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Childhood in Pala’wan Highlands Forest, the *Kanakan* (Philippines)
A l’école de la forêt des Hautes -Terres Pala’wan, les *Kanakan* (Philippines)
Los *Kanakan* a la escuela de la selva en las Altas-Tierras de Palawan (Filipinas)

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Abstract : This paper consisting of three main parts, emphasises the life experience in the forest and the shared values of the *kanakan*, a children’ age group (3-12 years old) in an equalitarian society of the Austronesian world.

After describing their daytime physical and cognitive activities in the houses’ surroundings, the wilderness, by the river, and in the upland field, we focus on children’ exposures and cognitive activities at nighttime. Excerpts from the childhood memories of three Pala’wan collaborators are included. Learning from the forest and learning from the school in the mother tongue brings this paper to a close.

5 key words :

Bagi at pägkanän, sharing food; *tabang*, mutual help, cooperation; *ingasiq*, compassion, empathy; *kira-kira*, imagination; *rändäm*, memory; Pala’wan Highlanders, Philippines.

« *Toutes les choses sont des concrétions du milieu et toute perception d’une chose vit d’une communication préalable avec une certaine atmosphère.* »

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception*, 1945, Deuxième partie, Le Monde Perçu, I Le Sentir : 240-280.

« *Dans un milieu humain, la réalité d’une forêt n’est pas seulement écologique, elle est éco-techno-symbolique. Cette réalité n’est ni seulement objective, ni seulement subjective, elle est trajective.* »

Augustin Berque, « Existe-t-il un mode de pensée forestier? »
Conférence, 28 Janvier 2017.

Introduction

The life world of the *Kanakan*¹

In the sub-tropical forest of Nusantara - the Islands in between - we shall focus our attention on the Pala’wan children living in the Highlands of the southern part of Palawan, an oblique landbridge on the Sunda Shelf connecting Borneo to the septentrional Luzon.

Steep slopes of mountain ranges and peaks, cliffs, forests and fallows, abrupt trails, and rocky streams, a world of scattered hamlets with small homes made of wood, bamboo, palm leaves or kugun grass, and a single large meeting house, fragile faraway field houses or protective caves and rockshelters of kartsic formations, the world the

¹ *Kanakan*: < the root word *anak* “child” | *Kä-* + *anak* + *-an* | affixe of plural: “the children”. In fact here, a group of siblings including the first cousins between 3 and 12 years old, an age group. The affixe also connotes the abstract: “Childhood”.

känakan perceive and inhabit has physical peculiarities according to the season, dry or humid, altitude, vegetation and rocks. (Photos: Plate 1)

Engulfed in the tiny music of things merging with the musicality of their mother tongue, Pala'wan children are very sensitive to the beauty of sounds and songs of the world they live in. As adults they will keep this playful aural/oral attitude, mimicking the songs of birds, the stridulations of insects and all the sounds of nature by the voice and musical instruments.² (Photos: Plate 6)

Birds and insects are omnipresent and vary from ecosystem to ecosystem. However, in the forest, *gäbaq*, everyone hunting with a blowpipe, *säpukan*, is attentive to birds songs for the locating of an eventual prey, or for seizing a charming pet, *ayam*, and bring it back home hidden in a basket, *tingkäp* to be given to a little girl or a maiden. Enjoyed for a while as a playful toy, the pet will ultimately be roasted and eaten up as a tiny but succulent viand to accompany the staple food, *käkanän* and please the appetite, *säbläk*.

Mimicking songs of birds, then transposing them into words and music on the jawl's harp, *äruding*, on the tiny ring flute, *bäbäräk* and on the small lute, *kusyapiq*, tuned to *läpläp bägit*³, part of every day's entertainment. In the Highlands, this music brings luck and is considered a good omen for hunting. It can be played by men, with a tiny vignette teaching the *känakan* about *älupiyan*, the bad biting centipede, for instance, its fast way to move and aggress humans, provoking laughter and memorable teaching. The lute may be played as a contemplative moment in daytime or at night by a young maiden or by a young father lying in a restful posture with his wife and their newly born baby, close to her as they are on the verge of sleep on a platform in a cave of the Singnapan valley.

The ostinati of insects accompany everyone's sleep, and from daybreak following the intensity of the ascendance then descendance of the sun, function as a clock; meanwhile in daily life, the flights and songs of birds are omens, *ngasa*, for adults and can prevent them from moving. But children do not care yet about this.

I - Daytime Physical Activities and Cognitive Activities in the houses' surroundings, *lagwas*, the wilderness, *talun* and by the river, *danum*.

I.1. Playful children in the *lagwas*, the houses' surroundings (Photos: Plate 2)

A hamlet, *rurungan*, is a group of sisters and first cousins assimilated to classificatory sisters, around which men – following the rule of uxorilocality – come and aggregate, *mämikit*, as husbands. This local group is under the protection and control of a father who is also the local headman. So the children are in fact first cousins assimilated to brothers and sisters, a group of siblings, *känakan*, making the age group -1.

In a hamlet of five to ten homes, the houses' surroundings, *lagwas*, together with the *käläng bänwa*, the nearby large meeting-house, are an extension of each family home, *bänwa*. This open sky, clear and cleaned space, is the children's playground where kites, *taguriq*, can be made and flown and tops, *käsing*, can be thrown when the soil is dry as hot season light winds blow.

² Revel, N., 2009 : 78-90 ; 2005a : 479 – 492 ; 2005b : : 479 - 492

³ *Läpläp bägit*, bird' touch is an anhemitonic pentatonic scale. See : Revel N. 1992, *Fleurs de Paroles Histoire naturelle palawan, Chant d'amour / Chants d'oiseaux*. Vol III, 1: 13-41.

Revel N. 2017, *Palawan Verbal Arts*, IV, *Bägit*, Bird' Songs, 1DVDRom 33mn, 08.

Everyday objects and tools are all accessible to all of the children: *tabig*, open basket, *tingkáp*, basket with a covert, *nigu*, winnower, as well as *tukäw*, men's bolo knife, *paqis*, women's curved knife and palm leaves ; left over *nito* or buldung leaves and cleaned stems. Nothing is forbidden to the touch or to handling which allow children to develop dexterity and awareness of sharpness at quite an early age, as no one interferes to prevent them to discover. ([Vidéo enfant et tukäw](#); [Vidéo: petite fille et couteau](#); [Vidéo: 2 enfants et tukäw](#))

In this place, the little ones can play together in the shade of a large jackfruit tree, or the shaded place, *sirung*, below the floor of the large meeting house. However in this place too, little girls of 3, 4 or 5 years old might have to take care of their younger brother or sister for half a day, while their mother is weeding or harvesting rice in a distant upland field. This is a long-lasting effort and responsibility for the little girls who have been abruptly deprived of the mother's tender contact by this newly born *mämäläk*, who is never left alone. They have to behave as a little guardians, silently swinging the baby from one leg to the other, a heavy load on their hips, mimicking the postures of the mothers and fathers.

I. 2. Children Foraging the wilderness, *päri ät talun*, and by the river, *päri ät danum*

I.2.1. *Danum*, the river, is a playful place of resources and activities⁴. Fishing with hook and line tiny river fishes (*ägtaq*, *bäribi*, *mängangaluyäw*, *barubuk*, *usap*, *kämaq kälämuq* (Gobiidae) and *mätaqan*, *dämagan*, *pigak*, *lugusan*, *päqit*, *ulpis* (Cyprinidae), is a pleasant activity carried out by women along with the children.

When they grow up and become more independent as *känakan* (6 or 7 to 12 years old) they go and fish in togetherness by the river side catching by hand land crabs, (*raramu käyängät*, *lämläm*, *tamuk*, *tingting-suwat*) and fresh water shrimps (*urang*, *urang dängawan*, *sirsyar*, *ipun*, *päyarak*, *lampung*, *ämämsäy*) as well as fresh water crabs (*lämläm*, *tamuk*, *käyängät*, *käyangät mäqitäm*, *käräpäy*⁵), river snails (*susu-uyäw*, *susuq balud*, *täkukang*, *tätangi*, *damisil*) all this is a delight and shall be cooked and shared on the spot. But there are also bigger snails in the forest (*patong balay*, *patong lintang*, *patong kälaq*, *patong daba*, *patung däändän*, *patong ratrat*) that are collected by their mothers or fathers - to accompany a meal of the day.

There are ten kinds of river frogs. However the Pala'wan, unlike the French, avoid eating frogs, for they consider them disgusting, as their little ones do. This food taboo is a means of protection from eating poisonous toads.

As they grow and become stronger, they make dams in the river bed, placing fishtraps *bubu*, snorkling, catching crabs, then cooking the preys they were able to catch on the river banks in a tiny can they have brought along, When older, they are able to catch eels (*indäräg*, *amayü*, *säka-säka*, *rurung*⁶).

As they enjoy collecting these catches of the wilderness, *päri ät talun*, or from the river, *päri ät danum*, they eat them on the spot, and then, they acquire a major complement in proteins to the daily food given by the adults at home, twice a day only. (Photos: Plate 4)

⁴ Revel N. 1990, *Fleurs de Paroles Histoire naturelle palawan, Les Dons de Nägsalad*, Vol. I, we know of 9 ways of fishing Vol. I:124, les prises aquatiques.

⁵ Revel N. 1990, *Fleurs de Paroles Histoire naturelle palawan, Les Dons de Nägsalad*, La Classification des Animaux: les crabes d'eau douce, les escargot, Vol. I Ch IV: 300.

⁶ Idem, Ch. IV, La Classification des Animaux, les poissons de rivière: 298-299.

A tale that serves as prelude to the epic of “*Kudaman*”, reminds them of the story of the two girl cousins who, at the request of the *Pänglimaq*, went to the river to gather water shrimps, *urang*. Tuwang Putliq, seeing a golden *urang*, is irresistibly attracted to a water pool or *libtung*, and refuses to return home. As she takes risks and disobeys, she is captured by the *Pägibutän ät Bwaya*, the Leader of Crocodiles, and finally will be saved and revived thanks to the mediation of the Young-Man-of-Cumulus-Clouds, *Känakan ät Inarak* who will be able to retrieve her little finger nail from the last tooth of the Oldest Crocodile ... (<http://epics.ateneo.edu/epics> Box 15 See : 15.10)

There are many water games as children and maidens in circle splash rhythmically the water surface of a pool and the sound, *tuligbwäng*, is accompanied by cheerful laughter, a moment of shared joy.

As days are spent playing together, they elect a friend and then they go two by two, hands in hands, arms around each other, picking fruits of vines and trees in the forest, gleaned and eating them, other delicious snacks to enjoy and share on the spot. This provides yet another great dietary intake of vegetal proteins and vitamins.

Foraging mushrooms⁷ and land snails, (*patong balay*, *patong kälaq*, *patong linsa*), along the way is also experienced as a playful catch *päri patung* by women and children. This is first a playful transmission of know-how from adults to small children, who quickly manage to catch them.

When they reach the age of 7 or 8, they will be given some training by the adults.

Girls will follow their mothers and boys their fathers. This is their first experience of the division of labor. As Antonita saw a plant on the trail, she told her daughter, “*This is a female and it has a male sibling*”. With these words, mothers are starting to teach their daughters, by observation and association, a fundamental binary principle organizing the plant world within a classification relating them also as males & female siblings, *mägtipusäd*, or as companions, *mägiba*, a reflection of the social organisation actually lived by the children.

I.2.2 *Bängläy*, The secondary growth, the fallows

After two years the field is abandoned and the vegetation takes over. The highlanders distinguish four types of fallows, a place of foraging and gathering mushrooms, bamboos shoots, useful plants for crafts, various bamboos and *nitu*, all kinds of vines to weave baskets, *tingkäp*, *tabig*, winnowers, *nigu*, are gathered.

Boys can make traps, *litag*, jaws harps, *äruding* and lures, *pispis*; kites, *taguriq* and wirligids while young bachelors, *subur*, sculpting bracelets, *luyang* of *mantalinäw* wood, tiny birds, *bätbägit*, and pigs, *bikbyäk*, for offerings, handles of bolo with elegant *umbalad*, quiver, *kärbang*, and a tobacco set, *aläp*.

Norlita Colili’s memories, in her own words:

“During summertime, the surroundings are a bit dry and good for an easy harvesting of mature raw materials used to weave baskets. Before midday, after working at the upland field, *uma*, my mother would drop at a near by place where *sumbiling* bamboos were abundant, to collect a bundle of around 5 to 10 poles, which she will use for weaving *nigu*, the large winnower.

(Vidéo *Vannerie: effilage des brins*); (Vidéo. *Vannerie et courroie*).

After eating lunch, she would split the *sumbiling* she had collected, with *tukäw*, *bäkuku*, and split the bamboo into small slats and shave it with her

⁷ Revel, N. 1990, *Fleurs de Paroles Histoire naturelle palawan Les Dons de Nägsalad*, La Classification des Animaux: Inventory of 39 green vegetables, *tulnuq*, 32 varieties of mushrooms, etc., Vol. I, Ch IV: 197-198.

curved knife, *pāqis*. To do this we need to sit comfortably and safely in a corner so the materials will be kept clean and intact until the winnower is made. The weaving place should be a stable platform or bamboo floor, with a good light, to facilitate the making of a quality woven *nigu* without stressing ourselves out for sitting long hours and our eyes keenly fixed on the weaving...”N.C.

Girls helping to fetch wood, helping to fetch water at the spring, the near by stream *saqsapaq*, or shallow well, accompany their mother and aunties who will carry the single or double bamboo internode, *pāyaqung*, *sagäb*, on one shoulder and follow the happy call to join. (Photos: Plate 3)

I.2.3 *Gäbaq*, and the four types of secondary forest are a place of fun in hunting with small blowpipes and foraging. Children are also fond of eating the larvae of bees, of palm weevil, *linggawung* and they love to eat raw, grilled or boiled insects, like winged termites, *anäy*. Animal proteins of insects, larvae, fresh water crabs and shrimps as well as little birds are part of a healthy complementary diet.

As young *kānakan*, they do not venture too far by themselves. However when they reach the age of 7 or 8 their father can take them along in the forest to capture rodents and squirrels as described here by Jose Rilla.

Jose Rilla’s Memories, in his own words⁸:

“ I was probably around 8, I think. As I was of age, my father started to make snares with various loops, *rabay*. When my father was laying snares, he would take me along to the forest. We were able to catch wild cocks and hens and a rooster. Every three days we were going to look at the snare. We captured also a dove, *limukän*, with the *litag* trap. I only look at the way the snare with loops is made. He was doing everything, I was just looking, I was observing how the snare was made. For a rooster, the height of the loop is different: it is a finger long, as we say. For a *limukän*, it is lower, one phalanx for the height of the loop. First, he taught me how to make the strings. He taught me more than four types of snares and how to attract the game to the trap.

Then, one day he told me “ To-morrow, you will go and check by yourself, together with your two younger sisters, Luhan and Gibang, you will go together, they are still small”. It was not far away as there was a lot of forest before, the forest, *gäbaq*, was thick near by our home at Sukswak. As we went, 8 doves were trapped! I am quite happy and I twist their necks one after the other. When dead, I unfold the strings, I tie them up all together and give them to Luhan to carry. Once again I fix down the snare. On our way back home, I was bitten by a centipede, *alupyan*, I cried and did not eat the doves, only they could eat the doves ... during four days I did not eat any rice or dove as it was very painful and no one knew how to cure this bite. ... I had to bear the pain. After four days, I felt better and I knew how to lay traps...

⁸ José Rilla J. R. and Mäsinu Intaräy M.I. told N.R. their respective life story in the sharing presence of Mägrägaq, a highlander, son-in-law of Usuy, during 3 evenings (August 20-22, 1995) as we were working together at my ‘bahay kubo’, my home, on Tataran Island, (South China Sea, now Philippine West Sea), facing Lipuun Point, the Tabon Caves and the near by little town of Quezon. These were delightful moments of sharing in friendship and trust. I taped what is the first emplotments of their respective life in August 1995, then later on I transcribed and translated them.

“Let us go and lay two traps, one for a squirrel and another one for the civet so that you know how to fix *baqang* for *masäk*, the civet, and one for the bear cat, *manturun*”.

I just observe the fixing of the traps in the forest. “Here is a palm tree, *bätbat*, (*Arenga undulatifolia*), its fruit is the food of the civet, let us fix the trap the two of us. Climb, remove the leaves, so that there is no way to escape by the top”. Once I had removed the leaves, he fixed the trap half way on he trunk of the palm tree “ This is a trap for *masäk*” and further we fixed another one, a trap for the bear cat ... For it, another measurment is necessary and a long propeller. This is how I learnt how to make and lay snares and I started to lay snares by myself.

After my father’s death, my mother, who was expecting Sianu, returned to her father’s home Uduk who helped to deliver her and I do all the work, up to the time Sianu was grown enough. I was 14 when my mother married again Galnu. After this, I considered him as my father and I was following him as we had some one to look for food, because our field was not big and my mother was searching for wild yams, *bagid*, in the ground, we had to bear with hunger, *urap*. He knew how to hunt with blowpipe, *sapukan*, he also knew how to forage all kinds of food in the wilderness, *talun*. He was a Highlander, a *Taw ät Dayaq*, from the Tämlang River. As a wild boar was captured they had to make an agreement on the catch: what is to be shared, what is not.

Then, for the first time, I could listen to a discussion on how to share the preys captured in the forest, *bisara ät pägbagi*, Panglima Dani said “If you happen to catch a boar, you shall not stay away, on the contrary, we shall continue to share. We are present or not, we shall share half and half, as we are nor yet really far away. That is an agreement. If you really move far away, we shall modify our agreement, we shall no longer share. But as you are not too far, let us not change our agreement, let us keep on sharing...” J.R.

Mäsinu’s Memories, in his own words:

“ First, I did not know how to hunt. My father made a blowpipe for me.

When the dry season arrived and I came of age (by 7-8 years old) my father said to me: “ Come let’s go and hunt with the blowpipe”. He did not teach me anything else... Then I learnt how to hunt with it.

They taught me hunting with the blowpipe as a game.

I learnt nothing else except to set all kind of traps, snares, traps in trees for small rodents, and big traps in the ground, *bawäg*, for the boars.

In the river, I also learnt to set fish trap, *bubung*, and to make dams by moving stones...” M.I. ([Vidéo: petite Sarbacane](#))

As they search for birds, and small rodents, as well as insects, plants, and fishes, and any other prey, the *känakan* accumulate many sensations, observations and memories about the natural objects. Being attentive and sensitive to the forest’s soundscapes, colors, smells, odors and fragrances, contacts and touch (lights, winds, rains, water, soils, barks, thorns, leaves, vines, ferns, flowers, feathers, furs, etc) they discover and internalize the living world. ([Photos: Plate 5](#))

Their respective imagination is stimulated by their personally lived experiences and the intermingling of memories and imagination is going to vary according to each one of them. However as a group, they share the same world - the given empirical world they inhabit - but when according to their parents, they reached the age of reason at 7

or 8, they already have imaginative variations, a deep layer of their respective consciousness, their subjectivity.

However, *Gäbaq* is also a risky place. The danger of getting lost and being attracted by a female demon, *Kukuk*, or Oger *Bungäw*, living in cliffs and chasms, is there. These abrupt stones and lonely formations are scary places and short tales are warning the children to avoid the attractive Evil Doers, or bumping into a Malevolent, *Taw Märaqat*. The fear of meeting a *Mämangut*, the ghost of a dead relative, as well as passing by a large ficus tree, *Baliti*, the den of Evil Doers, *Langgam* or *Saqitan*, are conveyed to them by adults and have a strong impact on their imagination, *kira-kira*. This is how some components of the adult worldview are instilled early on the *känakan*.

I. 2. 4 *Rupaq*, the primary forest of dammars, *käbägtikan* (*Agathis philippinensis*) and huge dipterocarps, *ginuqu*, (*Kompassia excelsia*), *dipanga* (*Pometia pinnata*) is filled with tall trees which aside from shade provide many resources to the ones who know how to use them: *änuling* (*Pisonia umbellifera*), whose bark can cure centepede bites and whose fruits can be turned into sticky traps to catch birds, *kämilit* (*Alstonia scholaris*), whose exudate cures wounds, *kayayansäng* (*Albizia acle*), whose bark is a medicine for flu, *lipsä* (*Agalia* sp.), a tree whose beautiful red flowers grow from the trunk, hanging down with gravity like as many bead necklaces. In the dry season its acidic fruits are ripe, ready to be enjoyed during a trip in the forest; *mälaga* (*Wendlandia philippinensis*), whose strong wood is the raw material of house posts and the flowers will be sucked by the bees a converted into a delicious honey; *saläng* (*Canarium asperum*), whose fragrant resin makes long lasting torches to enlighten a family or a meeting house during the night, *säramirig* (*Bischofia javanica*), and *täwläy* (*Cryptocarya* sp.) which also have medicinal properties and can help to relieve a stomach-ache⁹.

The canopy is much too high to get the flowers and suck the nectar, but sometimes the *känakan* can enjoy this kind of kendi together with hone, *dägäs*, gathered by adults and young bachelors, *subur*.

Then by the age of 13, they start to go with adult men to gather *bägtik* resin (*Agathis philippinensis*) and will discover the beauty of the old growth forest as the young strong adults will make a *kibah* to carry heavy loads of cristal resin (50kg) to the lowlands bodega. Since a long time, this raw matter used to make lacquers shall bring back some cash money to the Highlanders.

Monsoon breaks in June, while in August winds and rains become quite strong and the rice harvest starts. *Singläd*, caves and rockshelters in the kartsic formations on the East coast of the Rangsang Valley and particularly the Singnapan Valley¹⁰, have been selected by their great grand-parents, a safer place for a family to take shelter, to live in and be protected from the loud and feared bursts of *Duldug*, Thunder. For when *Upuq Kuyäw*, Grand-Father Thunder speaks, he expresses the ire of *Ämpuq*, the Master of all, and the *Taw banar* the genuine Human Beings, are afraid.

For the Pala'wan this is a seasonal variation of habitat during, the long lasting Rainy Season, *Barat*, that can last five months or more. However, these are pleasant times, "You can live protected from floods, winds and heavy rains, and by doing so you are

⁹ Xhaufclair, H. & al., 2017:1-21.

¹⁰ In the 80-90ties, around 37 families scattered in 12 hamlets used to take shelter in the Singnapan valley, Vallombreuse, P. & Macdonald Ch., 1993:19.

protected from fevers”, said Isnig¹¹. It is also a sort of holidays - for elders and youngsters - as they enjoy fishing and foraging a great variety of foods from the river bed and the surrounding forest, together with their respective mother, and mother’s sister’s family, their first cousins, together with their grandmother. Collective fishing by beating *tuba* (*Derris elliptica*), a root gathered in the forest, making pools with stones in the river bed is used to put the fishes to sleep. Then the small group will enjoy collecting them with a small net, *syud*. All this foraging is lived with a cheerful excitement and laughters, mainly at night with a torch, in the underground river: “*In the caves, we can catch many kinds of viands, kurikit, bägit-bägit, käsiliq, eels*”.

At dusk, in search for ripened fruits on the main land, bats, *kabäg*, used to fly out of the caves by the thousands and it was one of the abundant catch of the day. At the mouth of the cave, a man is standing on a platform, sweeping the fruit bats with a long pole on top of which a bundle of thorny rattan had been tight up. He can sometimes alternate with his wife below to gather the preys and roast them with their fur. Another catch is by knocking down of the swallows, *sarang* (*Salangane*), with a large oblong racket, *kärikid*, as they fly out of the cave. Nowadays, after the temporary inhabitants had fixed fishing nets along the galleries in order to capture more bats and swallows, birds and mammals have abandoned various caves occupied by the Pala’wan¹².

I. 2. 5 *Uma*, the upland field, is a place of work and resources for the *känakan*, to protect from birdspests, monkeys and wild boars. As the paddy is ripening two young cousins-friends are in charge of chasing away flocks of maya birds (*dignäs, dignäs märägang, karawit* and *kandulung*¹³) with whirligigs and singing bows, while sparecrows have been made by adults and erected in the middle of the field.

It is also a place of work and constraints as children are helping their mothers and aunties gather tubers in the field of one of them, bringing back home this food in order to share it on the floor of the large meeting house, according to the Custom of sharing food between sisters, *Adat ät pägbaqi*. (Photos : Plate 3)

When the Season of felling trees starts, *Pänambang*, the men have to face strenuous physical labor according to the Custom of mutual help and assistance, *Adat ät tabang*. They walk in a row to open the new far away field, playing gongs, *Basal* on the blades of their machete while the handle close to their open mouth turns into a box of resonance. Then, to imitate the adults, the *känakan* are playing *Basal* on the the cooking pots covers, *Basal ät takäp ät kandiru*. This music sounds as a joyful reminiscence, transfiguring the hardships of the labor by alluding to the mythic time when life was light and pleasant, when tools did the work alone in the field and giving birth was not a painful labor. This leisure was jeopardized when a scatter brained girl transgressed the prohibition by peering at the tools as they were working, the happy leisured life of human kind was for ever destroyed.

Mäsinu’s Memories, in his own words:

“ My father also taught me how to make the field, *uma*, to clear it, *mängririk*.

“ So that you won’t have a hard life, you must know how to plant cuttings and all the tubers You must know how to slash then burn the vegetation and grow rice in association with tubers.”

¹¹ Isnig was filmed for a Documentary “*Taut Batu*”, by Franck Cuvelier, 2008, presented on ARTE. N.R. translated the interviews with the Pala’wan.

¹² Vallombreuse P., personal communication.

¹³ Revel, N. 1990, Vol. I: 278.

First, I planted cuttings of banana trees and sugar canes in a small field, I love bananas!

Then later, when I was grown up, he taught me how to built a rice granary, lagkăw “ Without a granary you cannot store the paddy...” M.I.

Jose Rilla ‘s Memories, in his own words:

“ Then I am grown up, I am 10 years old. I was doing my field already but it was a small one, my seedlings were only 3 cans of condense milk Nestlé... But I was weeding with application and my father used to say “It is necessary to weed so that your paddy rice shall grow bountiful” and I was cleaning my field and my rice was beautiful. This was my sole work, year after year. As *Pāngririk*, the Slashing Season, was coming, I was the one to cut the vegetation, my father could not anymore. He had a strong back pain after he fell from the top of the house”. J.R.

As day light fades out and shadows enter the night, mothers say “*Kas kăw kăgibăk*, Don’t make noise!” - This is one of the few injunctions, one can hear, to protect the children from Evil Doers who are roaming around in the forest and might come closer to the hamlet and to the *lăgwas* at night, threatening the whole group of neighbours, *săng kărurungan*.

II. Children’ exposures and cognitive activities at night time

At dusk, by 6:15, the *kănanan* have an early frugal diner with their respective parents, then they are going to become active as an age group, in another way. Like birds, they become silent as the couple rests on the main floor of the large house to go to sleep, little boys lying down on their father’s side and little girls on their mother side.

As obscurity engulfs the fields, the forest, the river, hamlets, and houses, another type of cognitive activity tends to prevail. While lying down on the lateral platforms, *sărimbar*, children are resting, but they keep on hearing, on listening to the adults’ speech, *sugid*. This is the time when they develop their imagination, *kira-kira*, and memory, *randăm*. Playing with words and storytelling complement their lived memory of the day. And so, before sleep takes over, adults and children can enjoy making riddles, *igum*¹⁴

*The riddle of grand father starts :
They are five brothers
of various lengh
What is it ?
It’s the hand.*

They enjoy listening to short stories and to their teachings. It is an informal and playful moment to be immersed in the language and the worldviews of adults, to internalize the sayings of the elders and their values.

Storytelling does not occur every night in every home and so the little flock of children can decide to sleep in the house of their choice, near another close anty, wherever there is something happening, something entertaining such as a visitor staying overnight.

They enjoy listening to hilarious stories, such as “ *Urang bākăq Puguq*, Water Shrimp and Quail”, about the manners of birds, *băgit*, of insects, *răramu* and aggressive

¹⁴ Revel N. 2017, *Pala’wan Highlanders Verbal Arts : Igum Riddles*, Ch. VIII, pp. 209-223, (DVDRom 11mn. 36s)

animals, *sätwa*, and the eventual encounter in the forest trails with the voracious *Kukuk* and Oger *Bungäw*. Also they love to listen to long tales, *sudsugid*, teaching the *Adat*, the right behavior to follow, as practised in the adults' world : *Tabang*, Mutual help, *Bagi*, Obligation to Share, *Ingasiq*, Compassion, as well as *Gantiq*, Equity in an exchange.

However, a *känakan*, can also suddenly take the unforeseen initiative to move them all to the house of the lonely anthropologist to keep her company and entertain her staying over night and telling her audacious stories.

When a visitor passes by and is invited by the *Pänglima* to spend over the night, if he happens to be a singer of tales, *mänunultul*, they all join the adults under the roof of the *käläng bänwa* and listen to an epic, *tultul*. A long narrative can be sung by someone in the hamlet to welcome with courtesy the visitor, or the latter might be invited to sing a *tultul* from the far away valley he is coming from.

All night long, the *känakan* will follow the story, falling asleep from time to time, and waking up as the plot keeps unfolding until the first rays of the sun demand that the singer of tales bring the story to a close. These beautiful nights are very exciting for the children as there is always an attack by *Ilanän* pirates, an intense fight, with lots of magic spells, a shamanic Voyage, a self controlled hero and his calm beautiful wives. These nights of a long sung narrative performance are a crucial moment for a silent attentive child, the very beginnings of a poetically inclined and dedicated life, the very first embodiment of a young singer of tales. (See <http://epics.ateneo.edu/epics> Box 15 Palawan)

Mäsinu's Memories, in his own words:

“ I saw the capture of a wild boar, we were delighted because we had a good viand for our rice. Every time a boar was caught in the pig trap, *bawäg*, or by men with spears and dogs, someone sang a *tultul*, while its haunch was being roasted on a bamboo shelf made at dusk. My grandfather used to sing a *tultul* and it lasted the whole night, until sunrise. The grown-ups did not sleep. Nor did I. I wanted to listen. I loved it for there were fights, and the story was beautiful. I thought it was a good story and deep inside, I knew everything. Until the next morning, I did not sleep. And from then on, little by little, I increased my knowledge of them. I could not yet sing the story myself, but we used to play games around the houses and all day long, the *tultul* was singing in my head. I imitated the *tultul* of the grown ups deep within myself, I did not sing yet myself.” M.I.

A similar inclination to the beauty of the spoken words and argumentation can develop as the *känakan* listen to the long jural discussions, *bisara*, conducted by the eldest playing the Judge, *Ukum*, in the *käläng bänwa*, listening to the rhetorical talks of the respective litigants, *mämimisara*, while the neighbourhood – men, followed by their dog, women carrying along babies and children – listen on as witnesses.

One of the *känakan* might also develop an aptitude to remember the cases and the related fines and the offerings, as he followed silently but faithfully his father. Such is the case of José Rilla who became a famous judge in the *Mäkägwaq* and *Tämlang Valleys*¹⁵ as well as Mäsinu who, as a child, used to bring the betel quid box, *sälapaq*, to the speakers, *mämimisara*, and quietly listen to the long lasting debates conducted

¹⁵ Revel N., 1980: 65-78; 1992 : 87-108 ; 2017, *Palawan Highlanders' Verbal Art*, *Bisara*, Jural discussion, Ch. VII : 177-187, (DVD Rom 86mn.43s.)

by his father and relatives. From childhood, a familiarity with this sophisticated verbal art is acquired, and an inclination for rhetorics may develop.

Jose Rilla Memories, in his own words:

“In Mägkabuk, there were jural discussion, *bisara*, and I always accompanied my father. He would take me along, wherever the *bisara* was taking place. Seated by his side, I was attentively listening how the discussion between the two parties was conducted.

First, I attended the marriage discussion of Panu and my older sister. The present of engagement, *pakirim*, was discussed. I knew all the moves and deals for a procedure with *päkirim*.

At this level, I am only listening, but I keep on memorizing how a discussion unfolds.

For adultery as well as robbery cases, I am still present, listening. However I do not speak yet. I only listen. If the *bisara* continues at night, although I am lying down, I do not sleep. I listen carefully to all their doings.

When I was around 12, my father became very sick and could not walk anymore. This is when he died”. J.R.

At night time, as adolescents, young bachelors, *subur* would play mimicking the elders, acting as mediators under the guidance of the Eldest, *Mägurang* who would distribute them in two parties, so the simili *bisara* could be performed.

As adults, in order to be recognized and appreciated in this verbal ritual, they would have to memorize the numerous cases of *Adat*, the system of fines, *bätang* or *murta*, the system of offerings, *ungsud*, and to master the code of social values, the Law, *Saraq*, of this oral tradition and Jural law. Such a knowledge and mastery, *käpandayan*, are built up, little by little, from childhood.

II. 2. Sentiments and Emotions

During the night, they might be awakened by a mother giving birth and all the noises related to this event. They are not prevented from being there, ; these events are part of life in the household and children are not cut off from them.

When a baby boy emerges from the mother’s womb, one can hear “*Liwan*, Outside” and when it is a baby girl “*Säläd*, Inside”. This is a way to contrast the two sexes by orienting the future of each one in the alliance of marriage: boys have to leave their parents’ home and aggregate to their new affines in another hamlet. Girls together with all their classificatory ‘sisters’ have to stay in the hamlet and live close to their parents, under the custody and protection of their father or their uncle. This polarity is linked to the prohibition of incest: a young boy cannot marry a first cousin with whom he has played and shared all his childhood in the hamlet. He has to respect the rule of uxorilocality, a principle upon which the society controls this separation between *känakan* reaching the age of 12 to 13 for girls and 14 to 16 for boys, the time for these young adolescents to get married. In an area of endogamy, usually between two close valleys, Mäkägwaq and Tämlang for instance, there is no courtship and marriage is prescribed by the parents.

As sung in the opening of the epic “*Käswakan*, Broken Branches”, following raids conducted by the Ilanän enslaving the coastal people of Palawan as well as all the islands of the archipelago, in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the hero discovers an baby girl still alive in a devastated hamlet. She is a fragile orphan. Full of compassion, *ingasiq*, he decides to take care of her, for many years, *mängipat*, before she will become his wife. (<http://epics.ateneo.edu/epics> See: 15.7)

A pregnant woman can accept to give up her baby girl in marriage to a man who has an affection for her as a mother. In this case of betrothal, the man is to take care, of the little one up to puberty, then she will become his wife. The custom of taking a second wife, *duwäy*, can favor this second option.

As for the young maidens and bachelors they do have to obey the choices of their parents and relatives, a custom that may result in painful conflict. This was the case of Mäsinu who had to bend to the will of his kindred and marry Lamut quite young, instead of going to school in *Bunbun* (Brooke's Point) as he wished.

II. 3. Facing adversity, sickness, pain and death

In the hamlet, *rurungan*, small open houses made of bamboo, favor the proximity of parents and their children's life. In this surroundings sickness and death are daily events witnessed by the children and these experiences mold their sensitivity.

They are capable of silently enduring a sudden outbreak of malaria without complaining. However there are many epidemics, *läwlabäw*. Here I evoke the memory of the sickness of Pritinyu, the young orphan, brother of Manda, one of the strongest, cheerful and most charming *känakan* in *Bungsud*, "Ants Hill", where I share their life during one year (1971-1972) and was confronted with many diseases.

Excerpts from February 1972, N.R Diary :

Friday February 4-5 ... Little Pritinyu has chickenpox and malaria, I think.

Dr. Elegado and his wife Becky, will arrive tomorrow in the highlands for a brief visit. Wind is blowing.

... After a hard walk, they reached our place. In the afternoon he was able to check several sick children and adults. The following day they left and a heavy rain caught them on their way down. Their trip back was turned into a hilarious story by the Highlanders...

Tuesday 8 ... Mägrägaq, arrives and announces us the death of Usuy's daughter, last night. She was 20 and could no longer breathe. On this very morning, she was buried in the wilderness,...

Luno has measles and keeps on coughing. Lambung takes care of him and says me "You see, this is *täringkasu*"(the flu)...

Friday 11... The large meeting house of Lambung is the place where all the sick *känakan* are staying. Morning and late afternoon, I take care of them with the pills for malaria and penicillin sirop received from the lowlands. As all the children are sick, life in the *käläng bänwa* is quite sad...

Tuesday 15 ... This morning Mäsinu has a cold, *sälät*, and malaria. We cannot work. I am not feeling well either and I decide to go to Kangrian. I entrusted Mäsinu with all the pills and sirop for the children explaining him how to give them the medicines...

Sunday 27 ... I returned to Bungsud and felt very weak on the trail. It took me 4 hours. "It is *sabläw*", they said and on the spot they introduced me to the Ancestors, explaining them my presence in the Highlands.

As I arrived, I went to see my little friend Pritinyu. He was dying ...

In the afternoon, I brought him a tiny piece of balud, he was so fond of pigeon, he tried, but was unable to eat since several days...

Suddenly, he gave a howl, some sort of a jump of life.

At five in the morning, it was the end. I went immediatly to Manda's home.

His body was still hot and left in the same position. His thin blanket, *kumut* became his shroud.

Manda, had not given him any medicine since I left.

All the adults joined, including the *kānakan* “*Sayang āt tāw*, Poor one” they said. Manda, his elder sister, did not want to live any more “*Mandiq ku māgbyag*” Dangkug, her husband, had to control her.

I think he could have been saved, had I staid in the hamlet or had I brought him to hospital. I have deep sorrow... » *N.R.*

III. Learning from the Forest, Learning from the School

Time has passed ... the *kānakan* of the 70ties are now living close to their children and grand children but many have passed away.

At the beginning of the 20th century, with the coming of the Thomasites teachers and after World War II with the reconquered Independance, catholic and protestant schools as well as public schools have multiplied all over the provinces of the country. Filipino people highly praise education.

Along the foothills, South of Brooke’s Point, as a young adolescent, Jose Rilla was able to go to school in Brooke’s Point. After he became Barrio Captain and was close to Mayor Ordinario in 1968, a school was built by the Pala’wan in Tadud. The father of Norlita Colili gave one hectar of land in Mangkungän to build an elementary school and gave to all his children the opportunity to be educated and able to integrate the main stream of the society, without forgetting the Pala’wan values and Tradition.

Norli’s comments on a recent development:

« For several decades, the Department of Education has sent schoo teachers from other provinces to teach the native children in Tagalog and English. However, in 2015, the Philippine Government decided to modify the elementary schooling system and provide a multi-lingual education nationwide¹⁶.

In the Highlands of Brooke’s Point and the vicinity of Amas, within the frame of the ‘*Indigenous Peoples Education Program*’, a Pala’wan school opened in two hamlets, Pāwpanāw and Käluy, while in Tabud an attempt is undertaken too.

A key concept of this program is that the teachers should adapt their lessons plan to the local socio-cultural context and a school started modestly two years ago.

Here is an example of how the counting is being taught in the Pala’wan school: As children went to collect wood for fire with their teacher, each one would count the number of pieces collected and a calculus lesson would follow.

Flash sonic sentences in Pala’wan are used to teach orthography: in order to introduce the letters Y, A and D for instance, they would say: “*Aya daya. Yaya daya*”, meaning “Wow, the Highlands. The Highlands only”.

In addition to learn how to count, read and write, the Pala’wan schooling wishes to transmit the local knowledge and know-how to the young generation, in order to root them in their culture via the school too. For this purpose music training is being convened. Children gather with adults in the large meeting house and girls learn how to dance the tarāk and make ornaments, silad, out of leaves and grasses, while boys are shown how to play *basal*, the gongs ensemble (1 *agung*, 2 *sanang*, small rim gongs and 1 *gimbal*, a drum). Traditionally gong music accompanies all festivities and celebrations.

¹⁶ *After a positive experiment with Kalinga children and other autochtonous children in the world, the Primary Education Program of Unesco encouraged the use of mother tongues.*

Later in the night, children learn how to play a quieter music with the long lute, *kusyapiq*, the bamboo zither, *pagang*, exclusively played by women, the jawl's harp, *äruring* or *äruding* and two distinct flutes, *bäbäräk* and *suling*. In the school context, children are taught music by the elder explicitly and out of ritual or daily life context, while traditionally, they would silently observe and little by little they would play, as transmission is quite effective too by way of imitation and a nonverbal transmission. This is a great difference ». N.C.

Conclusion

Pala'wan children are cheerful, free, resistant and peaceful.

By playing and living together as siblings, *känakan* do practice fellowship and the related values organizing this society at an early age.

Here hierarchy, strong leadership, and violence are absent but equality, sharing, compassion, modesty and an irresistible sense of humor are praised as values and personal qualities.¹⁷

The impact of the plant world, as well as that of the animal world and their resonance, mold the children in their individual and collective being, their imagination and in the way they apprehend life.

This technologically simple and frugal society in Monsoon Southeast Asia, has generated a holistic symbolic worldview and a social organisation that is loose, non-authoritarian, but highly operative, reflecting somehow the harmony and lavishness of the forest¹⁸.

Let us express the hope that schooling in the mother tongue will safeguard the "Teaching of the Ancestors"¹⁹, their know-how. May the commemoration of *Ämpuq ät Paräy*, the Master of Rice and *Ämpuq ät Burak*, the Master of Flowers, related to artistic symbolic expressions not to be abandoned. May all the practices and memories related to the staple food cultivation and the foraging of forest produce not be forbidden, nor set aside, so that the beautiful way of life in the Highlands, together with the elementary schooling in the mother tongue, will contribute an ancient knowledge to modernity and will facilitate the integration of the *känakan* in today's global world.

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¹⁷ See Ch. J-H Macdonald's site « *Anthropology and Anarchy* »
<https://sites.google.com/site/charlesjhmaacdonaldssite/Home>

¹⁸ Underlying this conclusion is the notion of « *chaînes trajectives* » explained by A. Berque « Existe-t-il un mode de pensée forestier » (2017), but this is a complex matter and would need another paper.

¹⁹ See Revel, N., 2001: 417- 428. ; 2008: 121-141; 2011: 49-67.

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