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# The Pala'wan Highlanders and the World they live in: "A Weaving of Golden Threads"<sup>1</sup>

Nicole Revel

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In memory of Jacques Barrau and Hal Conklin.

- 1 This Volume II, celebrating the centennial of *Revue de botanique appliquée*, offers the opportunity to contrast the Culture of the people of the Cordillera in Northern Luzon with the people of Mindoro - Palawan - Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, the so called *Sulu Bassin Culture*, by Hal Conklin (1961).
- 2 Since 1970, after a long experience of life with the Palawan, I choose to allude to some aspects of their material culture and life ways related to Hanunóo and to the Buid (Gibson 2015) but also to the Samal: the *Sama Bihing* living in villages, and the *Sama Dilaut* or *Bajau Laut*, the Sea Nomads (Nimmo 2001, Martenot 2005, Sather 1997).
- 3 Long ago, land connected Borneo and Palawan to Mindoro and the Northern island of Luzon. Nowadays, a land-bridge rests on the *Sunda Shelf* between Sulu Sea, on the East, and South China Sea on the West, named in today context: *West Philippine Sea*.
- 4 In Central Philippines, Palawan is made of a large chain of islets and on the Southern part of the main island lives a small rain forest society. (about 40.000 to 50.000 inhabitants).
- 5 Pala'wan Highlanders' identity is rooted in the landscape of the central mountain chain running from the southern tip of the main island to a break linking Abo-Abo to Quezon, thus making a physical and cultural partition. The neighboring cultural groups are the Tagbanuwa (Fox 1982) while further in the North are the smaller groups of Negritos, the Batak (Novellino 2011, 2019).
- 6 The present observations have been made facing Sulu Sea, in a long-lasting collaboration with pala'wan communities, on the progressive slopes to Mount Mantalingahan (2.085m, 149.193 hect. of forest, 10% of the totality of the main island,

the watershed of five municipalities: Quezon, Rizal, Bataraza, Brooke's Point, Española)<sup>2</sup>.

- 7 My attempt is to give access to a lived presence in the world of this small society which, we think, could reveal several features of a reconstructed Austronesian world.
- 8 The approach I favor consists of a biological, eco-techno-symbolical and ethical insight.
- 9 It is based on the distinction between two notions elaborated initially by Joseph von Uexküll in his study on animals' milieu, 1934:
- 'Milieu' (Umwelt) is the concrete reality for a given being (an animal, an insect, a bird, a plant, a human being) and the given components of the 'natural environment', 'l'environnement brut' (Umgebung).
- 10 My presentation integrates also the later works of Tim Ingold and what he named an 'Ecology of life' but also the 'Study of Human Milieux' or 'Mesology' developed by Augustin Berque who has been inspired by a related concept elaborated by Watsuji: *fûdosei* 風土性, or 'the structural moment of human existence'. It means that there is a dynamic coupling between the human being and his milieu, the two are inter-related, inter-connected, inter-dependent, (in French we would say: "l'entrelien").

## Pala'wan society and values

- 11 Since a long time and up to now, the uplands are a place where the *Katutubong Pala'wan* live. They are hunters with blowpipe, foragers and upland rice and tubers cultivators. Their hamlets, *rurungan*, are scattered and uxori-locality is the rule of residence. Their social organization based on a bilateral kinship system (Macdonald 1977), is characterized by an absence of hierarchy, no private property of land, no political power, nor authority. This society rather functions on interpersonal relationships, while an ancestral Customary Law, *Adat*, constantly referred to in daily life, helps them to restore peace and harmony between the members of each hamlet or of an area of endogamy between two valleys (Macdonald 2011, 2018).

Figure 1 : Flying from *Ladaq* to *Ransang* valley, a hamlet in the Highlands



Photo. N. Revel, 1972

- 12 The Highlanders way to live in this mountain, to relate to each other, is based on four fundamental values, namely: mutual help, *tabang*; sharing, *bagi*; exchanging in parity, *gantiq*; pity, compassion, feeling sympathy, empathy, *ingasiq*.

## An animist ontology

- 13 In the phenomenal world they are part of, the values mentioned above do apply to four kinds of collective beings, namely:
- *Taw Banar*, the Genuine People, you and I;
  - *Taw Mänunga*, the Good-Doers (in French: *les Bienfaisants*) among which the *Taw ät Käbubuluran*, the People of the Mounts;
  - *Taw Märaqat*, the Evil-Doers (in French: *les Malfaisants*) among which *Taw ät Gäbaq*, the People of the Forest;
  - *Taw ät Käkayuqan*, the Trees People and Animals People.
- 14 These various collective beings have specific components (corporal, emotional, intellectual, spiritual) and distinct proper names (Revel 1990-1992, 1998, 2017). They manifest themselves, express themselves and speak in different ways, languages and styles.
- 15 Pala'wan animist ontology reveals that, although the four types of collective beings are characterized by distinct visible and invisible features – I mean to say, they have a respective physicality and interiority – all of them are, 'persons'<sup>13</sup>, *taw*.
- 16 Some do communicate and inter-relate with the genuine people *taw banar*, by touch, voice and a specific spoken style, or express themselves by way of effluences and smells like the Trees people, *Taw ät Käkayuqan*.

- 17 Living in the same space, these collective beings are in constant interaction, which is ruled by a socio-cosmic order resting on two basic principles regulating inexorably their mutual actions and motions: *bagi*, sharing and *gantiq*, exchanging in parity.
- 18 Hence visible and invisible beings inhabit the world, do hunt, fish, cultivate rice and demand the right to eat viands, *isdaqan*, as well. All these peoples, *taw*, are in a constant interaction with the genuine human beings, *taw banar*, you and I. So, we have to live in their very presence, to co-exist with them, to share with them, to communicate with them by addressing them and listening to what they have to say. An empathy, *ingasiq*, a fluidity integrates all beings in the various realms of the Living and the necessary parity uniting them is associated with a shamanistic view and related curing practices.

## Pala'wan cosmogony

- 19 This mysterious relationship is expressed by the Highlanders by way of real dialogues, short and long narratives (myths, *tuturan*; tales, *sudsugid*; epics, *tultul*), while rituals and artistic symbolic expressions (music, poetry) set their interpretations of life and death into motion.
- 20 *Ämpuq*, the Master, is the supreme Deity and the world is conceived as a pile of disks or 'plates', *rayaq*, in twice seven levels, above and below the earth, *dunyaq*.
- 21 *Ämpuq*, has his abode on the 7th realm, the Emyrean, *Anduwanän*.
- 22 Grand-Father Thunder, *Upuq Kuyäw*, evolves in the clouds and by way of lightning and diluvian rain, strikes the genuine people dwelling on earth.
- 23 We are then caught in a vise between seven levels above, as *Upuq Kuyäw* speaks loud and strikes with lightnings and seven levels below, as the Fish-Dragon, *Tandayag*, evolves in the Abyss, *Basad*, provoking geysers, deluges and tsunamis.
- 24 All these threats are turning real when in their life on earth, people are in the wrong, when misconduct prevails and *Adat* is not carefully respected.

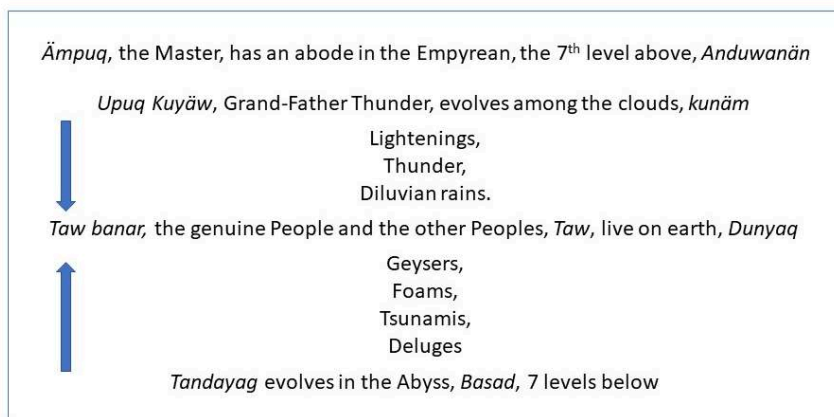


Figure 2 : Mt. Mantalingayan from the eastern side

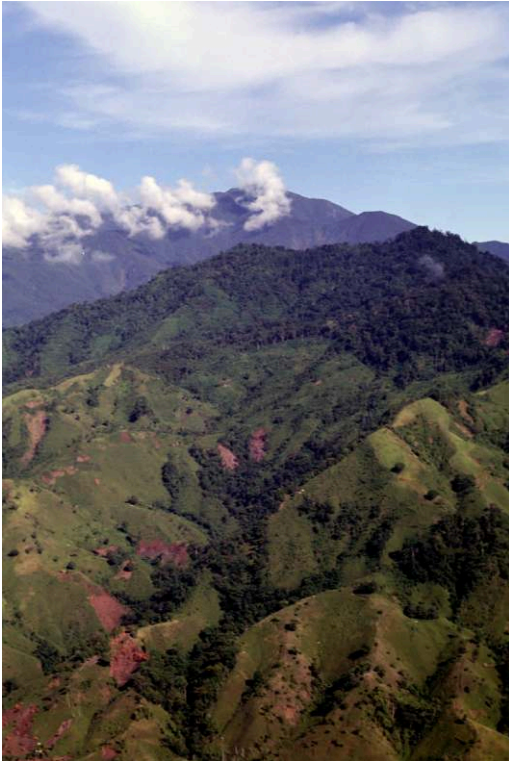


Photo. N. Revel, 1988.

- 25 *Kăbătangan*, < [*Kă-bătang-an*]: plural of *bătang*, “trunk” means: Trees’ trunks, Trees’ boles. It is the name given by the Highlanders to Mount Mantalingahan and refers to the *băgtik* tree (*Agathis philippinensis* Warb. or *Agathis dammara*). It provides the precious *almaciqa* resin to make lacquers, paintings and varnishes, a forest product the Highlanders own from generation to generation, highly valorized as a product they can collect and sell.

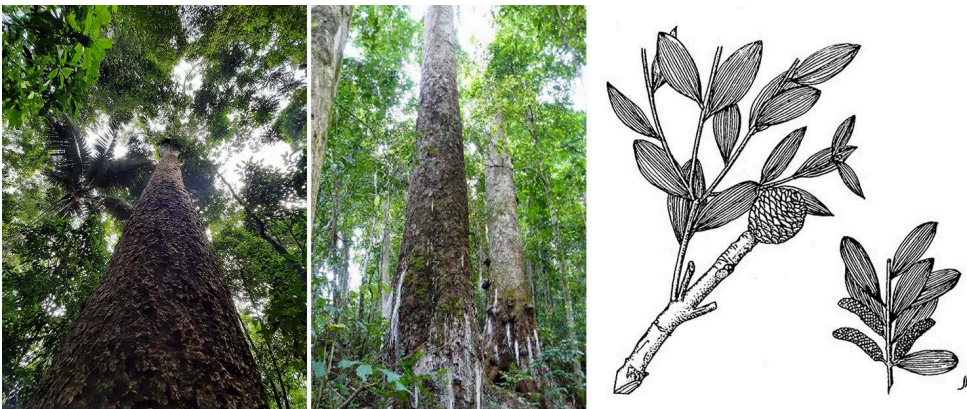
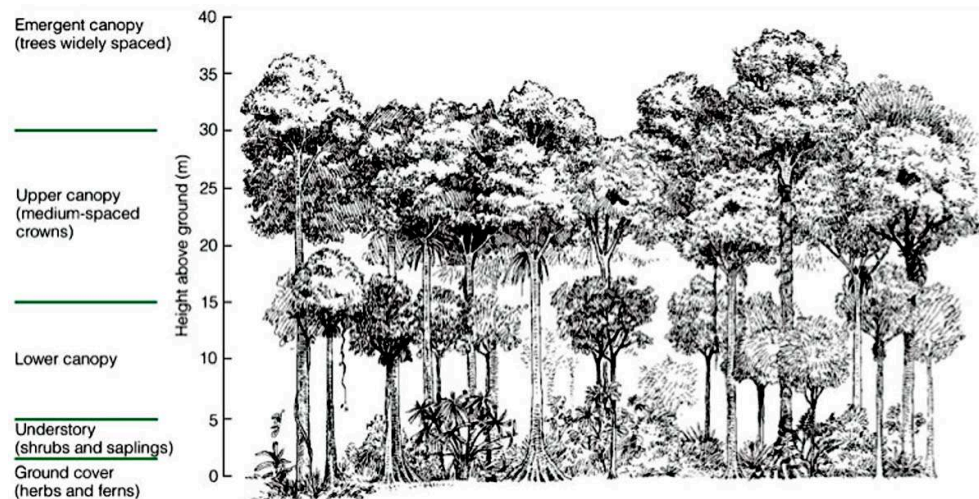
Figure 3 : “Trees’ Trunk” forest, *Kăbătangan*

Photo. Norli Colili, 2017 ; Drawing by Jacqueline Lemeux, MNHN. (Revel 1990-1992, v. 1 : 211)

- 26 It refers also to the various huge *Dipterocarpaceae* like *Ginuqu* or *Mangis* (*Koompassia excelsa* Taub.), *Salăng* (*Canarium aspersum* Bentham) etc., present in the rain forest, *rupaq* and *găbaq* (Figure 4).

Figure 4 : The various strata of the tropical rain forest



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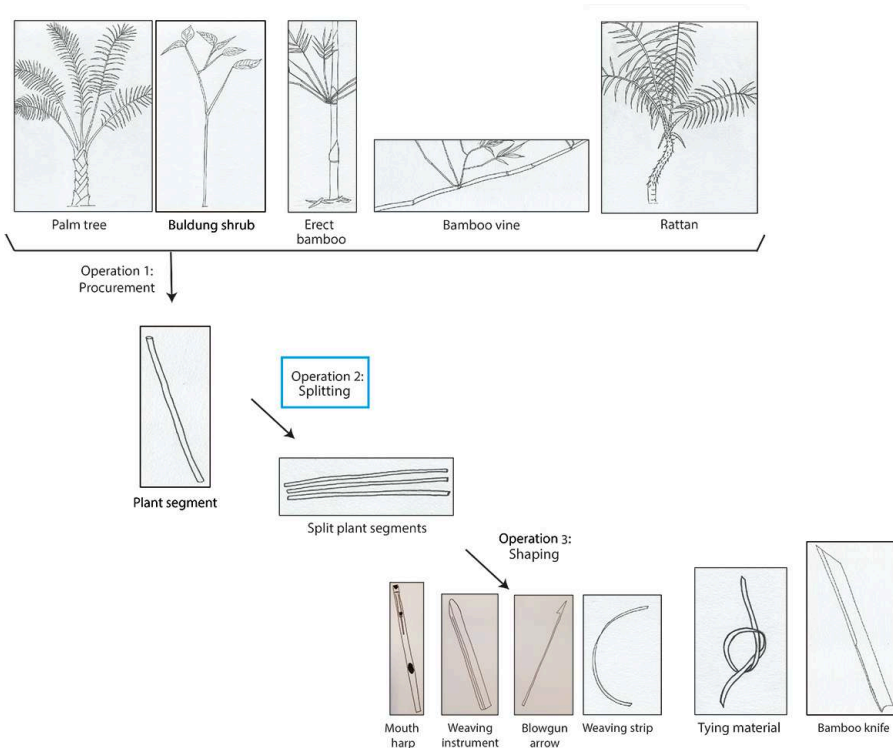
- 27 In this inhabited world, the Highlanders lived experience takes place. This is where their subjectivities – senses, intelligence and imagination – evolve since childhood (Revel *et al.* 2017); during all their life, they accumulate an empirical knowledge by evolving in the phenomenal world, their oral/aural memory and lived experiments is shared from eldest to youngsters the Teaching of their Ancestors, *Tuturan üt Käggunggurangan*, reveals a very peculiar interpretative presence, a co-presence with all that is.
- 28 Listening to speech acts, discourses as well as elaborated composed narratives within their socio-cultural, their eco-symbolic frame of reference, reveals some of their fundamental attitude towards life, gives us access to Meaning, to the meaning they give to this mountain, their dwelling place, their home, the place they belong to and whose trees belong to them.
- 29 As a matter of fact, Meaning is at the very core of ‘all that is’, the seven golden threads that have been woven precisely by *Nägsalad*, ‘the Weaver’ as the myth of the earth explains the context, the spatio-temporal frame in which the *Taw banar* inter-act, move, think and behave respecting – or breaking – the rules involving the many collectives in presence.
- 30 We have attempted to penetrate the intimacy of the system of thought the Pala’wan Highlanders live on within the given milieu surrounding them, to capture the way they relate to all things of the phenomenal world: trees, forests, wilderness, animals, upland fields associating cultivated grains and tubers, creeks and rivers ways, under bushes paths, and open sea, soundscapes, winds and rains, sky and reckoning stars, but also with hamlets, nuclear family ‘homes’, *bänwa* and the ‘large meeting house’, *käläng bänwa*.
- 31 I order to do so, I choosed to focus on bamboo<sup>4</sup> as an eco-symbol, the recurrent raw material and multifaceted motif of the Highlanders’ dwellings and crafts.



## From the forest to the home, a major eco-techno-symbol: Bamboo

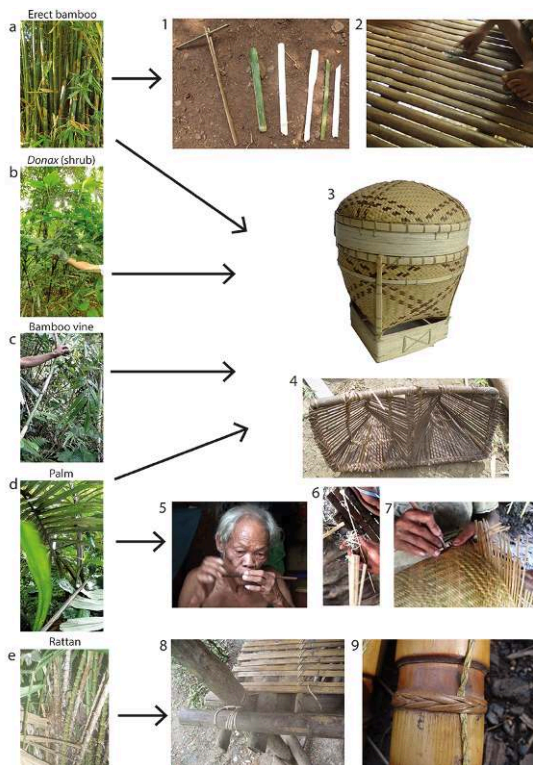
- 32 We know seven species of erected bamboos (the archetype being *kāwayan*, *Bambusa blumeana* Roxb.) and six vine bamboo (the archetype being *Pawaq*, *Cephalostachyum mindorense* Gamble). They are needed and highly valorized in domestic daily life. These Gramineae, grow by vegetative reproduction. As a raw material, they are associated with six sagu palms and five areca palms but also with twelve rattans, *nawi* (Palmaceae), for tying.
- 33 Wood can be used for roof's beams and posts, and bamboos and woven palms' leaves alternate with *kugun* (*Imperata* subsp. *koenigii* (Retz.) Tzvelev. for roofing). However, bamboo remains the basic material used for making houses.
- 34 All these raw materials are non-timber forest products used in the making of the various objects, tools and containers: a delicate blowpipe, *sapukan* (two long bamboos inserted in a third one ornamented by pyro-graved spirals) a quiver, *kārbang*, (two types of arrows in a single big internode with some glue fixing magic spells on the top of its covert); spoons and a braker of fibers, *papalu*, (for sagu preparation, *natāk*) two or three internodes water container, *sagāb* (the configuration of three stars aligned: Alshair-Altair-Tarazeb in the constellation of Aquila), they observe in the night sky as a sign for planting, a smoking set, *alāp* (a red jasper fire stone, a piece of iron, *santikan* and amadoo, *lublub*, to light a cigaret); a knife, *balwis*, to mince dried tobacco leaves or severing the umbilical cord of a baby, as well as scrappers, and four music instruments, a tiny ring flute, *bābārāk* and a longer leap flute, *suling*, a jew's harp, *āruding* and a tubular zither, *pagang*. (See Drawings by Anna Fer in N. Revel (1990-1992, vol I and vol. III).
- 35 Quite abundant in many varieties, in the lowland, *napan*, the coastal plain, *daranasan*, the foothills, *tikād*, and the upland, *dayaq*, *kāwayan* (*Dendrocalamus merrilliana* Elmer or *Bambusa blumeana* Roxb.), *tāring* (*Bambusa vulgaris* Schrader ex Wendl.) *sumbiling* (*Schizostachyum lumanpas* Merrill), *bungbung* (*Schizostachyum brachycladum* Kurz), all these bamboos are a strong erected, noble raw material, however perishable when attacked by a pest, *bukbuk* for instance.
- 36 The bamboo culm is cut cross-wise to the fibers, an internode or more is then selected, snicked with a bolo, *tukāw*, twined, split in two, rough out to obtain smaller split segments, slivered, stripped, woven or shaped into a blade or an arrow (Figure 5)<sup>5</sup>.

Figure 5 : Bamboo knife Manufacture



In : Xhaufclair et al. 2020

Figure 6 : Bamboos, palm and rattan used for making daily objects



Hermine Xhaufclair

- 37 Bamboo allows to make temporary and renewable shelters, fresh and ventilated houses for a nuclear family. From green when freshly cut, it turns slowly dry and golden under the sun's rays. (Figures 7, 8, 9)

Figure 7 : Shelters along the *Mäkägwaq* river



Photo N. Revel 1971

Figure 8 : *Bänwa* Nuclear family house, Malia



Photo Norli Colili, 2015

Figure 9 : *Mäkägwaq*: Antonita Bibas and her handmade winnowers, *niq-nigu*. House's walls made of wooden frames and woven bamboo, *sawali*



Photo N. Revel, 1996

- 38 It allows to make partitions, *dingding*, side-platforms, *särimbar*, floors, *datag*, but also snares and traps, *bawäg* to hunt boars, capture birds and small rodents, as well as lines,

*kahit*, to fish with hooks, in the river and the many strips slivered by women to weave baskets and winnowers, *tabig*, *tingkáp*, *nigu*. These daily objects and tools are renewed once a year, when the first variety of rice is about to be harvested the happier period in a yearly cycle named People's Life, *Byag át Taw* (Figure 10).

Figure 10 : *Kulbang*: Hunting birds with a blowpipe *sapukan*, a quiver *kárbang*, and a covert basket *tingkáp*



Photo N. Revel, 1972

Figure 11 : *Tataran*: Pwäw weaving a *tabig* (left) and *Läsung*: Minsaya's baskets and winnowers woven for the new rice, in August (right)



Photo N. Revel, 1990

- 39 The origin of bamboo is linked to music (Figure 12). By way of an inversion, the myth reminds the Pala'wan that on full moon one can see the large bamboo, *kāwayan*, spreading out from a tubular zither resting on *Nangum*'s lap as she played excessively music, while iron wood, *tāgas*, (*Intsya biyuga* (Colebr.) Kuntze.), grows out of her partner's lute, since they were petrified for being excessive in playing continuously music and songs of seduction, *kulilal* (Revel 1990-1992, 2017)<sup>6</sup>.

Figure 12 : Left, *Kangrian*: two friends meet, one plays a bamboo zither, *pagang*. Right, *Läsung*: two friends *Mandun* and *Lapung* playing the lute, *kuyapiq*



Photo N. Revel, 1972 (left) and 1983 (right)

## Dwelling places: shelters in the wild, platforms in rock shelters and the large meeting house in a hamlet

- 40 To be protected from the sun during dry season, *Bulag*, and from strong winds, thunder and heavy rains during Monsoon season, *Barat*, various dwelling places are a must. Shelters are built on the edge of upland fields or alongside rivers and streams (Figure 13).
- 41 Figure 13 : *Put batu*: Houses made of bamboo platforms and light wood scaffoldson rock shelters



Photo. N. Revel, 1972

- 42 On this Eastern side to *Käbätangan* (Mt. Mantalingahan), an abrupt landscape with steep slopes, upland fields and fallows, cliffs and more recently erosion, prevail. Habitat is scattered and hamlets are small (3 to 8 houses). On the Western side, a larger plain and hilly landscape prevails and in the area of *Kulbiq Känipaqan*, hamlets are more densely populated and more extense.
- 43 *Lägwas\*\**, designates a living space, an open space enjoying the shade of a large fruit tree - mango tree, *mämpalam*, *mangga* (*Mangifera indica* L.), or jackfruit tree, *nangkaq* (*Artocarpus heterophyllus* Lam.), grape-fruit tree *swaq gadya* (*Citrus maxima* L.) - it is a life connecting place for the people of each household and a playground for children (Figure 14).

Figure 14 : *Mäkägwaq*: large meeting house, *käläng bänwa*, and *lägwas*



Photo N. Revel, 1996

- 44 As a matter of fact a hamlet, *rurungan*<sup>7</sup> consists of several nuclear family houses, *banwa*, and is composed of a group of sisters, their first female cousins assimilated to classificatory sisters, their children and their parents, (father, mother and/or uncle) to which the respective young men came to 'aggregate' as husbands, *mämikit*. It is a social space of mutual help and sharing, where collaboration and solidarity prevail, but disputes do occur too and are then controlled by the eldest, *mägurang*, or discussed and judged according to the Customary Law, *Adat*, the arbitration of a headman *panglima*, or the sentence of a judge, *ukum*.

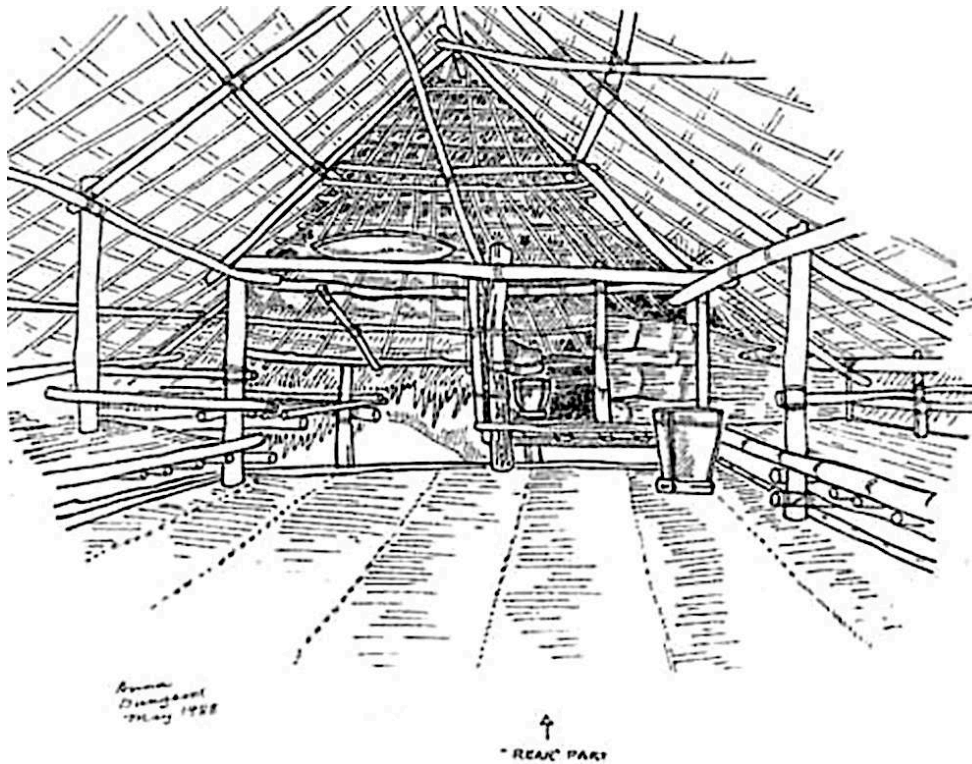


Figure 15 : *Amrang*: upland field, *uma* – hamlet, *rurungan* – forest, *gäbaq*

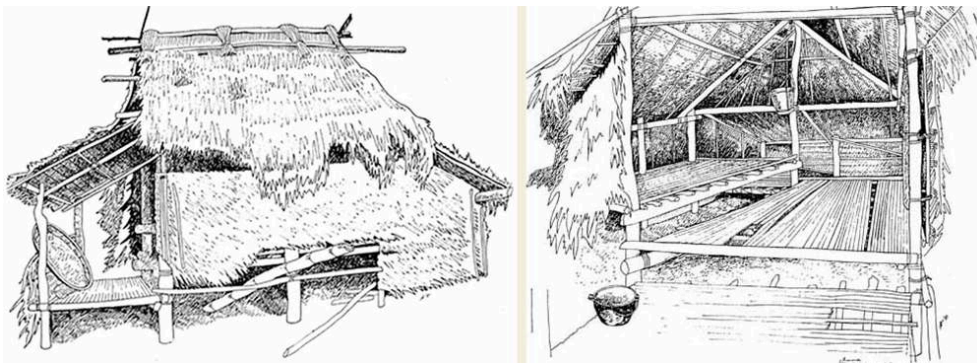


Photo N. Revel, 1988

- 45 *Käläng bänwa*, the large meeting-house built on strong wooden posts, is the most striking example of a pleasant, well ventilated dwelling place. There, gongs are played inviting far away relatives and visitors to join the feast for the Commemoration of the Master of Rice, *Tamwäy ät Ämpuq ät Paräy* and the Commemoration of the Master of Flowers, *Tamwäy ät Ämpuq ät Burak* or a generous ritual rice sharing *lutlut*, to bring fertility and good health to a community in an area of endogamy between two valleys, *Tambiläw*.
- 46 It is the place *par excellence* for the judge, *ukum*, to gather several head-men, *pänglima*, and conduct a jural debate, *bisara*, the large space for a marriage discussion followed by a wedding celebration, *bulun*, to welcome and entertain a newly arrived guest listening to a singer of tales, *mänunultul* (Figure 16).

Figure 16 : Interior of the large meeting house *kālang bānwa*

Ink Drawings by Anna Fer, house architecture 1981

Figure 17 : Exterior and interior view of a nuclear family house *banwa*

Ink Drawings by Anna Fer, house architecture 1981

- 47 Its four lateral elevated platforms, *sarimbar*, surrounding a spacious central floor, *lawasan*, all made of bamboo, turn this house into a place of sharing, *par excellence*, attending long jural debates, enjoying formal conversations, sharing of ideas, listening to story telling, competing in riddles, *igum*, a place for young maiden and married ladies to enjoy their feet percussion dance, *tarāk*, as they listen to the gong ensemble *Basal*, an hospitable place for resting and sleeping in togetherness and conviviality.
- 48 It is also the place for an equitable sharing of raw food between sisters who, every other day, gather tubers, *luluwakān* and vegetables in one of their respective upland field. It can be the place for a *pānglima* and his wife to stay aside in an alcove, *singlād*,

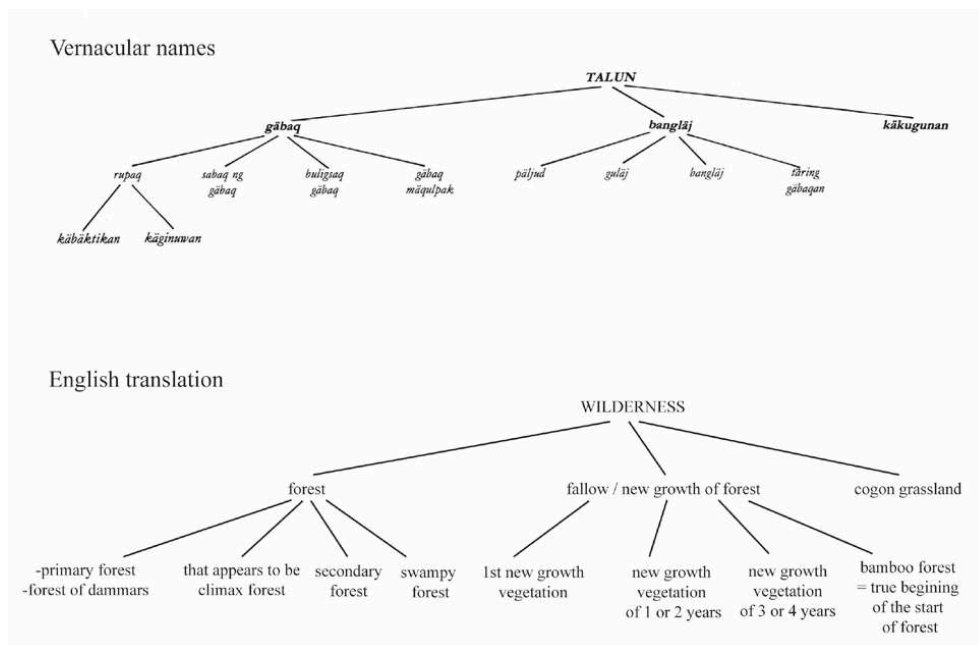
where the precious jars, chinese plates and gongs of this kins' group were kept out of sight and protected.

- 49 However bamboo is also linked to semi-protected food products, close to the house and the near by forest. Mothers gather bamboo shoots, *päri räbung*, as well as banana inflorescence, *päri pusuq*, or palm heart, *päri säpwa*, to prepare a viand, *isdaqan*, to complement the staple food, *käkanän* and please the appetitus in a frugal meal.
- 50 Women and children like to fish with hook and line along creeks and streams, while young men with homemade snorkles and spear gun, fish underwater or join in a collective fishing party by beating ichtiotoxic leaves like *pangi* (*Pangium edule* Reinw.) or *tubah* roots in the river bed (*tubah*, non identifié).
- 51 Small edible ferns, *paku*, and many varieties of mushrooms (11 growing on the ground, 23 on dead tree's trunks or on bamboo)<sup>8</sup>, land snails (*patung balay*, *patung lintang*, *patung kälaq*, etc.) are picked up on their way back home.
- 52 After ten to twelve years fallows, a secondary forest of bamboo, *Täring gäbaqan*, (*Bambusa vulgaris* Schrader ex Wendl.) indicates that the soil was given enough time to regenerate and an upland field, *uma*, can eventually be open anew.

## A lively and lived forest

- 53 The four distinct vegetation formations<sup>9</sup> and the various stratas raising to the upper canopy are not perceived as hostile in day time; on the contrary, it is rather a pleasant playground for hunters, foragers and the little flocks of children from 3 to 12 years old, the *känakan* (Revel *et al.* 2017).

Figure 18 : Typology of forests and fallows



N. Revel, *Fleurs de Paroles*, 1990-1992, I : 95

- 54 This lively world can provoke a genuine cynegetic passion, driving afew men to keep on hunting and foraging in the forest, neglecting totally the work in the upland field –

mainly during the long rainy season when the tedious work of weeding, *mängilamunän*, is needed for the rice to grow from suckers. Such was the behavior of Usuy, the shaman and beloved singer of tales of *Mäkägwaq* valley<sup>10</sup>.

- 55 At dusk, the forest turns dark and is felt as hostile and dangerous. Children are asked not to make noise anymore. It is the time when *Säqitan* and many Malevolents, *Taw Märaqat*, take over and move around, hitting, stinging, burning, fitting, hurting whoever crosses their ways and meets with them inadvertently. Hence to walk in the forest at night searching for medicinal plants, *ururu*, is considered a brave and daring act. In the past, Tagung took this risk to cure a sick relative. He was then living in *Kämantiyan*, near the *Tämlang* river valley.
- 56 The hardships and pleasures one feels walking in the forest, the nice sensation its bounty inspires to the hunter-forager, the blow of wind in dry season, the lights and sounds filtered by the foliage, the bachelors' joyful screams of departure, *linsaq*, as they run downstream to the foothill market and the coastal plain, the melodic call of young mothers to their sisters carrying on their shoulder bamboo tubes, *sagäb*, on their way to the spring, the careful listening to birds' songs and their omens, *ngasa*, the noisy chitchat of birds with others animals are part of the Highlanders daily soundscape, a dialogic experience between humans and the living in the surroundings of the house, *lagwas* and the near by forest. (Figure 19)

Figure 19 : *Kangrian*, bamboo water container *Sagäb*, 3 internodes



Photo N. Revel, 1972

- 57 In other words, the teachings of the Ancestors, *tuturan ät Kägunurangan*, together with the lived empirical knowledge perpetually generated are inherent to the Highlanders' motions and actions upstream *dayaq*, and the foot hills, *tikäd* (Ingold 2003 : 302).

## Käbägtikan, the Forest of Bägtik (*Agathis philippinensis* Warb.) the Wind' Voices

Figure 20 : Trunk of *Bägtik* (*Agathis philippinensis* Warb.) with the crystals of resin



Photo Norlita Colili, 2017

- 58 The Trees boles of *Käbägtikan*, are the only ancestral possession of the *Taw ät dayaq* and the resin they know how to collect introduced them to a larger scale cash money economy. Collecting crystals of resin is a periodical men' hard work. In a remote part of the forest, they have inherited some huge trees from their parents and grandparents, and know how to gather lumps of white pure resin leaking from the huge trunks.
- 59 As a group, they go and spend one or two nights entertaining themselves by way of conversations, storytelling, *sudsugid*, jokes, *luluy*, or listening to a singer of tales long sung narrative, *tultul*.
- 60 The forest, *gäbaq* and all the more the 'primary' forest, *rupaq*, the forest of damars, is also a beautiful world of sounds, the Highlanders enjoy to listen to, imitate and be inspired by.
- 61 During these very peculiar nights in altitude, a singer of tales can step aside from the group of men and spend hours listening to the wind's melodies filtered by the upper and lower foliage of the canopy.
- 62 He might be then 'touched', *läpläp*, by a Good Doer, a Benevolent of the Mounts, *Taw ät Käbudbuluran*. This is a moment of poetical inspiration, *päläpläp*, a state between wake and sleep. Through the canopy, the wind blows melodic motives to the attentive ear of the becoming singer of tales.

- 63 After a long solitary process of working memory and creativity experienced in the forest, these melodies will turn into sound icons of the various characters as a sung narrative is recreated by each singer of tales. Someday he will feel more confident and able to perform the song of an epic a whole night long to an attentive audience in the *kālang bānwa* as the first rays of the sun appear.
- 64 All these sounds, motions and lived experiences reveal the Highlanders' embodiment and attachment to the forest of *Kābātangan*, Trees' Trunks (Mt. Mantalingayan), their home.
- 65 To bring this brief synthesis to a close, I wish to raise once again a major question: How can one access Reality?
- 66 In 1985, I defended a Thèse d'État entitled: *Burak āt bārās*, 'Fleurs de paroles'. *Du Sens et de la Traduction* (Revel 1990-1992). My quest during 18 years alternating fieldwork and precious collaborations of various Departments at le Jardin des Plantes in Paris, was about Reality and the Meaning of things.
- 67 Is Reality as lived and conceived by the Pala'wan, then observed, described in their words and analysed by a linguist-anthropologist genuinely accessible to them both?
- 68 After many years of interrogation, I would answer today quoting Augustin Berque:  
 "The meaning of things is a matter of trajectory, a general operation through which the data of the environment are captured as something by one's senses, actions, mind and language." (Berque 2016)  
 "Reality is neither purely objective, nor purely subjective, but always trajective" (Berque 2018).
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## NOTES

1. This subtitle is borrowed from one of the variants of the Teaching about the Earth (the Land) and its very beginning, *Tuturan ät Lugtaq*.
2. Major monographic books and many articles on pala'wan culture published since the seventies are present in this article. I refer to: Charles Macdonald publications in social anthropology, religion and mythology (1977, 1988, 1990, 2011, 2018) on the one hand, publications by myself in linguistics, ethnoscience, oral tradition and cognition (1979, 1983, 1990-1991-1992, 2000, 2013, 2017), on the other hand; I also refer to the works of anthropologists on neighboring cultures in Pala'wan, namely: Eric Casino (1965), among the Jama Mapun, Dario Novellino among the Batak in the North of the main island and the Pala'wan, North of Brooke's Point, and Jess Peralta among the Taw ät Batu living in the Ransang valley.
3. Philippe Descola (2015) has described the notion of 'Collectifs': they consist of stabilized associations between homogenous and heterogeneous beings and the human members of this assemblage can think about and conceptualize these various associations. All the existing beings (in French 'les existants') are sharing one single living place. A quite similar representation is



found among the Batak, a Negrito group of hunters foragers farther north on the main island of Palawan (Novellino 2011, Ch. 8 : 108-109).

4. This part was inspired by the article of A. Berque (1992). A motive of the art of dwelling, that by way of a sensible form, expresses the physical and phenomenal as well as the bodily and symbolic relationship of human with the world, as well as the ethical and aesthetical link underlying postures, behaviors and built up forms.

5. H. Xhaufclair (2014), "*Bamboo Knife Manufacture*" on the operating chain described in her PHD Thesis, 2014. p. 212. '*Weaving Strips Manufacture*' p. 253.

6. In Southeast Asia, by way of many variants, bamboo is associated to a feminine motif. According to the types of social organization it can be a princess, like in the Malay sultanates or the first woman created as among the Bontoc in Northern Luzon (Elsa Clav&, pers. com. 2022). Invertedly, among the Pala'wan, a bamboo shoots up from a woman's lap as one can see a young maiden playing the pagang, the symbolic link to a feminine being is still present.

7. <sup>6</sup> It has been hypothesized that platform constructions might have existed in archaeological sites during Prehistory (Peralta 1979, 1983).

8. N. Revel 1990-1992, I : 143-144, 33 varieties of edible mushrooms.

9. N. Revel 1990-1992, I : 95, Typology of Forests and Fallows or new growth in the Wilderness, *Talun*.

10. N. Revel-Macdonald, 1982, Brève Histoire d'une vie, in « *Kudaman. Une épopée pala'wan chantée par Usuy* » III, pp. 44-54.

## ABSTRACTS

Nicole Revel, Emeritus senior researcher at CNRS, *Doctor Honoris causa* (Humanities) Ateneo de Manila University, Linguist and anthropologist, works since 1970 in the Philippines.

In collaboration with the Palawan Highlanders she described their language (1979) and their knowledge about Nature (1990-92). She also published part of their oral Tradition. Focusing on Austronesian languages, she conducted a workshop at CeDRASEMI on *Rice in SEA. Atlas of the vocabulary of the plant* (1988).

From 1990 to 2001, coordination of an international seminar on "Epics" in the *Integral Study of Silk Roads, Roads of dialogue*. Since then she is committed to the safeguarding of the literatures of voice.

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Centrée sur les langues austronésiennes elle dirigé un atelier du CeDRASEMI sur : *Le riz en Asie du Sud-Est. Atlas du vocabulaire de la plante* (1988).

Entre 1990 et 2001, à l'INALCO elle a coordonné un séminaire international : « *Epopées* » dans le cadre de l'*Étude intégrale des Routes de la Soie : Routes de Dialogue*.

Depuis, elle s'attache à la sauvegarde des « *Littératures de la voix* ». *The Philippines Epics and Ballads*

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Après avoir co-fondée en 2000, l'unité *Langues-Musiques-Sociétés* (LMS)-CNRS-Paris V René Descartes, elle est devenue membre de l'unité mixte CNRS-MNHN 7206 *Eco-anthropologie* et participe activement à l'enseignement de l'anthropologie linguistique au Musée de l'Homme.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Palawan, cosmogonie, bambou, écologie, mésologie

**Keywords:** Palawan, cosmogony, bamboo, ecology, mesology

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