Landas 32:2 (2018) 109–125

THE MYSTIQUE OF DIALOGUE

Pathway to Spirit Power for Liberative Struggle

Jojo M. Fung, S.J.

The experience of journeying for more than two decades with the indigenous peoples—such as the Lakota and the Apache of North America, the Murut of Sabah and the Semai of Perak in Malaysia, the Bontoc and Ifugao of the Philippines, the Karen and Lahu of northern Thailand, and the Kayah and Kayan of Myanmar—has been most enriching. They have taught a most invaluable lesson—that interaction and participation in their rituals entail recognizing the mystique of intercultural-religious dialogue.

In the first section of this article, I will explain a more contextual version of interreligious experience which involves a period of "discipling" under the immediate tutorship of a reputable shaman or spirit-guide of primordial or deceased shamans. In the second section, I will offer a more contextual reflection on the fourfold dialogue as enjoined by the Asian Bishops in the light of my interreligious experience. I will then explain in the third section why this reflection calls for greater recognition of the mystique in our dialogue with the indigenous peoples. Indeed, reflecting on my interreligious experience convinces me that dialogue must be about empowering the indigenous peoples to access and actualize the spirit power for the liberative struggle against the neocolonial imperialism that in turn spawns the globalization of neo-liberal capitalism.

https://publications.lst.edu/

1. "Discipling" as Integral to Dialogue

Indigenous shamanism is one of the many religious traditions in Asia that predate Christianity and offers a unique and valid process of "discipling" under the guidance of a *guru* in the person of the shaman. While Christianity has its own rites of initiation—the Catholic Church, for example, has the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, the process of "discipling" in indigenous shamanism is markedly different.

With its age-old beliefs and practices stemming from the ancient civilizations of ethnic groups, indigenous shamanism offers various ways of initiation.[1] For instance, what I term a "baptism" into the deep mysteries of life offers a pathway into the actual experience of shamanism in a Murut village community called Bantul in Sabah, East Malaysia. This "baptism" calls for the humbling of oneself to take one's place as an uninitiated and begin what can be a lifelong filial relationship with the master. Indeed, a certain passion to live with a community-acclaimed master-shaman in the rural village and learn at his feet is what drives an aspirant. The master-shaman in turn exercises the sole discretion to present the selected aspirant, should she or he be deemed suitable, to the spirit-world for approval and admission to apprenticeship. This period of apprenticeship is informal, ranging from daily conversations and doing daily chores with the master-shaman to actual ritual celebration.

This informal "rural school" begins with the initial stage of dipping in the waters of shamanism, known to the initiated Muruts as "*na rio*" (taking a bath). Upon completion of the first phase, the initiate enters into a more advanced level of immersion in which the master-shaman guides her or him in calling the different spirits to heal the sick,

[1]Among the indigenous communities of the Arecuna and Taulipang in South America, "the shamanic novitiate was reported to last from ten to twenty years" (L. Sullivan, *Icanchu's Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions* [New York: Macmillan / London: Collier Macmillan, 1988], 395 [see 386–465 for details]).

https://publications.lst.edu/

deliver those possessed by evil spirits, or improve the well-being of the community and the harmonious relationship between the human world and the spirit-world which guards over the Murut people, the river, the forests, and the land.

The rituals are occasions for the master-shaman to dictate more incantations which the spirit-guide offers to the initiate. The master-shaman will instruct the initiate on the intended purposes of the incantations and the kinds of occasions when such incantations can be used. The initiate is under the guidance of the master-shaman who "disciples" her or him through daily conversations and a series of rituals up until this point, after which she or he begins learning under the tutorship of the guiding spirits.

On certain evenings during the season of the "full moon," the initiate has to live alone with the master-shaman, in a hut away from the community, so that the latter can introduce the initiate to the family of spirits that the master-shaman is in touch with. The initiate recognizes the spirit-guide(s) assigned to him or her, in addition to the names given earlier, in this face-to-face encounter. The master-shaman then initiates the apprentice gradually into the art of "summoning" and "communicating" with the spirit-guides, allowing the latter to enter into a more personal and closer relationship with the family of spirits.

When the master-shaman passes away, the apprentice becomes the medium of communication with the family of spirits and continues to mediate the power of the spirits for the common well-being of the indigenous communities and their everyday struggle for dignity and livelihood. With the exercise of these powers from the spirits, the disciple-shaman is gradually acclaimed as the community shaman and, over time, even as the shaman of the indigenous peoples in the wider region.

This whole process of the initiation and formation of a "novice shaman" into a "qualified shaman" who acts as an intermediary between the community and the spirit-world is strewn with what Aloysius Pieris calls a "soteriological nucleus not yet assimilated into Christian consciousness," and yet "an Asian theology of liberation lies

https://publications.lst.edu/

hidden there" and the "recovery of an ancient revelation is indeed a new creation."[2] My immersion into indigenous shamanism has convinced me that God reveals its salvific value and has further persuaded me that God saves indigenous peoples (soteriology) through the worship and practices of their primal religions.

Reflecting thus on my own process of "discipling" and on the subsequent "baptism" into the deep mysteries of life in light of the double insights of Pieris, I felt a call to accompany these indigenous poor of Asia and unleash the soteriological power of their shamanic beliefs through the celebration of their shamanic rituals.[3] Indigenous shamanism is a source of liberative power not just for indigenous peoples but also for the teeming masses who suffer from crushing poverty and oppressive marginalization. Like other religious beliefs and practices of the poor, indigenous religiosity has the liberative power to free a world caught up in a model of unsustainable development that relentlessly exploits both natural and human resources because of greed and the lust for power.

A germinal liberation theology of sustainability also lies in indigenous religiosity. This liberation theology empowers the poor and enables them to supplant the logic of global capitalism with the logic of sustainable livelihood and development, one in which the earth's resources are cared for, thereby leaving enough for all. It is a sufficiency that is based on our just and harmonious relationship with fellow human beings and with Mother Earth.

[2]A. Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 71.

[3]See J. Fung, *Garing the Legend: A Decorated Hero, a Renowned Shaman*, Sabah Museum (Kota Kinabalu, Sabah: Percetakan Kolombong Ria, 2006); J. Fung, "An Asian Liberation Theology of Sacred Sustainability: A Local Theology in Dialogue with Indigenous Shamanism," *Asian Horizons* 4:2 (2010): 401–415; J. Fung, *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability: Church and Shamans in Dialogue for Liberative Struggle in Asia* (Quezon City: Jesuit Communications Foundation Inc., 2014).

https://publications.lst.edu/

2. Dialogue with Indigenous Communities

In his 1991 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope St. John Paul II highlighted the importance of the "dialogue of life" which includes three additional related aspects: cooperation in social concerns, theological exchange, and the sharing of religious experience (56–57). In the context of my experience in interacting with indigenous peoples, this "dialogue of life" calls for the dialogue of accompaniment, of sharing religious experience, and of liberative struggle (RM 59).

2.1. Dialogue of Accompaniment

The shamans believe that accompaniment is "from within"—first, they live in the midst of the village communities; second, they guide the communities through ritual celebrations so that they have an inner mystical experience of the sacred power of the spirits. Through communal prayers, chants, and dance, the shamans enter into the sacred presence of God, into an intimate and mystical experience of God through trances or altered states of consciousness (ASC), God who descends and missions them to act on God's behalf as salvific intermediaries.

Like Moses who guided the Israelite tribes across the Red Sea (or sea of reeds?) and through the wilderness to the promised land, who acted as their intermediary to obtain from the Lord manna and quails (Exod. 16:1–36) as well as potable water (Exod. 17:1–7) and, most important of all, the Sinai covenant and its laws (Exod. 24) which governed their relationship with God, the shamans accompany the indigenous communities in seeking God constantly in ritual celebrations and act on God's counsels for the good of the group. These shamans' intimate experience of God in ritual celebrations resonates with Jesus's own theophanic Abba-experiences at his baptism, transfiguration, and at Gethsemane before his arrest (Jn. 12:28–30; Lk. 22:43–44).

Through such recurrent and intimate mystical experiences of God, the shamans are empowered to guide the indigenous communities in

https://publications.lst.edu/

avoiding or forsaking all forms of addiction, evil desires, and greed especially. In this way, the marginal indigenous communities are delivered from the burden of poverty and given the opportunity to engage in sustainable livelihood with dignity, justice, and peace.

In this dialogue, the shamans delight in a Church that encourages them to establish a network of male and female shamans so that they feel strengthened as a collective of like-minded specialists who serve as community elders, healers, exorcists, prophets, ritual performers, or teachers. The presence and accompaniment of the Church during the process of organizing the network thus lends moral support to the shamans, legitimizing the shamanic traditions as loci of God's revelation and salvation[4] since—as Craffert unequivocally postulates[5]—the shamans are types of the Galilean shamanic figure Jesus of Nazareth. The Church acknowledges and affirms their revelatory and salvific significance in the economy of God's plan of salvation.[6] Indeed, as envisaged by Fr. Jean-Pierre Oxibar, the empowering presence and protection of the Church ensures the "full flourishing" of these shamanic traditions.[7]

---

[4]F.-J. Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia* Vol. II: *FABC Documents from 1992–1996* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), 212.

[5]P. Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2008), 296.

[6]Eilers, *For All the Peoples of Asia* II; see also the 1995 document of the FABC Office of Evangelization based on a conference held in Hua Hin, Thailand with the theme *Evangelization Among the Indigenous Peoples of Asia*.

[7]The Lahu regarded Betharram priest Jean-Pierre Oxibar (1898–1964) as a prophet, liberator, and protector of theirs who "rejoiced in such indigenous traditions as being those of a people who, like his own Basques, could become Christians but still express their joy of life through the ways of their ancestors." Saint-Guily states that it was Oxibar's hope, moreover, that "these ancestral traditions would flower still more gracefully" under the protection of the new religion and "through his presence and his prayers." For more detail, see Anthony R. Walker, *Merit and the Millennium: Routine and Crisis in the Ritual Lives of the Lahu People* (New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corp., 2003), 621.

https://publications.lst.edu/

The Church, moreover, can help solve some problems which the shaman faces regarding the religious practices of their rituals. A case in point is family members' lack of full participation in the rites under the care of the shaman—the absence of family members hinders the shaman from performing the rites, calls into question the efficacy of the religious ritual, and thereby undermines the shaman's authority, which is a traumatic experience for him and can cause sickness and/or madness. A Church that is supportive of indigenous religion and recognizes its positive contribution to family spirituality and solidarity can therefore encourage participation in the shamanic rituals.

2.2. Dialogue of Religious Experience

The nature of this dialogue enjoins the Church of Asia to put out into the deep by plunging into the ritual celebrations so as to take delight in the sacred presence of the mystic Owner and absolute Being, *Taj Thi Ta Tau*. This dialogue of religious experience enables the Church to understand the importance of entering into the inner world of the mystical experience of the shamans,[8] allowing her to comprehend and appreciate the richness therein and thus be disposed to receive the revelation of God who is at work in their rites.[9]

---

[8]Fung, *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability*, 10.

[9]Participation in the shamanic rituals draws its assurance and inspiration from the Asian Bishops who state that in Asia,

> the dialogue of prayer and spirituality is highly valued. Prayer together, in ways congruent with the faith of those who take part, is an occasion for Christians and followers of other faiths to appreciate better the spiritual riches which each group possesses, as well as to grow in respect for one another as fellow pilgrims on the path through life. Human solidarity is deepened when people approach the divine as one human family. (Formation Institute for Interreligious Affairs IV, August 20–25 [Pattaya, Thailand: 2001], 8; available at https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/2001/09/11/fabc-leadership-training-calls-for-culture-of-dialogue&post_id=1147)

https://publications.lst.edu/

Rather than always being discursive and academic, this dialogue of religious experience with the shamans is conversational, celebratory, and, therefore, experiential. There will be opportunities to attend and participate in the ritual celebrations upon the invitation of the shamans by either listening to the chants as observers or taking part in communal dancing as participants in order to experience being possessed by the divine spirit (*rûaḥ 'ĕlohîm*). Such spirit-possession will enable the participants to gain an insight into the mystical experience of the shamans, an inner experience that complements what is observed on the outside. It is thus important for the participants to have both the observational experience of the outer world and celebratory experience of the inner world of the spirit in order to attain the desired complementarity of human and mystical experiences.

This dialogue of religious experience will also allow the Church of Asia to understand more about the inscrutable omnipresence of the Pentecostal Spirit[10] that shattered the mono-ecclesial Jewish community and poured forth into the multi-cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman world. Indeed, this universalization of the presence and manifestation of the Creative Spirit, alluded to in the multi-glossarial phenomenon experienced at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), is well attested to even now by

---

FABC III (Bangkok, 1982) urges the Church of Asia to journey in dialogue with people of other faiths so that we can better discern how God speaks to them in their lives, rituals, and histories as well as through them to us.

[10]The Asian bishops state the same conviction, that

> Christians believe that God's saving will is at work, in many different ways, in all religions. It has been recognized since the time of the apostolic Church, and stated clearly again by the Second Vatican Council (cf. GS 22; LG 16), that the Spirit of Christ is active outside the bounds of the visible Church (cf. *Redemptor hominis*, 6). God's saving grace is not limited to members of the Church, but is offered to every person.… His ways are mysterious and unfathomable, and no one can dictate the direction of His grace. (Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs II, Nov. 13–20 [Kuala Lumpur: 1979], 12; available at http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_25.pdf)

https://publications.lst.edu/

the shamans, religious sages, and the Church of Asia that is involved in this dialogue of religious experience.

The multi-religio-cultural manifestation of the Spirit paves the way for the Church to enter into a gradual understanding of the alternative ways by which shamans and indigenous communities express their religious experience as well as how they articulate their experience of being possessed and empowered by the Spirit, their understanding of God, and the liberative-salvific mission of this God. This articulation, done either on a one-on-one basis or in a small group, is more of a conversational sharing which involves recognition and clarification of what each dialogue partner is saying.

Yet what appears to be personal sharing is indeed an ongoing verbalized reflection on the mystical experiences of the shamanic ritual celebrations. By participating in this conversation, the Church is able to understand the revelation of God in and through the shamanic traditions. The Creative Spirit is already at work, purifying, elevating current understanding, and completing the experience with a new awareness so that the "elements of truth, of grace and goodness" that are not only "in the minds and hearts" of indigenous shamans and communities but also in "the rites and customs" of indigenous peoples are "healed, elevated, and completed" by God's Spirit (AG no. 9, LG no. 17).

In this dialogical process, the Church is able to perceive, intuit, and understand how God's Spirit speaks from within the shamans' inner or mystical experiences. It is important for her to comprehend the verbalization of their shamanic spirituality—the uniqueness of their God (*Theos*) who descends as Spirit (*Pneuma*), invisible to the human eye but able to be experienced in the human heart as a divine touch and mystical spark. The Church needs to experience and understand how the shamans come under the influence and guidance of the Creative Spirit and thus become divinely inspired, and how this Spirit-Savior (*Sôtêr*) liberates their people in their life-struggles as marginalized communities.

The Church, in fact, witnesses in the shamans' communal prayer, chant, and dance the living indigenous theology, pneumatology, and

https://publications.lst.edu/

soteriology arising from within the communities of believers in the primal religions. The growth and blossoming of a local theology, pneumatology, and soteriology are nurtured by the Creative Spirit "blowing where it wills" (Jn. 3:8), operating in and out of ecclesiastical structures and never totally monopolized or domesticated yet always empowering, liberating, and saving God's marginalized peoples.

As an intermediary of God in the dialogue, the Church in turn is invited to affirm the shamans' verbalized understanding and supplement it with whatever is needed to enrich and liberate their local theologies from any undue shadows of unethical influence. Finally, the Church as co-pilgrim is enjoined to "lift up" (as opposed to suppress and denigrate [cf. Jn. 8:28; 12:32; cf. Nb. 21:8]) the local indigenous theologies and communicate them in a language intelligible to the outside world so as to challenge and enrich the local, regional, and global Church and society.[11]

2.3. Dialogue of Liberative Struggle

Enkindled by shamanic God-experiences; empowered by indigenous theology, pneumatology, and soteriology; and motivated by an indigenous spirituality, both dialogue partners are poised for action—for the praxis of liberative struggle involving the indigenous communities in partnership with other stakeholders in civil and political society, and always in collaboration with the local councils and interfaith networks at the local and national levels.

The communities struggle for the land to ensure a sustainable livelihood with greater security and dignity in their villages. In the interfaith prayer service, the community invokes the Divine to recreate and sanctify the sacred space in their ancestral homeland. In the collective rite of sacralizing the forests, the people call upon

[11]The Asian Bishops have declared that "in each local church, each people's history, each people's culture, meanings and values, each people's traditions are taken up, not diminished nor destroyed, but celebrated and renewed, purified if need be, and fulfilled … in the life of the Spirit" (International Mission Congress [Manila: 1979], 15).

https://publications.lst.edu/

Him to protect the sources of water for irrigation, the rice grains to be used for sowing, the fields to be planted, etc. The communal struggle can also take the form of a crusade against the encroachment of developers and annexation of land by the hegemonic states, or a campaign against a neo-liberal economy that violates the dignity and security of marginal communities.

The Church of Asia, on the other hand, is enjoined by the shamans to engage as a dialogue partner in a liberative struggle with their peoples at the various levels. But how? At the socio-cultural level, the Church needs to respect the otherness of the cultural and religious identity of indigenous peoples so they are not totally assimilated by the dominant cultures. At the ecclesial level, she ought to give indigenous communities the democratic space to articulate their indigenous theologies and practice their shamanic spiritualities which call for the sacred sustainability of the earth and preservation of all life forms found therein. Finally, the Church at the local-regional-global structural level should support indigenous communities in their liberative struggle for freedom from the oppressive hegemony of global capitalism (see section 4 below).

The Church of Asia has much to gain from the dialogue with indigenous shamans in becoming a more inculturated Church among indigenous peoples. In this way, she will learn to treat the shamans with reverence, emulate their model of accompaniment, respect their mystical experiences of God, and support the liberative struggle of indigenous peoples for the sustainability of their livelihood in their ancestral homeland.

3. The Mystique of Dialogue

The experience of dialogue with indigenous peoples always brings us into the spirit-world—the realm of YHWH and His divine assembly (Ps. 82:1), of the sons of God (Ps. 29:1), the righteous people (*ṣaddîqîm* / *dikaioi*) in the Bible, and of "[all] those who have died and gone before us marked with the sign of faith" (Eucharistic Prayer I). More than just a memory, this spirit-world is a living presence and divine power that

https://publications.lst.edu/

suffuses the human world and consciousness itself. Indigenous wo/men elders, healers, sages, and shamans thus experience the mystery and power of the spirit-world whose presence they feel all the time. And yet we, too, can experience it through recurrent exposure to the indigenous spirituality of the community, mediated as it were through their seasonal ritual celebrations such as the annual water spirit ritual.

This lived spirituality of the indigenous community is best described as an embodied sense of an everyday mysticism,[12] a mystical sense of the spirit's presence and power that is akin to Rahner's insight that "the experience meant here is the experience of eternity"[13] because the suffusing sacredness, in all its infinite expansiveness, is experienced in our midst as plausible. This mystical sense is the lived mindfulness of the eclipse and a compenetration of the *anthropos*, the *cosmos*, and the spirit-world in this open and multiversal space of God's creation. It is a recurrent yet constant awareness that those in the spirit-world "are here with us, with power, accessible for our everyday resistance and liberative struggle." It is similar perhaps to the Ignatian mysticism of "seeing all things in God and God in all things"[14] and of always being thankful for God's presence in everyone and everything in creation.[15]

This mystical sense of the compenetrative presencing of the spirit-world enables the everyday mystics of the indigenous communities to explain that humans actually live in a web of interdependency

[12]See Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Experience of Grace," in *Theological Investigations* III, trans. Karl H. & B. Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1967), 87–88 and Harvey D. Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 60–61, 76–77.

[13]Rahner, "Reflections on the Experience of Grace."

[14]Cf. the *Contemplatio ad Amorem* of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (Sp. Ex. 230–234).

[15]In the October 4, 2010 report on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, remarked that "of course, in our encounter with others, our Ignatian tradition trains us to use methods which are discerning, contemplative, and grateful for God's presence alive in everyone and everything."

https://publications.lst.edu/

and interrelations that is suffused with sacredness and mystery.[16] In this cosmic relational web, the mystical sense makes us realize that "everything is sacred and rituals make everything sacred" due to the suffusing and sacralizing presence of the spirit-world.[17]

This mystical sense also enables us to appropriate mystical cosmology and anthropology in a mystical age[18] with the paradigmatic shift in consciousness that we are *homo spiritus* and *homo shamanicus*.[19] In other words, we are spirit-bodies with a mindfulness of the everyday presence and power of the spirit-world. The Great Creative Spirit

[16]This mystery is characterized, as quantum physics suggests, by complementarity, complexification, probability, profundity, synchronicity, unpredictability, and even a profound sense of direction. See D. O'Murchú, *In the Beginning was the Spirit: Science, Religion, and Indigenous Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 46, 72–73; M. Hathaway & L. Boff, *The Tao of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 316; H. Russell, "Quantum Anthropology: Reimaging the Human Person as Body/Spirit," *Theological Studies* 74:4 (2013): 934–959; J. Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25–26, 36–38; C. Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003); B. Cox & J. Forshaw, *The Quantum Universe (And Why Anything That Can Happen, Does)* (Boston: Da Capo, 2011).

[17]As for understanding God as creative activity, see Jürgen Moltmann (1985, xii; see also O'Murchú, *In the Beginning was the Spirit*, 138) who used the phrase "God the Holy Spirit … is *in* all created things." This God, in the postulation of Gordon D. Kaufman, "is an activity rather than a person" for "God is our name for the creativity in nature" and "the creativity in nature is God enough." See Gordon D. Kaufman, *In the Beginning: Creativity* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 2004), xi, 48; Stuart A. Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 284, 142; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1976); O'Murchú, *In the Beginning was the Spirit*, 51, 59, 138.

[18]See F. Tuoti, *The Dawn of the Mystical Age: An Invitation to Enlightenment* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997) and Kathleen Coyle, "Theology and the New Cosmology: A Quantum Leap in Theological and Spiritual Insight," *EAPR* 50:2 (2013): 189–205.

[19]See J. Fung, "Sacred Time for a Sacred Sojourn in the Mystical Age," *Ignis* XLII/IV (2013.4): 7–32.

https://publications.lst.edu/

along with ancestral and nature spirits alert and communicate with us through discernible signs such as dreams, calls of the birds and animals, and natural calamities like droughts, climate change, superstorms, and polar vortexes. At the same time, the spirit-world seeks human cooperation and agency in the activity of suffusing, sacralizing, sensitizing, and sustaining the *cosmos* and *anthropos*.

4. Gaining Access for Actualization

The *homo spiritus/shamanicus* endeavors to live out the Ignatian charism of being a "discerning person" (*anthropos diakritikos*) who is "perpetually mindful or watchful of God working in all things and at all times."[20] The human person, in other words, lives with a mystical sense that facilitates connection and communication with the cosmic spirit power; it is in the state of one-spirit-ness that the *homo spiritus/shamanicus* senses and discerns the disclosures from the spirit-world.

Once these communications are discerned and understood, the *homo spiritus/shamanicus* becomes the mediatory conduit of the spirit power in defending local indigenous communities against the onslaughts of rapacious capitalists and exploitative corporations. Such assaults are perpetrated by the hegemonic forces of the global oligarchy controlled by what Dean Henderson dubbed as the "Eight Families" (Goldman Sachs, Rockefeller, Lehman, Kuhn Loeb, Rothschild, Warburg, Lazard; and Israel Moses Seif) who operate the "Four Horsemen" of the oil cartel (Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, BP Amoco and Royal Dutch/Shell) and the "Four Horsemen" of banking (*Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, and Wells Fargo*)[21] with their colossal influence

[20]See Aloysius Pieris, "Spirituality as Mindfulness: The Biblical and Buddhist Versions," in Patrick Gnanapragasam & Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Negotiating Borders: Theological Explorations in the Global Era* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 185–198, particularly 187.

[21]*D. Henderson, The Federal Reserve Cartel: The Eight Families. Centre for Research on Globalization. Available at* https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-federal-reserve-cartel-the-eight-families/25080 *(accessed June 6, 2018).*

https://publications.lst.edu/

over the CFR (Council on Foreign Relations), GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), RIIA (the Royal Institute of International Affairs), G7/G8 and G22, UN, WB, WTO, and IMF.[22] It is a menace that must be confronted by mounting multi-sectoral and multi-level countercultural movements of solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized populace of the world. Such subaltern movements need to wed religio-cultural sensibilities and wisdom with the cosmic-divine power of the creation-wide spirit-world, thereby producing a confluence that enables the *homo spiritus/shamanicus* to access and actualize the cosmic power for the reversal of the neocolonial and liberal capitalist cartels' hegemony. Indeed, the globalization of this "mindful access" to the spirit-world gradually makes possible the eruption of the insurrectional power of the subaltern movements[23] for concerted action[24] against the systemic injustice and despotic oppression that perpetuate the hegemony of the global cartels.[25]

---

[22]See T. Volgy, K. Kanthak, D. Frazier, & R. Ingersoll, "The G7, International Terrorism and Domestic Politics: Modeling Policy Cohesion in Response to Systemic Disturbance," *International Interactions* 30:3 (2004): 191–209; Peter Kanyandago, "Globalization: A Reflection on Its Anthropological Underpinnings in Relation to Social Justice," in Gnanapragasam & Fiorenza, *Negotiating Borders*, 457–464, here at 461; and Philip L. Wickeri, "Globalization and Transnational Christianity: Notes on Intercontextual Theology and the Present Ecumenical Situation," in Gnanapragasam & Fiorenza, *Negotiating Borders*, 464–483, here at 466.

[23]See Etienne Balibar, "Outlines of a Topography of Cruelty: Citizenship and Civility in the Era of Global Violence," *Constellations* 8:1 (2001): 15–29, here at 18; Nevzat Soguk, "Border's Capture: Insurrectional Politics, Border-Crossing Humans, and the New Political," in Prem Kumar Rajaram & Carl Grundy-Warr, eds., *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 283–308, here at 296–299.

[24]Felix Wilfred believes that "the hope for tomorrow lies in the resistance today" in his article "Searching for David's Sling: Tapping the Local Resources of Hope" (*Concilium* [2004], 85–95, here at 86).

[25]See Dean Henderson, *Big Oil & Their Bankers in the Persian Gulf: Four Horsemen, Eight Families & Their Global Intelligence, Narcotics & Terror Network* (Carson City, NV: Bridger House Pub., 2010) and Dean Henderson, *The Grateful Unrich:*

https://publications.lst.edu/

This struggle for liberation thus calls for the *homo spiritus/shamanicus* to engage in the fourfold activities of God's Creative Spirit:

i) suffusing the *cosmos* and *anthropos* with God's sacred presence and power so that humankind would relate to God's creation with reverence and sensitivity;

ii) sacralizing the *cosmos* and *anthropos* through the power of the spirit-world especially through ritual celebrations so that everything and everyone is made sacred;

iii) sensitizing the rest of humankind to the need for developing and globalizing mindfulness of the spirit-world in order to actualize and harness its spirit power for the concerted action against the global cartels at the local, regional, and global levels; and

---

Revolution in 50 Countries (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010). Richard Freeman states that these cartels—Cargill, Continental, Louis Dreyfus, Bunge and Born, André, and Archer Daniels Midland/Töpfer—exercise "complete domination over world cereals and grains supplies, from wheat to corn and oats, from barley to sorghum and rye," including "meat, dairy, edible oils and fats, fruits and vegetables, sugar, and all forms of spices," and they have "moved into hoarding, increasing [their] food and raw materials holdings." Freeman warns, furthermore, that "the Anglo-Dutch-Swiss cartel is playing for high stakes—the ability to constrain the supply of raw materials, and above all, food, to turn back the clock of history, and reduce mankind from the 5.6 billion population it currently enjoys to the state of a few hundred million semi-literate souls scratching out a bare existence." Freeman boldly advocates that such an assault "cannot be fought timidly [that the] full truth about the food cartel must be known." Freeman's boldness resonates with Dean Henderson's remark: "The demonic City of London *Illuminati* banksters may have unlimited time and money.… The human spirit has unlimited potential. We are much closer to the beginning of this story than to the end." See Richard Freeman, "The Windsors' Global Food Cartel: Instrument for Starvation," *Executive Intelligence Review* 22:49 (1995): 16–24 and Dean Henderson, "An Economic Corpse: Ukraine Falls Under Fascist Bankster Thumb," *21st Century Wire* (March 13, 2014). Available at https://21stcenturywire.com/2014/03/13/an-economic-corpse-ukraine-falls-under-fascist-bankster-thumb/.

https://publications.lst.edu/

iv) sustaining the *cosmos* and *anthropos* with the sacred presence and power of the spirit-world so that creation manifests the eternal glory and splendor of God's Creative Spirit.

Conclusion

This theological reflection on my "dialogue of life" with the religio-cultural traditions of indigenous peoples is more than just a verbal and academic engagement. It is an "embodied dialogue" between humans who are body-and-spirit, who live in a web of relations which encompasses the spirit-world. The initiated or "discipled" *homo spiritus/shaminicus* exercises the capacity to access and actualize the sacred power of the spirit-world in the various instances and places of contestation with the super/supra hegemons of the world. This liberative struggle, undertaken with and for the marginalized indigenous communities, is facilitated by the fourfold activities of God's Creative Spirit through the *homo spiritus/shamanicus* so that God and God's reign pervade in creation. In this way, the "dialogue of life" that embraces the spirit-world brings about the total sacralization of creation so that God is in all, through all, and all in all.

https://publications.lst.edu/

CONTRIBUTORS

Miriam R. Alejandrino, O.S.B., is currently the Academic Dean of St. Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute and a professor at St. Francis Xavier Regional Major Seminary in Davao City. She obtained her licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, doctorate in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and a licentiate in Monastic Theology from San Anselmo in Rome. She taught for several years at Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay City and has published scholarly articles in various journals. An excerpt from her doctoral dissertation, *Deborah and Barak: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Analysis of Judges 4 and 5*, was published in Rome by the Pontifical Gregorian University (1998). Her latest book, *History of Salvation in the Old Testament: A Journey of Faith: A Handbook for Teachers and Students*, is forthcoming from Claretian Publications. She is also a trustee of the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines.

Jojo M. Fung, S.J., hails from Sabah, Malaysia, and is a faculty member of both Loyola School of Theology and the East Asian Pastoral Institute. He obtained his MA in Social Anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Jesuit School of Theology & Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley; and doctorate in Contextual Theology from the Association of Theological Colleges, Chicago. As a research fellow of both the Sacred Springs Dialogue Institute of Spirituality and Sustainability and the Research & Training Center for Religio-Cultural Communities (RTRC) and coordinator of the Jesuit Companions in Indigenous Ministry (JCIM), he conducts courses and research on issues related to indigenous peoples. His latest book is *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability: Asian Church in Dialogue with Shamans for Liberative Struggle* (2014).

Johnny C. Go, S.J., is concurrently serving as the Director of the Science and Art of Learning and Teaching (SALT) Institute at the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines and Education

https://publications.lst.edu/

Secretary for the Jesuit secondary and pre-secondary schools in the Asia-Pacific. He completed his doctorates in education in 2016 at the UCL Institute of Education, University of London and Singapore National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University after his term as President of Xavier School from 2001 to 2013. He also teaches education and philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines. Aside from journal articles on education, his most recent publications include *Religious Education from a Critical Realist Perspective: Sensus Fidei and Critical Thinking* (New York: Routledge, 2019) and *Learning by Refraction: A Practitioner's Guide to 21st-Century Ignatian Pedagogy* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2019).

James H. Kroeger, M.M., has served mission in Asia (Philippines and Bangladesh) since 1970, working in parishes and serving mostly in the education-formation apostolate of seminarians, catechists, and lay leaders. He currently teaches Christology, Ecclesiology, Missiology, and "Asian Theology" at the Loyola School of Theology, East Asian Pastoral Institute, and Mother of Life Catechetical Center in Metro Manila and has written extensively on Asian (FABC) and Philippine theology, mission, interfaith dialogue, and the Second Vatican Council. His recent books include *Exploring the Priesthood with Pope Francis* (Manila: St. Paul's Publications), *Telling the San Jose Story: Historical Perspectives* (Manila: San Jose Seminary Alumni Association), *Asia's Dynamic Local Churches* (Manila: Claretian Publications), *Becoming Missionary Disciples* (Manila: PMS), *A Vatican II Journey: Fifty Milestones* and *Walking in the Light of Faith* (Manila: St. Paul's Publications), and *The Gift of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).

James McTavish, F.M.V.D., is currently doing formation work for the Verbum Dei missionary community in Quezon City, Philippines. He finished his undergraduate studies in medicine at Cambridge University, England, graduated as a medical doctor in 1992, and pursued a career in surgery, eventually obtaining his fellowship in general surgery with the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. He joined the Verbum Dei missionaries in 1999 after having met them in Sydney, Australia, spent his formation years in

https://publications.lst.edu/

the Philippines, and studied and obtained his licentiate in Moral Theology from the Accademia Alfonsiana (the Redemptorist Higher Institute of Moral Theology) and a masters degree in bioethics from the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome. Combining his teaching with an active apostolate, he helps form the laity in prayer and evangelization. Indeed, his book, *Choose Life: Theological Reflections on Current Moral Issues* (Manila: Paulines, 2012), is the fruit of both his missionary apostolate and teaching experience in Moral Theology and Bioethics at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, and University of Santo Tomas as well as of his years in practice as a medical doctor. He has also published scholarly essays in various academic journals.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo graduated from the Ateneo de Manila University in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Major in Philosophy (pre-divinity track) while undergoing formation in San José Major Seminary and completed his Master of Arts degree, Major in Theological Studies in 2015 at Loyola School of Theology. After having taught Christian Life Education at Xavier School in San Juan, Metro Manila and worked with youth volunteers, indigenous peoples, and municipal leaders in Mindanao as Program Coordinator of the Companions of Assisi for Peace Volunteer Program and as Program Assistant for the Public Private Partnership for Peace, Justice, and Development Program of the Assisi Development Foundation, he currently teaches theology, philosophy, and sociology at the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas where he is also pursuing his doctoral degree in Theology. He has also translated various Church documents into Filipino, namely *Liham Ensiklikal Laudato Si' ng Banal na Papa Francisco ukol sa Pangangalaga sa Tahanan nating Lahat* (2015), *Amoris Laetitia ng Banal na Papa Francisco ukol sa Pagmamahalan sa Loob ng Pamilya* (2016), and *Misericordia et Misera ng Banal na Papa Francisco sa Pagwawakas ng Di-pangkaraniwang Hubileyo ng Awa* (2017) as well as Pope Francis's book *Ang Pangalan ng Diyos ay Awa* (2018), all published by Claretian Publications in the Philippines.

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J., is a professor and the former Dean of Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University.

https://publications.lst.edu/

He obtained his Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute and Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and teaches various courses on the Hebrew Bible as well as on Biblical Hermeneutics, Textual Criticism and Research Methods, the History of Ancient Israel, and Biblical Hebrew. He has also published scholarly essays on the eighth century prophetic literature of Israel, is a founding member of the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines, and currently serves as the editor of *Landas*.

https://publications.lst.edu/