



**HAL**  
open science

# The continuity of past and present: The house as crossroads of Mangyan Patag society

Elisabeth Luquin

► **To cite this version:**

Elisabeth Luquin. The continuity of past and present: The house as crossroads of Mangyan Patag society. *Archiv für Völkerkunde*, 2009. hal-01661923

**HAL Id: hal-01661923**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01661923v1>**

Submitted on 12 Dec 2017

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Elisabeth Luquin, Anthropologist, Senior lecturer in Filipino at the  
Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), Paris  
Centre Asie du Sud-est (CASE, CNRS)  
[elisabeth.luquin@inalco.fr](mailto:elisabeth.luquin@inalco.fr)

in *Archiv für Volkerkunde* 57-58 : 65-79, issued by the Museum für Volkerkunde in Wien and  
by the Verein "Freunde der Volkerkunde", Vienna (Austria)

## **The continuity of past and present: The house as crossroads of Mangyan Patag society**

### Abstract.

Among the Mangyan Patag in the south-east of Mindoro in the Philippines, the house, as a construction *and* a social unit, is an organising principle. Houses are inhabited by members of one kindred and different houses are linked to each other. A house (*balāy*) is built in a named place and it is attached to a territory with a specific spring which links the inhabitants of the house to their ancestors. Most activities in everyday and ritual life, from birth to death, are organised around these houses. The main rituals are linked to the rice culture and the ancestors. The house is the only encompassing social unit that represents Mangyan Patag society as a whole. However, the house is also a place to live in and to communicate with the ancestors through the spring, which links the sky with the earth and the underworld. The Mangyan Patag share the idea of the house as a body with other Austronesian-speaking societies. This paper<sup>1</sup> will show how Mangyan Patag houses, from their foundation in the ground until after their destruction when they are still 'alive' in the memories of the living, are entities of both past and present. It will consider the main features of the house-building ritual as well as other types of houses, as for instance those for exhumed bones or offerings to ancestors. The notion of the Mangyan Patag house will also be considered from the point of view of 'rice intimacy'.

Key words: *house, socio-cosmos, myth, rituals, ancestors, rice, house building, locality, Mangyan, Philippines*

In Mangyan Patag society<sup>2</sup>, all categories of human origin have their place in the landscape: the living, the dead, the ancestors and the malevolent spirits (in addition to plants and animals). Mangyan Patag society visualises the world according to this classification in which a specific category of actors has its own dwelling place. The malevolent spirits dwell in large rocks, caves, trees, etc., but no houses are built for them. The dead have adjoining houses near their cultivated fields just above the ground. After being transformed into ancestors this

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on fieldwork carried out between October 1990 and December 1994 in the south-east of Mindoro Island where I spent around 3 years with the Mangyan Patag, mainly in the village of Dangkalan on the Peninsula of Buyayaw. I undertook a second one-month field trip in July 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The 20.000 Mangyan Patag, also known as the Hanunoo Mangyan, mainly cultivate dry rice, corn, plantains and root crops. They also raise pigs and chickens and go fishing in the coastal waters.

‘crowded village’ is transferred to the underworld. By contrast, the houses of the living are scattered here and there, sometimes far from their cultivated fields. The benevolent *dāniw* ancestors have their own houses or a separate house is built for them by the ritual specialist, either near the house of the living or on a steep rock.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike in Western ideology, no distinction is made between society and cosmos<sup>4</sup>. In this socio-cosmos, the house, both as a container and a social space, is more encompassing than just a dwelling place<sup>5</sup>. It is a place of contact, where relationships are maintained with other beings: those dwelling above the house can be contacted through the ridge pole and those beneath it through the foundation pillars. We will see that in the case of the Mangyan Patag – a society with no prescriptive rules of alliance and descent – the notion of ‘house society’ can incorporate house-based social processes<sup>6</sup> relating to the body, the cosmos and time.

The Mangyan Patag offer only rice with meat to the recently dead and ancestors; no other kind of food is offered although root crops and corn constitute the staple foods<sup>7</sup>. Rice and meat constitute a pair which is the compulsory food for funeral rituals and for ancestor rituals. This demonstrates that rice is the ritual food plant *par excellence*. We will show that rice and the dead play central roles in constituting a house’s relations with the outside world. Both also establish kinship relations at the level of the house. We therefore will look at the Mangyan Patag notion of the house not only as a ‘house-centred’ kinship system but we will also analyse it in the light of the hypothesis developed by Aurora Donzelli for the Toraja of Sulawesi (Indonesia) and Gonçalo D. Santos for the region of Northern Guangdong in South China in their paper in this same volume. According to these authors, “rice intimacies refer precisely to structures of attachment and relatedness that were historically shaped by the phenomenon of widespread production and consumption of rice”<sup>8</sup>. Even though the Mangyan

---

<sup>3</sup> The ritual specialist is in an intimate relationship with the *dāniw* ancestors. He eats with them, talks to them regularly, etc. They address each other with the auto-reciprocal term *apwan* (from the word *apu* + the suffix – *an*).

<sup>4</sup> This is also the case in many other Austronesian-speaking societies (see de Coppet and Itéanu 1995).

<sup>5</sup> The term *balāy* refers not only to the house but also to the shell of the seashells or snails and to the pod/hull of cultivated beans.

<sup>6</sup> See Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995.

<sup>7</sup> When there is no rice for a meal, the Mangyan will say that there is no food even if the meal consists of tubers. When rice stocks are exhausted it is said that it is the ‘season of hunger’ (*tag lun ’us*).

<sup>8</sup> Santos and Donzelli base their hypothesis on the Aristotelian notion of ‘household’ (*oikos*) which is opposed to *polis* (‘city’) or the realms of ‘politics’, ‘ritual’ and ‘law’. They wrote that “*oikonomia* is a practical and managerial form of knowledge that was strongly connected to the Greek notion of the ‘household’ (the ‘*oikos*’), which, as the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2005) has insightfully pointed out in a recent interview, ‘was a complex organism with different intertwined relations, stretching from family ties in the strictest sense to

Patag practise dry-rice agriculture and do not have a widespread production of rice, rice is the only offering to the dead and the ancestors. This phenomenon places the Mangyan Patag among societies in which “rice plays a key role within the local structures of relatedness” (Santos and Donzelli). We can ask if ‘rice intimacies’ also form the basis of the Mangyan Patag notion of the ‘house’.

The first chapter of this article gives a comprehensive description of relations among the living in the socio-cosmos; the second chapter is dedicated to house-building rituals focusing on remembering the house's location. In the third chapter, I will describe and analyse the relation between death (implying “the ancestors”), food (being represented by rice) and the house.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. The structure of landscape (TITLE)

The landscape of the Mangyan<sup>10</sup> was, and still is, shaped by their ancestors (*āpu*) and the relationships they have with humans. Thus, the division between the Earth and the Sea was created by the ancestors, caused by a flood provoked by incest; and the division between Earth and Sky was brought about by a quarrel between first degree male cousins. However, society and the cosmos are neither seen as being divided nor as opposed to each other; no vernacular term designates an opposition or separation: human society and cosmos are united in one single space.

This socio-cosmic space<sup>11</sup> is composed of two binary and vertical oppositions such as earth/sky and earth/sea, the surface of the earth being in the middle, and one horizontal axis, sunrise/sunset, perpendicular to it. The dead who are not yet ancestors are located between the earth and the sky.

---

master-slave relations and the management of agricultural enterprises of often large dimensions”. They focused their article “[...] on the more practical and economic side of kinship - the one that is more strictly related to what we call the *oikonomic*” (see their article in this volume).

<sup>9</sup> Since this is a work-in-progress, I am not presenting yet a wider comparison with other South East Asian societies which, probably, would have further strengthened my argument.

<sup>10</sup> I am referring here to Mangyan Patag for reasons of simplicity and in accordance with the Mangyan Patag’s practice of self-reference.

<sup>11</sup> For a broader study see Luquin 2004.

The opposition between space and life *upon* and *beneath* the earth's surface is another basic feature of Mangyan society. The ancestors of the *Parawān*<sup>12</sup> live under the surface, in the 'underworld'. They are the dead who received complete funerals and who crossed the different spaces where their progressive transformation into ancestors was carried out. Other ancestors, the benevolent *dāniw*, live in stones located near springs and big trees in the forest before they become linked to a ritual specialist who then will build them a house. The ancestors of the earth, thunder and earthquake live at the foot of the tree which supports the earth. The ancestors of water live mostly in the spring of the underworld river but also in the springs on the surface that do not dry up during the dry season. There, the malevolent spirits (*labāng*) wander through the forests and around nearby springs in search of human flesh.

The fusion of cosmos and society is also revealed in the myth of the flood caused by incest. The disaster was provoked by the birth of a child from an incestuous relationship between a man and his daughter<sup>13</sup> when the blood of the delivery seeped into the earth. When the blood reached the *Parawān* ancestors' living place situated underground, beneath the house, water spouted up through one of the foundation pillars. The water was sent by the angry ancestors. The house of the incestuous protagonists became a flat rock by the seashore where twenty years ago I could still observe several Mangyan Patag making offerings. When a baby conceived in a non-incestuous union is delivered, the blood is allowed to seep under the house. Moreover, the placenta and the umbilical cord are buried underneath. Thus, a human being's relation to the soil and the ancestors passes at birth via the house.

When the umbilical stub of any newborn has dried and fallen off his/her abdomen, it is then wrapped in a cloth and placed in a wallet woven from palm fibers which is kept in the house together with the umbilical stubs of the baby's siblings. If the family moves, children's umbilical stubs are taken along to the new house. Should they be left behind in the old house, the children will fall sick because malevolent spirits will try to eat the cords and obtain the life-principles which, as a result, will become scared and leave the children's bodies. This clearly demonstrates that the relation between persons and houses is much more than merely a matter of ownership or occupancy.

---

<sup>12</sup> They say that the *Parāwan* is **in the direction of** the sunset (*isalpan*) or west, but **it is not** the sunset/ west direction proper.

<sup>13</sup> This man is called "Grandfather of the origin" (*Laki pu'on*) and his wife "Grandmother of the origin" (*Ido pu'on*); she helped their daughter deliver the child from the incestuous relationship.

In contrast, when a baby is born from an incestuous union (between parent and children or between siblings), the blood of the delivery must not touch by any means the ground under the house<sup>14</sup> because this contact would lead to a flood similar to the one described in the founding myth or, at least, it would flood the house or bury it by a landslide. The blood should be poured together with the placenta and the umbilical cord in a bamboo container and hung from a high branch of a tree. These prohibitions should prevent the newborn child to be in contact with the soil and the ancestors right after birth (as would be the case for a newborn child from a non-incestuous relationship), until a *dāniw* ritual is performed to ask acceptance from the ancestors.

This myth shows that the pillar of the house is the path used by the *Parāwan* ancestors to climb up to the earth's surface. This pillar is also the place where offerings are made by those who have committed incest, and where the ritual cooking of rice for the remote dead as well as particular agrarian rituals are performed (see chapter 5. 3).

Another founding myth, which narrates how humans were saved by their *dāniw* ancestors from the human body eaters, mentions that houses should not be built in groups of much more than ten units. It therefore was forbidden to build large villages. Besides, the mythical flood explains why the Mangyan did not to build their houses near the sea or on the plains but always in the hills or on sometimes even very steep slopes. The origin of the region's topography and the proscribed type of settlement are based on broken social relationships caused by incest or malevolent spirits who killed human beings.

If the source of the river leads to the underworld and the water comes up through the foundation pillar of the house, the springs are at the origin of the hamlets and the places where the ancestors are fed by the living<sup>15</sup>. The Mangyan Patag notion of 'house' is connected with the myth that recounts the very relation between the ancestors and the living<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Since a house is built on piles, it is composed of three spaces: the area under the house, the floor and the roof.

<sup>15</sup> After a person's death, his or her "life-principle" (*karādwa*) inhabits the place of the dead during a long funerary treatment which, after three generations, will transform them into ancestors. After a complete funerary treatment, the ancestors finally dwell below the ground.

<sup>16</sup> For the last 40 years, a few hamlets have become villages (*pu'ok*) in the sense that many houses (20 or more) are adjoining each other like, in the view of some old Mangyan, the houses of the dead and the ancestors. This change is due to the Mangyan demographic development and the migration of non-Mangyan Filipinos to Mindoro. The term 'village' here corresponds to the French notion of 'village' which Dumont defines as the sense that the Mangyan village (with the influence of Spanish values) is "the correspondence between a built-up area (agglomeration) and a territory, both having the same name, being inhabited and cultivated by the same group" (Dumont, 1964: 25; my translation). This development among the Mangyan has been influenced by

## 1. 1. Traditional dwelling distribution (SUB-TITLE)

A nuclear family -- the parents and their children (G0 and G+1) -- is the smallest social unit and lives in the same house. A group of houses forms a hamlet (*kabalayan*) which is composed of two to ten buildings being located near a spring that supplies water even during the dry season. The houses located in a confined area around the spring, are considered neighbours (*kamalay*; root word *balāy*), whether they are fetching water at the same spring or not. Each house in the hamlet has “blood” and/or marriage links with the other houses in the hamlet. The members of the hamlet belong to an ego-centred extended kin group which is made up of cognates descending from a common ancestor. A person’s extended kin group normally spreads out over several, not necessarily neighbouring hamlets.

*Balāy*, meaning ‘house’, is probably a root word for the kinship term *balayi* which designates the ‘affines’affines’ and the ‘affines’siblings’. Furthermore, the word *pamalayi* -- prefix *pa-* (= ‘for’) plus root word *balayi* -- signifies the ritual meeting and sharing of a meal by the parents of the future spouses in the house of the bride-to-be. It officially links the two houses in a marriage relation and is especially important since the marriage ceremony is not obligatory.

Thus, affinity is marked in space: it is restricted in the first place to the house level (*balāy*) and to the spouses (the couple); then to a larger space, a group of houses (*kabalayan*): to the spouse and his or her affines.<sup>17</sup>

The name of the hamlet has a toponymic attribute. It very often refers to a particular feature of the landscape, a common local plant, a large tree or a specific event. The name of the locality is usually the same for the spring and for the hamlet.

The relations between the hamlets are based on exchange and ritual and define the identity of a place. In addition to the spring, several hamlets inhabited by an extended kin group share a

---

almost four hundred years of Spanish colonisation, another forty years of US American colonisation and, finally, by national Filipino values.

<sup>17</sup> Traditionally, the residence was uxrilocal. Because of the system of land tenure imposed by the Philippine government for thirty years, there is an increasing tendency for neolocal or virilocal because the land is named after the male family members.

natural cave which sometimes is closed with stones and where the exhumed bones of their dead have been hidden for generations.<sup>18</sup> These caves are situated quite far from the hamlets, but here again the relation to the dead and the ancestors is primordial and specifies the locality.

All hamlets, and nowadays a few villages too, form an area called ‘the related Mangyan living in one place’ (*kamangyanan*). This is what we would call the geographical space inhabited by the Mangyan Patag which includes the ancestors, the malevolent spirits, etc. This Mangyan vernacular word is the closest to the English term ‘society’.

The social representations of the Mangyan Patag make up and give signification to the landscape. The genealogical history of the site is also significant. Mangyan explain the abandonment of houses or their destruction by fire as being caused by the death of one of its inhabitants. Memories of an ancestor’s house may reach back up to six generations.

## 2. The house (*balāy*) (TITLE)

The setting of a new house demonstrates the type and quality of relationships between its occupants’ and the beings of the place.

A new house on piles is built to replace an old one or when a couple is newly married. The location near a spring is chosen in accordance with the topography of the site and a range of other factors. No houses are built near a malevolent spirit (*labāng*)<sup>19</sup> or a funerary cave or ritual ground, because malevolent spirits or ancestors would cause sickness when being disturbed. Before starting to build, a man - usually helped by his sons - performs several rituals to ascertain that the choice of the place is propitious.

### 2. 1. Rituals prior to house building (SUB-TITLE)

---

<sup>18</sup> While each hamlet has a spring of its own, several hamlets share a cave. The exhumed bones placed together in one cave usually belong to an extended family up to the 4<sup>th</sup> degree cousins.

<sup>19</sup> The *labang* are people who had died but did not have the benefit of a proper funerary ritual. The Mangyan insist that malevolent spirits are the enemies of humans because they feed off their flesh and blood and thus, turn their ‘life-principle’ into yet another malevolent spirit.



The history of a site tells the Mangyan about the presence of a malevolent spirit at the place itself or in its vicinity. However, they generally double-check and seek the opinion of a *dāniw* ritual specialist<sup>20</sup>. If the malevolent spirit lives nearby, the ritual specialist -- helped by the *dāniw* ancestors to whom he<sup>21</sup> is related -- will drive him away, bury him or cover him up, or the family will decide to change the site for their new dwelling<sup>22</sup>.

After having cleared the site chosen for the new house and before driving the foundation pillars into the ground, two rituals have to be performed in order to find out whether the place is safe or dangerous.

The first ritual is performed in order to protect the lives of the dwellers and to ensure the abundance of future harvests. A branch of the ficus *hawili*, having the same number of leaves as the future members of the household, is planted in the middle of the ground while the head of the family asks the branch to give a sign if someone will die. The location is considered favourable if no leaves drop until the following day. This means that the ancestors have agreed that the new dwelling may be built there. This ritual is occasionally replaced by another one that focuses on dreams. In this case, a ‘cross’ of two unequal bamboo stems is planted while uttering the words, ‘If it is *parawān* [i.e. someone will die<sup>23</sup>], I will have an ill-fated dream; if it is not *parawān*, I will have a good dream!’ The next day, according to the dream<sup>24</sup>, the building will be pursued or abandoned.

Thus, through the dreams of the inhabitants, the ancestors of the *Parawān* determine whether the site of their new house is favourable or not.

---

<sup>20</sup> The benevolent *dāniw*-ancestors (*‘āpu dāniw*) help protect the humans against evil intentions. The *dāniw*-ancestors allow the ritual specialist to see, locate and communicate with the invisible beings, such as the ‘life-principle’ of the living or of the recently dead, with the dead, the other ancestors and the malevolent spirits. The *dāniw* rituals vary according to the event concerned: sickness, death or incest.

<sup>21</sup> Most *dāniw* specialists are men, although there are no prohibitions for women to perform as such.

<sup>22</sup> Since an encounter with a malevolent spirit can sometimes be fatal for humans, a Mangyan never sleeps alone in his or her house. A person on his or her own (e.g. an elderly widow or a single person) will always sleep with a relative, who may either be a child or a single adult of the same sex.

<sup>23</sup> The word *parawān* refers to many kinds of prohibited actions, all of which are identified by this same word when not respected. This notion is encountered in relation to all important actions, particularly funerals, linked to prohibitions and their consequences in the form of punishment ordained by the ancestors. I have listed 87 of which 32 concern the funerals.

<sup>24</sup> An auspicious dream will feature the sea, a cultivated field or heavy rain; a dream that includes a person, a fallen tree, or blood is considered inauspicious.

The second ritual should ensure, too, that no one will die as a consequence of the construction of the new house. The head of the family puts as many corn seeds as there are inhabitants of the future dwelling on the ground in the centre of the site. He covers them with half a hollow coconut shell and builds soil around it. He calls upon the corn seeds by saying, 'If no corn is missing there will be no missing person, but if one grain is missing there will be a missing member of this house!' The next morning, the remaining corn seeds are counted.

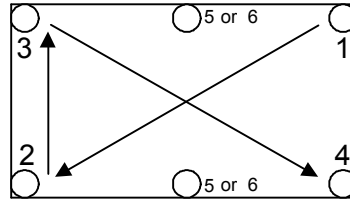
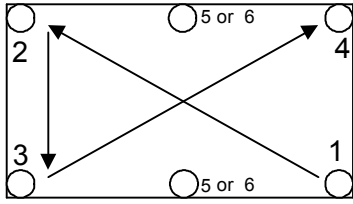
There are a number of other bad omens connected to the time before and during house building. The repeated appearance of certain signs called *tabi'an* impedes the building of the house. These include the sound of a gecko or of a small house lizard, the call of a particular bird or when a person bangs his or her head on the house or sneezes. If one of these signs occurs several times during the day preceding the setting of the pillars in the ground, the construction works will cease. Through these signs, the dead or the ancestors warn the living of an imminent danger (i.e. an accident, a snake bite or the presence of a malevolent spirit). Indeed, choosing the right site for the pillars to be driven into the ground is not a trivial affair since the occupancy of the earth, both its surface and the underworld, has to be shared between humans and other beings.

All these precautions are taken because, through the pillars, the house establishes a link with the underworld and its occupants.

## 2. 2. The house: orientation, movements and the human body (SUB-TITLE)

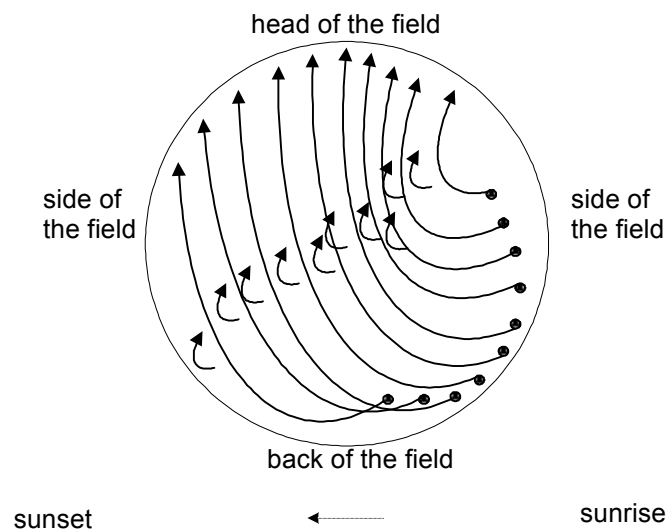
The Mangyan term for building a house is 'to drive in the foundation pillars of a new house' (*mag-tulduk bag'o balāy*) or 'to erect' (*mag-bungsud*) 'the pillars' (*tulduk*) or 'the base / foundation / origin of the pillars' (*pu'on tulduk*). The base of the pillar -- a tree trunk -- is planted in the ground and the top of the trunk soars up in the same way as a tree.

The prescribed order for driving in the foundation pillars shows the desire for an abundance of food. When driving in the pillars, the same order is followed as when harvesting rice. For the house, the first pillar to be driven in is the one on the side of the rising sun, the second and third are on the side of the sunset -- whether downhill or uphill -- and the fourth is again on the side of the sunrise as the following diagrams show:



Sunset ← ..... Sunrise

For the harvest,



In rice harvesting, leaving the sunrise -- or the downhill slope -- behind them, harvesters head in one line all along the field for the sunset -- or uphill slope -- and come down again towards the sunrise -- or the downhill slope; so the movement is like an encirclement, a kind of embrace with the arm drawing back to itself. The movement is both a protection and a manner of 'catching' the abundance.

In both situations, leaving from the sunrise to go towards the direction of the sunset and return to the sunrise, expresses the to-and-fro movement of the sun. Moreover, the house's main entrance should ideally face the sunrise or, at least, be facing south. It is said that the 'base' (*pu'on*) of the house has to face the sun.

Two notions have to be kept in mind: the position of the foundation pillars (like the two ridge poles of the house<sup>25</sup>) follows the orientation sunrise / sunset and then returns to the sunrise, indicating at the same time a complete cycle and ‘enclosure’ and the higher position of the sunrise in this cycle.

In addition to the foundation pillars, several short pillars (*tukud*) support the floor joists. They are also driven into the ground. One of the *tukud* is placed in the centre of the house, at the point where the diagonals intersect the virtual centre. Two rituals are performed at this particular place: the first one is called ‘to bow low’ and should be performed when a younger person has offended an elder, and the second one is carried out at the occasion of the first bath of a newly recovered invalid or a new mother.

The two ridge poles of all Mangyan houses follow the axis of the sun, from sunrise to sunset. The lower ridge pole is named ‘the bone of the roof’ (*but’ōl bubungan*). This expression signifies that the ridge pole holds the house like the bone holds the flesh. The bone is under the skin and, like this pole, invisible.

This reference to the body is also expressed in the Mangyan saying, “If you strike my house, it means that you hit my body. This house of mine [the body] is the scene of my life.” It is explicit here that the body of a person is **seen** as the house of his or her ‘life-principle’ (*karādwa*’) at a metaphorical level.

Since the house may be in danger of sliding down the slope (either due to landslides caused by heavy rain or due to earthquakes provoked by ancestors who are angry at the misdeeds of the living), two transversal posts (*sulay*) are driven into the ground to anchor the house in position on the slope. The lower ridge pole and other posts are secured to them. The ancestor of thunder is said to live at the base of one of the *sulay* during the rainy season. When there is a shortage of rain, a ritual with offerings of rice and meat is performed at the base of this post to ask the ancestor of thunder for rain.

When a new house is completed, several rituals have to be performed before the occupants are allowed to sleep in it.

---

<sup>25</sup> See below.

### 2. 3. Settling into the new house (SUB-TITLE)

Before sleeping in the new house for the first time, a *dāniw* ritual is performed in the old house. After calling the *dāniw* ancestors, the ritual specialist asks them to drive away the malevolent spirits from the new house in case they have already arrived before the new dwellers.

The next day, the building of the hearth (*dapugan*) takes place. A miniature bamboo bow is placed on the spot where three stones will form the hearth.<sup>26</sup> When the person in charge of hearth-making puts the three stones in place, she says, “Wake up now, you are the one responsible for the abundance of rice and corn. Whatever food, you are the one who will take care of it!” The hearth is called upon to guarantee future harvests. The living speak to the hearth as if it were an ancestor.

During the first night in the new house, a slow-burning log must burn until sunrise which guarantees that no log will ever go out in this household. The log, therefore, has to be watched continuously during the whole night. This ritual should ensure that the members of the new house will not be victims of untimely death. The burning log also represents flames that drive away malevolent spirits who approach the living during the night.<sup>27</sup>

### 2. 4. Ill-fated events for a house (SUB-TITLE)

When a person dies in someone else’s house, his or her relatives will have to make a payment equivalent to the value of the foundation pillars and floor joists to the inhabitants of this house who will have to build a new dwelling. While the relatives of the dead do the compensation, the floor beams are laid in the same direction as the body of a deceased with the head lying towards the bottom of the slope and the feet pointing towards the top of the slope (perpendicular to the axis of the sun). When someone dies in another person’s house, the floor beams have to be restituted to the members/ occupants of the house. This prescription reflects

---

<sup>26</sup> The miniature bamboo bow is said to represent a full belly as tight as a bow string meaning - at a metaphorical level - that the members of the house will not starve.

<sup>27</sup> The Mangyan informers used the term *labdab* which means “flames (of a fire)” and is another metaphor.

the house's basic opposing directions: sunrise/sunset and uphill/downhill; the first one corresponding to the life cycle and the second one to the death cycle.

The entering of wild animals (*hayop talon*)<sup>28</sup> into a house is also a warning of a *parawān* situation or a danger of death. This movement -- of a different order -- from outside to inside means that either the life-principle of a dead person or an ancestor appears in this form to communicate something to the family living in this house.

Another important ill-fated event concerns domestic animals (*balaynon*)<sup>29</sup>. When a sow or a female dog sleeps in a house other than their own<sup>30</sup>, and if a stream separates the two houses, it is said to be *parawān*. The domestic animal's action is a sign that an ill-fated event will happen to its owner and that it brings the *parawān* to the neighbours; in consequence someone from one of the two houses will die. The ancestors of the underworld, the *Parawān*, have ordered the animal to sleep in the other house and thus warn both parties of the danger. The members of the other house will, for example, say to the pig's owner, "You brought the *parawān* into our house with your pig!"<sup>31</sup> It is necessary, then, to perform a *parabyab* ritual to restore order in the relationship of the two houses. The pig is usually killed, shared and eaten by both households in order to protect the lives of everyone involved.

Why does this action cause a *parawān* situation? On the one hand, the link or *'āpu* relation between the animal and the living (or its 'owner' as we would say) is broken and, on the other hand, a link is established with the ancestors (the other meaning of *āpu*). In fact, the streams, the paths of the ancestors, connect to the ancestors of the earth and the water who both live under the ground. This *parawān* situation is linked to the ancestors of the place called *Parawān*. The *parawān* notion usually expresses a separation or a break, a broken relation which can only be restored by performing a ritual. In the same way as the person dying in someone else's house or a wild animal entering a house, a domestic animal sleeping in someone else's house crosses the ancestors' path and provokes a dangerous situation with the *Parawān*.

---

<sup>28</sup> Literally 'forest animals'.

<sup>29</sup> Literally 'from the house'.

<sup>30</sup> The animal did not sleep at home i.e. in the house of 'the person related to it' (*'āpu* relation; see Luquin 2006).

<sup>31</sup> On the one hand, the animals are meant to be only signs and give warning but, on the other hand, they themselves are associated with the danger.

### 3. Rituals and the other houses (TITLE)

Several rituals are performed at the house or house-hamlet level and others are performed at the level of the society as a whole (these latter are not discussed here<sup>32</sup>). All the rituals taken together link the different social units (houses or hamlets). In the following sub-chapters, I will describe the role of the house in connection to death, implying ‘the ancestors’, and food, being represented by rice.

#### 3. 1. The *Dāniw* Ritual (SUB-TITLE)

The *dāniw* ancestors help the ritual specialist to see non-humans such as malevolent spirits, life-principles and ancestors. The role of the ritual specialist is to maintain and safeguard relationships within the socio-cosmos. For example, when a person falls sick, the ritual specialist, assisted by his *dāniw* ancestors, searches for the life-principle that has been taken away by a malevolent spirit or by an angry ancestor. The *dāniw* ancestors then talk to the life-principle of the sick person and try to restore it to the body of the invalid who, if newly completed, recovers. In case of failure, the person dies and the specialist and his *dāniw* ancestors have to accompany the life-principle to the place of the dead at a tree height above the ground.

The *dāniw* ritual starts from and returns to the house of the *dāniw* ancestors. The type of house depends on the nature of the *dāniw* ancestors and on their relationship with the specialist. Some *dāniw* ancestors dwell in special stones transmitted from a *dāniw* specialist to a neophyte; or they live in houses near the springs of the main rivers of the Mangyan Patag region. Other types of *dāniw* ancestors dwell on the fontanel of the specialist. **Thus** the house is built at a metaphorical level by the specialist but according to my *dāniw* specialist informers, the *dāniw* ancestors have a house (*balāy*) near the ritual specialist’s house from which they move upward or downward to the underworld. The ancestors’ house is said to be perfumed by fragrant plants<sup>33</sup> that have been planted around it to warn off the malevolent spirits. During the ritual, in his ‘travel’, the specialist freshens up the house and makes it

---

<sup>32</sup> See Luquin 2004 (chapter 7).

<sup>33</sup> These are cultivated plants - like basil, vetiver and ylang-ylang among others - from which leaves and/ or flowers are used for warning off the malevolent spirits. Since they are perfumed, they are also used by men and women for beautification (especially for courting).

invisible in order to avoid ill-fated events.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, if the house of the *dāniw* ancestors is destroyed, the ritual specialist related to them falls sick. This information allows us to draw an analogy between the body of the ritual specialist and the house of the *dāniw* ancestors. In order to maintain his relationship with the ancestors, the ritual specialist has to take care of the ‘virtual’ house of his *dāniw* ancestors.

Based on the foundation myth (or myth of the flood), during the *dāniw* ritual performed for an incestuous couple, the ritual specialist and his *dāniw* descend through the foundation pillar on the sunset side of the house to the underworld or *Parawān*. Each of the two foundation pillars represents a member of the incestuous couple. The indispensable payment of glass beads threaded on cotton strings<sup>35</sup> (or paper money nowadays) to the *Parawān* ancestors is placed on top of these pillars. This compensation will allow the incestuous couple to survive in spite of their wrong-doing.

### 3. 2. Ritual houses linked to death (SUB-TITLE)

Just as the human body can be separated from its life-principle, a house can lose its members. The term for ‘house’ (*balāy*) is also used for other buildings and shows the continuity between life and death.

After a person’s death, the position of the body (life) -- head in the direction of the sunrise, feet in the direction of the sunset (parallel to the bamboo floor) -- is changed into the position of the corpse (death) -- head in the direction of the downhill slope, feet in the direction of the uphill slope (in a vertical position perpendicular to the floor). The house of the dead becomes isolated and subject to many prohibitions called *parawān* like those following ill-fated events. In other words, a great number of prohibitions have to be observed by the inhabitants of a house containing a corpse. If they are not respected, one of the members of the house will die. The funerary rituals performed in the house transform the corpse -- not yet separated from the living (thus, many rules and prohibitions are linked to the house and its members) -- into another transitory body. Several sequences of the funerary rituals demonstrate how the house is affected by the death. Let us now examine these.

---

<sup>34</sup> The specialist has to sprinkle water in the house (on the floor and the walls) and outside (on the wall) in order to cool it off because heat is considered ill-fated and therefore negative.

<sup>35</sup> The cotton strands represent the breath and the beads represent the body of the incestuous couple.



To get the corpse out of the house, it is necessary to destroy the wall on the sunset or sometimes “northern” uphill side. Only living people, animals and food in whatever form may enter and leave through the doorway of the house.

The grave is called the ‘corpse house’ (*balāy bangkay*), ‘grave house’ (*balāy lubung*) or ‘quasi-house’ (*balāy-balāy*). The corpse is buried in the ground and once it is covered with soil, a small quasi-house is built on the top. Its technical terms are the same as those used for a house for the living. Thus, the corpse is actually placed under the ‘floor’ of this ‘corpse house’. The dead are under this quasi-house as if they descended to a lower floor.

To remove the prohibitions and restrictions from the deceased person’s kin<sup>36</sup>, a ritual called ‘to make enter (the house)’ (*pasaka*) is performed in the shrubby vicinity of the house where another ‘quasi-house’ (*balāy-balāy*) is built<sup>37</sup>.

During the secondary funeral, after approximately one year, the bones of the dead are exhumed<sup>38</sup>. Another house called the ‘bones house’ (*balāy but’ol*) is built specifically for the exhumed bones. This new house is built near the house of the living, reproducing the ordinary houses in both form and material. Its ridge poles also follow the course of the sun. Its size varies and it is often inhabited by the living after the secondary funeral. If many deaths have occurred within a short period and the living are afraid that they may also die soon, such a house sometimes is built in the forest far from the other dwellings. The ‘bones house’ can also be a simple hut (*payag*, not a true house) which may be located either fairly close to the settlement or even far away. During the exhumation ritual, the life-principle of the dead remains in the ‘bones house’; it does not follow the participants who exhume the bones. This house is the deceased’s last human house (which can be inhabited by living people as well), his/ her last dwelling among the living. The house of the bones is a place of transition between the location of the life principle and the process of the eight deaths<sup>39</sup> which will then commence.

---

<sup>36</sup> These prohibitions are called *lihi*’ and differ from the *parawān* prohibitions.

<sup>37</sup> See Luquin 2004 (chapter 4).

<sup>38</sup> After exhumation the bones are cleaned, enveloped in new blankets and “dressed” with new clothes according to the gender of the deceased. They are then carried to the house; relatives dance with them and offer them food. This ritual is the most important in terms of the participants’ number (since everyone, even non-kin, can attend) and in term of the expenses (*ibid*).

<sup>39</sup> Luquin (2004: 255).

After a week, a month or even a year, the exhumed and enveloped bones are placed in the extended family's cave called 'the hardwood house' (*balāy tinugas*). This house is the everlasting house of the dead person's bones, while the life-principle will be transformed into an ancestor.

Finally, a last temporary quasi-house is built for the 'ahaw ritual which is performed by a sibship for all the dead of the same and adjacent generations. It is a small house, two meters high and half a meter long, built near the dwelling house of the living. It is used as a depository for the offerings. This house is called the 'place of the 'ahaw' or the 'house for the place of the 'ahaw' (*balāy pangahawan*). Its architecture is considerably less complex than that of an ordinary house. It has no walls and its roof is flat and slightly sloping. It is as if the rudimentary house structure reflects the increasing distance of the dead, as if those who have been dead for a long time no longer require a house like the living. We note that the ancestors are no longer represented by their bones. During this ritual, the living eat in their house whereas the dead are believed to eat outside, in the "'ahaw house". The living and the dead are physically separated at last. By being separated from the living, the dead (*tawo namatay*) are socially reintegrated as ancestors (*āpu*).

Although they are all referred to as 'house', each construction has a different meaning and each term is specified by an attribute: corpse, bones, hardwood or 'ahaw ritual.

### 3. 3. Rice and its house (SUB-TITLE)

According to a certain myth, the ancestor or life-principle of the rice was cut into two pieces. One of them went to live on the other side of the sea on Panay Island, southeast of Mindoro Island. Its house is thus located in a foreign land. The other piece stayed in the Mangyan Patag area. Each year before planting, the rice ancestor has to be summoned from the other side of the sea to grant an abundant harvest of rice and other plants too. The Mangyan say that the abundance (*ūya*) shall return.

The ladder of each house represents one of the rice mothers<sup>40</sup> because it is used by the seeds and the harvest when entering and leaving the house. In the past, the ritual to summon the rice

---

<sup>40</sup> The other rice mothers are a frog, the dragonfly, the cat, the dog, the hearth and the whetstone.

ancestor usually was performed for all the houses of the same hamlet together. Houses of the same hamlet were thus linked through rituals. Today it is more common for each house to perform the ritual individually.

A particular personal prohibition (*lihi'*)<sup>41</sup> concerning the ritual sower and the non-ritual sowers shows that the house is perceived as a kind of living being; the sowers are not allowed to enter someone else's house before planting. If they do so, it is considered disrespectful towards the rice. As a result the rice abundance will accrue to the house they visited, because the abundance will be taken by the latter. Five, seven or ten days after planting rice, it is forbidden, among other prohibitions, to eat and sleep in another house than his/ her own or the harvest will be poor. Informers explain this by saying that "to respect the cultivated plants is the same as to respect the dead" (*Imaw diman ga sa namatay waydi kay mag-galang sa halaman*).

Newly planted rice needs the protection of a house. In the downhill slope of the field, a small ritual rice field is planted on a natural mound and the planting dibbles used for the sowing are pushed, in a circular shape, into the ground around it. It is said that the small ritual field is enclosed. A piece of dark cloth or leaves from the 'alum tree (becoming black when they are rubbed) is draped around the ritual small dibble sticks (different from the dibbles) forming a kind of wall. This 'house' (*balāy*) or 'quasi-house' (*balāy-balāy*) for the rice is a protection against pests, and like the way of setting roots in the soil -- the rice ancestor/life-principle is enclosed -- the abundance of rice is encouraged to remain there too<sup>42</sup>.

The plants grow during the rainy season. In the case of too much or too little rain, a ritual is performed at the base of the two transversal posts (stanchions; *sulay*) where the thunder ancestors live during this period. A small house, the size of a small doll's house, is especially constructed for this purpose.

Like in the Toradja case (see A. Donzelli and G. D. Santos), among the Mangyan Patag too, the prestige attached to large and prosperous rice fields is important which, however, requires special attention to rice cultivation. Rice is believed to be just as fragile as a pregnant woman in whose womb a foetus is developing into a child.

---

<sup>41</sup> This term designates several prohibitions connected only to the close relatives of the dead.

<sup>42</sup> If there is no such quasi-house, the rice will be 'sulking', and the harvest will be poor.

Before every harvest, a ritual sheaf is made with the seven first ripe panicles tied to the stump of a tree and/ or a wooden ‘cross’ (two sticks are tied together in the shape of a cross) on the downhill slope near the small ritual rice field or in the middle of the field. This stump and/ or the ‘cross’ is called the ‘foundation pillar’ (*tulduk*) like those pillars of the humans’ house. After that the bond of the ritual sheaf is tightened two or three times every two days **and several panicles harvested at the same time**, the harvest of the **entire** field can start. At the end of the harvest, all baskets full of rice are attached to the rice ‘foundation pillars’ (the stump). The rice is tied to its own ‘house’ built by human beings and it is linked to the ancestors through its ‘foundation pillar’.

After the harvest is completed, the rice baskets, followed by a small ritual basket, are carefully brought from the harvested field to the house of the living. The rice, signifying abundance, has to be brought through the main entrance (*pasaka*) into the house like the kin of a deceased person after the ritual of removing personal prohibitions. In front of the entrance, the performer of this ritual<sup>43</sup> informs the household by calling (like when a visitor arrives at the house) that the rice is entering. Inside the house, he or she touches shortly the main parts of the house (stanchions, purlins, rafters of the roof) while naming them.

An informer specified to me that, by carrying out this ritual, the rice ancestor (*‘āpu paray*) enters the house. The head of the family, who is in a special relationship with his/ her rice ancestor, has to walk around inside the house in order -- on a metaphorical level -- to fill up his/ her house with the harvest from the field due to the presence of the life-principle of the rice in the house. The rice, like the living and other food in whatever form and condition (raw, cooked, skin), enters the house through the door, whereas the corpse leaves the house through a hole in the uphill wall.

Then the small basket containing the ritually harvested rice (the seven first panicles) is placed (*ipatakaw*)<sup>44</sup> near one of the foundation pillars linking to the underworld ancestors *Parawān* which should ensure that the wealth will remain in the house like a foundation pillar rooted in the soil. It is interesting to note that the set of prohibitions for a widow or widower is called

---

<sup>43</sup> The ritual is usually performed by the head of the family -- either spouse -- “in relation to his/her rice” (*kanya ‘āpu kay paray*). The Mangyan Patag do not own or possess the field or rice; they are in a relationship with it. See Luquin (2006).

<sup>44</sup> Literally ‘made to sit’.

“made to sit the widow/er” (*patukaw buranday*) and that the ritual to lift those is also called *pasaka*.

Finally, before the new rice and other new food can be consumed, a ‘doll’ made of rice straws, representing the rice abundance, is tied to one of the pillars of the house. For the ritual of the new rice, the couple inhabiting the house has to gather their children (whose spouses are not obliged to come) and eat together, otherwise the rice abundance will be taken away by the recently dead. The neighbours, whether kin or not, are also invited to participate. We see that at the rice level, locality is more important than affinity because the neighbours are specifically invited whereas the affines are not, but may join if they want to. When the parents die, the children will no longer gather among themselves for the new rice ritual: they will invite their own children<sup>45</sup> instead. This rice ritual constitutes the continuity of the generation through its accomplishment.

All these ritual sequences show that the house’s abundance is kept, protected, tied first to its own ‘house’ in the rice field and then to the house in the form of a doll. The configurations/forms of rice abundance are linked to the pillar: the ritual sheaf of rice is tied to it before the harvest; the small ritual basket containing the first harvested panicles, which will be the seeds of the next rice cycle, is placed nearby; the ‘doll’ representing the rice abundance gathered in the house after the harvest is tied to it; the ritual pot containing the first cooked rice is placed in its vicinity; at any ritual that includes a meal (e.g. funerary or rice ritual), a small cooking pot called ‘prescribed cooking pot’ and containing cooked rice is placed at the base of one of the foundation pillars. At the end of the ritual after all the other participants have departed, this rice is eaten by the members of the house who had organised the event.

In case of incest or a marriage between cousins, the offerings to the *Parawān* ancestors are placed on top of the pillars. Thus the two notions, rice abundance and incestuous relationships, are directly linked to the foundation pillars<sup>46</sup>.

---

<sup>45</sup> By contrast, at the last funeral ritual *‘ahaw*, the deceased person’s siblings gather in order to offer food and cloth to all the dead of their own generation, and to those of the lower and upper adjacent generations. Here again, affines are not obliged to participate.

<sup>46</sup> The *Parawān* ancestors send the thunder ancestor to eat those guilty of incest and he is called upon for rain during the growth of the rice; he therefore has a double relationship with the people. For the importance of the thunder in other Philippine societies, see MacDonald (1988).

Another interdependence between rice and the dead can be observed during the agrarian and death rituals at the level of prohibitions named *lihi*.<sup>47</sup> After death, the close relatives have to respect *lihi*' prohibitions like the planters/ harvesters for the rice. If those protagonists do not respect the numerous prohibitions; they 'give death' to other humans and cultivated plants abundance for the first, and to rice abundance for the seconds. As I demonstrated in my doctoral dissertation (2004: 339-343), the rice -- and the space where it has been planted, the rice field -- is treated like a pregnant woman when it is growing, and treated like a corpse when it is harvested<sup>48</sup>. In other words, during the two ritual cycles -- rice and funerals -- homologies and inversions imply that the funerals are performed for the departure of the life-principle (to separate it from the corpse), and the rice rituals are performed for the retention of the abundance, to guarantee that the rice life-principle will not leave but 'physically' remains in the house. In other words, the 'corpse' of the rice -- the field -- is left while its life-principle -- the harvest -- is taken to the house. By contrast, the corpse of a human -- in the form of its bones -- is taken to the house and its life-principle goes to the underworld.

### Conclusion (TITLE)

The rituals of the new house mark out the spatial boundaries in the relationships between the living and the malevolent spirits. The living are surrounded by ancestors and paths leading to these ancestors: springs, foundation pillars, anchor posts, ridge poles, mounds and the funerary cave. To build a house is an appropriation of the land by the living which they have to acquire from the ancestors. By performing rituals, the living build a gap between themselves and the other categories of their society, the ancestors and the malevolent spirits. The importance and the roles of the ancestors and the *dāniw* ritual, both before and after the building of the house, become highlighted in these rituals.

The house is also a set of relationships between the inside and the outside, that is between its human inhabitants and those living outside, between the inhabitants and the rice, between the inhabitants and the malevolent spirits and between the inhabitants and the ancestors.

Finally, the house encompasses, through the rituals, different spatial oppositions: the one of the sun -- sunset and sunrise --, the one of the uphill/downhill axis (from life position to death

---

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 36.

<sup>48</sup> See Luquin 2004 (chapter 5).

position of the body) and the one caused by the animal crossing the stream (from uphill/downhill crossed with sunrise/ sunset axis).

Locality is defined by the kinship relations between houses or hamlets, by the bones of the dead relatives placed in caves since  $n$  generations, by the relations to the ancestors who live in springs, and by the malevolent spirits who live in the surroundings of the house.

The house is also the place under which the afterbirth is buried, and where the bones of the dead are kept before being hidden in the cave. It contains also the detached umbilical cords of the sibship. Furthermore, it is built on the land belonging to the ancestors and ensures the survival of the living. The foundation pillars play a preponderant role in society as they are the ancestors' pathways and meeting places between the inhabitants and their ancestors.

These notions of the house and locality suggest a strong relationship between person and place. The transmission of land depends on the locality where somebody lives and where his/her descendants will set up their houses; locality is the only requirement for receiving a specific piece of land from a kin. A person's locality is based on his/ her relationships to the ancestors who are the masters of the place.<sup>49</sup> The site for a new house is identified by a spring, the house foundations (pillars), the house as a human body (the birth blood and afterbirth under the house, the umbilical cords of its new members inside). It is a matter of constitutive relations between humans and their house and not a matter of ownership.

The house is a microcosm in the sense of a social and ritual unit, but the house/ hamlet is part of a larger structure; it is in a relationship with other houses/ hamlets. However, it is the intimate relationship between the members of the household that builds and its rice harvest that guarantees the continuity of life. It is the duty of human beings to feed rice to their dead and to their ancestors who hold authority and provide abundance.

In contrast to the Toradja and the Guangdong Chinese, the Mangyan Patag are dry-rice cultivators and have neither 'temples', nor 'origin houses' but 'simple' houses. Nevertheless, the notion of the house is also expressed in different house forms which are constructed for ritual occasions: as 'corpse house' or 'grave house' or 'quasi-house', 'bones house',

---

<sup>49</sup> Since the ancestors own the land, the living only have the right of its usage.

‘hardwood house’ (the caves with the bones), ‘house for the place of the *‘ahaw* ritual’ and as ‘rice house’. These houses (as buildings) are temporary ritual spaces and in relation to permanent ritual spaces -- bone-caves and springs -- inhabited by the ancestors and constituting the memory of the society.

References cited (TITLE)

Carsten, Janet & Hugh-Jones, Stephen

1995 (eds.) *About the house: Claude Lévi-Strauss and beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coppet, Daniel de & Iteanu, André

1995 (eds.) *Cosmos and Society in Oceania*. Oxford & Washington: Berg,

Dumont, Louis

1964 *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du sud : Organisation sociale et religion des Pramalai Kallar*. La Haye-Paris : Mouton.

Luquin, Elisabeth

2006 “To be in Relation; Ancestors” or the Polysemy of the Minangyan (Hanunoo) Term *‘āpu*, in *Philippine Journal of Linguistics* 37(1): 89-96.

2004 *Abondance des ancêtres, abondance du riz: les relations socio-cosmiques des Mangyan Patag, île de Mindoro, Philippines*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, E.H.E.S.S., Paris.

MacDonald, Charles

1988 *L'éloignement du ciel : Invention et mémoire des mythes chez les Palawan du sud des Philippines*. Paris : Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Donzelli, Aurora & Santos, Gonçalo D.

2008 Rice Intimacies: Reflections on the ‘house’ in upland Sulawesi and South China, in this same publication