. What follows is a series of rationalisations unique to Aquino de Belen, and both characters use weather to make a point.[8] In the first utterance, Mary describes her interiority as aquatic, her grief an outpouring like a raging torrent: *ang dalamhati nonohos / lalo na matoling agos* "my sorrow cascades / in a raging torrent", while her son, in contrast, she describes as solar: *O poon co,t, sinta,t, liag, / o arao con maliuanag* "Oh my lord, my beloved, my dearest / oh, my shining sun" (Aquino de Belen

[8] The exact location of this scenario can be found in verses 680-724 in the *Mahal na Passion* (Aquino de Belen 1990, 146-149) and its analogous reworking in verses 1766-1828 of the *Casaysayan* (1988, 100-102).

1990, 145). The understanding of weather as external phenomenon and as interior landscape and identifier—briefly introduced in the general worldview—are now more deeply nuanced through the very gendered trajectories of messianic and Marian *panahon*.

Jesus, as emblematic of the solar trajectory, approaches Mary's storm through inevitable abatement. While he himself is undergoing a passion, the justification for his anguish comes from divine mandate itself. The sun is never inundated by his emotions (he never talks of himself as stormed, or as sinking, or as flooded) and we suppose this is because his sorrow is anchored skywards; whenever pain threatens to overwhelm him, he always elevates his justification as the will of his father. The rationalisation brings him enough comfort to follow through even with his own death. This is why the agony in the garden sets such a meaningful pattern for the development of Jesus' character; in atmospheric terms, one of Jesus' most difficult hurdles is coming to terms with divine forecast and his choice to submit Himself to the historical winds of his fate. Jesus' suffering is valuable for the sake of itself, because it is in his experience of it that the whole of humanity's salvation is hinged. Mary's anguish, in contrast, has not been forecast because it has no value; it is a consequence, not a point. Her anguish is then simply collateral damage, and Jesus tries to soothe it, not by saying it is necessary, but by promising that it has an eventual end.

693. *Longmabas cang Calapati*	693. "Depart, you dove
sa Dauong baga ni Noe	from Noah's harbour
pagbalic na,t di pa cati,	and when it returned
tubig ay lubhang malaqui	the water was still as great
nitong Passion mong marami.	as your many Passions.
694. *Di mo pa sucat matan-ao,*	694. You cannot yet see
ang bahag Hari,t Balangao	the arc of the rainbow.
pagtila nang sigua,t olan,	It will appear when
ang yaong nabibighaan	the storm and the rain subside,
nang olap, nang casaquitan	from behind these clouds of pain."
(Aquino de Belen 1990, 147)	

Particularly, Jesus acknowledges Mary's interiority as stormed and flooded, and his consolation takes the form of a rainbow, or the refraction of sun light through water. The Marian's sorrow, no matter how immense, will inevitably abate, and it is the presence of light through dispersed water that provides the most comfort for the grieving. The logic of storm appeasement coming from Jesus makes a certain amount of sense, given that it is one of the miraculous abilities that distinguishes him.