

## Quest for Well-being: Gazes on the Ritual Healing of Filipino Immigrants in South Korea

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### Abstract

*The transnational movement of people around the globe has challenged migrants' belief systems and their quest for well-being. The movement of people in itself is a form of ritual performance, a journey towards a dream and the aspiration to acquire a new sense of self and identity. The goal of this research is to illumine how Filipino migrants living in South Korea reconstruct their ethnicity through access to the albularyo<sup>1</sup> ritual healing of their homeland. The findings indicate that the root cause of ailments of Filipino migrants within South Korea is caused by emotional distress linked to identity conflict and emotional turmoil. Healing is an outcome of rebuilding positive relationships with the self, others, and the Divine – practicing one's spirituality and reconstructing one's ethnic identity.*

**Keywords:** ritual healing, ethnicity, migration, shamanism, religion, psycho-spiritual healing

### *I- Introduction*

#### **1.1 Background of study**

This paper unites the concept of health, religion and migration, which converge in their common goal of achieving well-being and wholeness. In the English language these three words, health, wholeness and holiness originated from one old English root word 'hal'. Health like religion and migration can be understood through the social and cultural dimensions of human interaction, which shapes and reshapes beliefs and practices. This research explores the ritual healing that is deeply rooted in the social structures and cultural dimensions of health and illness of Filipino migrants in Korea. It examines the remaking of 'Filipino ethnicity' from the ambivalence of colonial mimicry (Bhaba Homi, 1994:121) to its linear effect of being participating agents in global modernity.

Globalization has challenged the sense of belief systems and exploration of human well being. The movement of people in itself is a form of ritual performance, a journey towards the dream and aspiration to acquire a new sense of self and identity. In pursuing such a dream, one is inevitably separated from 'home' and replanted to a new milieu alien to the self. There is ambivalence of location, identity and personal preferences. The expression and value formation in globalization starts diverging and the work of illusory imagination prevails over reality. For example, people express independence while valuing relationship, express individualism while valuing community, living in an era of advanced communication, but with limited or no communication with the family and significant others. Moreover, migrants live in an imagined community (Anderson, 1986) and the expression of their ethnicity is the reenactment of what was left in their memories.

Due to the tenacious lifestyle in this global age, people suffered more emotionally and spiritually. Those who have the incapacity to meet certain global conditions become 'others'. Yet, globalization offers a wider world of realizing dreams through migration. Migration is a secular pilgrimage, because transnational people achieve a new sense of self after undergoing manifold stages of *liminality* (Turner, 1967) as they continue their journey in search for a 'new sense of self'.

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<sup>1</sup> Albularyo is a Filipino term for a neomancer or the medicine man.

The transit or passage from the homeland to the foreign land gets simpler and faster but in the long-term migrants may suffer from its *pneumopsychosomatic* (spiritual, mental and bodily ) effect. However, the spiritual and psychological health of humans are taken for granted in most medical fields. In medical healing, the body is prioritized while medical professionals may forget or ignore the possibility that migrants' illness may have a certain connection with 'home'; their ethnicity, their beliefs and cultural practices. They also carry with them a personal worldview and understanding of well-being. The researcher felt the need to study migrants' healing because they are the most vulnerable recipients of social control, have the 'homeless minds' that is their state of identity consciousness is "in betwixt and in between" – that is, "neither here nor there." It is necessary to study their beliefs and practices in order to understand better the etiology of their illness. As Tan (2008) asserts, traditional and ritual healing is not only limited to somatic ailments, but also healing mental, familial, social and economic stress and the predominant biomedical paradigm may lack the proper perspective to understand the intertwining of these other factors. Integrative healing would be incomplete without knowing the spiritual wisdom behind their healing practices.

The colonizers as a cause of sickness are manifested in Filipino beliefs in *Engkanto* (a caucasian spirit). The 'other' in the group means the '*aswang*' or witch who can cause harm to the people. The migrants as 'other' and 'outsider' can also be viewed as agents of deterioration and evil ones in the receiving country. The maltreatment of migrants from the hands of their employers, their colleagues and treatment in the social sphere can be part of the same inclination. Apart from maltreatments, psychic strain is severe due to the fear of punishment and deportation, especially those who do not have documents to prove their own legal identities. Migrants face many evils and the evil possession they have experienced is not a process where an evil spirit enters the human body, but the possessive employers and husbands who possess and oppress their workers/wife and who stifle their growth and constrict them.

The common cause of illness among Filipinos in diaspora is nostalgia or *namamahay*<sup>2</sup> causing insomnia and inappetence as "the body is looking for home" (Tan, 2008:106). Nostalgia is deep rooted in the emotional conflict wherein the mind is in the homeland while the body is in the foreign land. The informants of this study shared that the family or familiar spirits make them heal and makes them ill. I argue that it is not the spirit that follows them in the foreign land. It is the memories of their beliefs from the homeland that they recalled while living in the foreign land. The exploration of this *albulario* healing of migrants raises the question about the cause of their illness and why they seek out the *albulario*. Who are global Filipinos? What are other beliefs that lie hidden beneath their Christian belief? What is really meant by health and illness for them? To answer these questions and to develop my argument, I reviewed bodies of literature on ritual healing and conducted fieldwork in Bucheon from June 2015 to May 2016. This research is then based on the ethnographic data from the stories of migrants who brought with them amulets and those who are practicing the *albulario* ritual healing. I draw my conclusion on the reconstruction of selfhood and reconstruction of ethnic identity and viewed the effect of healing as psychological. I also discuss the function of the mind and the body and its responses to their belief systems and spirituality.

## 1.2 Literature Review

Several Philippine medical anthropologists gathered research data about the traditional healing beliefs and practices of the Filipinos. One of them is Tan (2008) who revisited the social and cultural dimensions of alternative health care and medical culture in the Philippines. He explains the etiology of Filipino conception of illness and healing through different theories: phenomenological perspective, social interactions, political economy, and cultural ecology. He proves how the indigenous philosophies substantiate the foundation of culture, which includes ontological and epistemological knowledge in the daily life of Filipinos. He shows how alternative or traditional medicine is deep-rooted in the culture and belief system of the Filipinos. He also discusses the Filipino identity and their traditional medical practices. His work focuses the Filipinos in the native land while this research employs global Filipinos who are bringing with them their beliefs and practices of medicine in the foreign land. In addition, this research is centered on the reconstruction of ethnic identity through the healing of their 'homeless minds' (Burger, 1973) after being physically separated from the traditional institutions.

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<sup>2</sup> The root word of *Namamahay* is *Bahay* which means home.

In connection with the above research, the work of Edith Turner (2006) emphasized the concept of *communitas* in her observations of the healing stories around the world. She asserts that healing is a community project because the one who is sick cannot normally function as a member of the community. Therefore, the community helps the person obtain healing because the sickness of one is the sickness of the whole community. Strongly influenced by Durkheim's (1912) "social effervescence" Turner (2012) expanded upon this concept of *communitas* in human experience from a local *Gemeinschaft* towards the bigger and wider global *Gesellschaft* in the experience of helping one another and asserts connectedness of soul and how *communitas* may be found in music, sport, religion, disasters and every human event. While Paul Gilbert and Hannah Gilbert (2011:112), discuss human personality, which focuses on fear reduction and increasing human connectedness.

Another common healing ritual is charismatic ritual healing, Christian healing or middle class healing (Csordas, 1997; Linn and Shlemon, 1997; McGuire and Kantor, 1998). Linn and Shlemon (1997) focus on the way Jesus healed through the sacraments such as the penitential rites, communion, reading of the sacred scriptures, anointing of the sick and some gestures of healing like laying on hands and touch which show the care and compassion of the caregivers of the sick. Csordas(1997) and McGuire (1998) also applied the same participant observation method known in anthropology; both of them explain the self as the one that alters during healing. They also explain that causes of illness and suffering is due to the lost of social connectedness and coherence of the life's world order. The only difference is that Csordas (1997) explained how sickness is defined culturally based on ethno-demonology and ethno-sinology. The ethno-demonology and ethno-sinology perspectives explain that the 'other' is described as the evil doer. Csordas(1997) and McGuire (1998) conclude about psychologically healing the self. However, Csordas considered healing as a kind of self-embodiment, to alter oneself to fit into the bourgeois or adaptation to the culture of the middle class. While the healing portrayed by McGuire and Kantor(1998) focuses on the changes of an 'individual-to-society relationship'. The collective identity rather than individual identity and belonging is desired and the inter-connectedness of the human is emphasized. Also, the discovery of the self is the affinity for the group and active adaptation as a group member. Psychologically, being accepted and loved in a religious group is a way of healing the emotional distress caused by nostalgia and longing for the family of origin.

In the same vein, Pollner (1989) discusses the real and metaphysical or imagined networks in religious membership. He argued that the real network within the religious group, physically and psychologically contributed to the well-being of the individual especially to those who have constant discourse with their families and friends. When significant others are not present one turns to the imagined network, the assumed families in the spiritual world which most religions tend to emphasize. The significant others are the deities, a personified relationship who can give guidance and gives comfort to the person. The imagination of significant others which could be God or deities may aid in healing inner loneliness that the person felt within.

The common theme of the literature above suggests that community and connectedness oppose loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness and social isolation are the illness broadly of today's generation. Humans are slowly disconnected from the circuit and interconnectedness of souls. The human standard of acceptability tends to isolate others. The common example is the racial discrimination and oppression. Hardy (2013:2) contends, "racial oppression is a traumatic form of interpersonal violence which can lacerate the spirit, scar the soul, and puncture the psyche." In the global community, racial oppression and racial discrimination arise in different fields and even among co-ethnic groups due to severe competition. Migrants who may face strong competition in all aspects of life within their same ethnic group in foreign lands may find it difficult to develop into a healthy individual. For Hardy( 2013), healing those who have hidden wounds of racial trauma is to give space to the race in order for them to articulate and express, counteract and rechannel rage and negative emotions.

Healing is always integrative. The book edited by Mijares (2003) consolidated and discussed the different religious traditions which emphasized the healing of the self as a potential method to heal people's culture and even looking towards healing the world. It gazes at the problem of familial and social discord and the ambivalence of value choices around the world that makes one so discontent about the self. It suggests that healing the self comes through by connecting to some ancient wisdom and finding a life with deeper meaning. It also suggests that one must not ignore any parts of the body in practicing spirituality. Most of the spirituality practiced by people focuses on mentality and may only be stuck in the head, which neglects the active forces within the body. She invites people to embrace differences and uniqueness to create enlightened consciousness. The book uses narrative and stories that entertains and speaks about useful truths about human existence.

It is convincing that spiritual practice and prayer, although unable to be proven scientifically are useful in healing the body, mind and spirit. The healing in this book is mostly geared to mysticism, meditation and yoga, especially in achieving self-consciousness and concentration. While other works viewed healing as an invitation to cross the boundaries between science and religion. Fraser Watts(2011) contends that science is transforming its paradigm toward wider methods as it begins to explore how spirituality could affect bodily healing. For Watts, healing is reconciling modernity and post modernity, between theology and science that is interwoven in human practices and becoming better aware of the religious and non- religious aspects of healing in this contemporary time. The theology of spiritual healing proposed by Phillip Clayton (2011:44) follows Watts in suggesting that healing is not a dualistic function but rather a holistic one. He suggests that there is nothing miraculous in human healing since it is created by God. He also discusses the historical background on how healing in early Christianity was replaced by 'saving' after being influenced by Aristotelian rationalism, a word that is continuously used until the present, which give more emphasis on the salvation to prepare for the next life. It focuses on the importance of the soul rather than the body.

In the healing examples illustrated in the Bible, Justine Meggit (2011:32) reviewed the records of what Jesus was reputed to do as a healer. He argued that healing brought by Jesus was a 'meaning- response' that is parallel to placebo effect. While Bourne and Watts (2011) in their comparison between Christian and secular healing have found that Christians used the Bible text for healing while secular healing depends on knowledge acquired to strengthen stamina based on methods learned from syncretic beliefs. Another interesting process of healing is that suggested by Marilyn Schlitz (2011:140), who discusses distance healing through the intercessory prayers of the Reiki healing group. She explains that a "fresh breeze" is blowing too many corridors of medicine in most human desire for health and a desire to live". She asserts that emphasis should be placed on preventing illness and damage to the mind instead of focusing on improving the science of diagnosing illness. She remains critical of the practice of the contemporary medical care primarily because it focuses on providing health care only for those who can pay.

Research about amulets and their use in the Philippines (Pambid, 2000) was also reviewed to understand the practices of migrants who chose to wear protective amulets. The essays on well-being edited by Paz (2008) listed the different healing practices of Filipinos, included descriptions of herbal medicines and the illnesses that these herbs may be used to cure. The above literatures inspire this research. The concept of Victor and Edith Turner on *liminality* and *communitas* is viewed in a different perspective. *Liminality* usually refers the difficulties encountered during rites of passage from having no status to with-status (group membership) but in this research, it is used to describe the challenges and stages of change that migrants undergo as they seek to create a new sense of self and identity in Korea. Migration is not only viewed according to economic theory and the geographies of power, but in a religious sense as a pilgrimage. In migrants pilgrimage from birth to death illnesses are part of their *liminal experience*.

### **1.3 Framework of Analysis**

#### **1.3.1. Illness and Disease**

In the Philippines, *sakit* is the only term for illness and disease. However, *sakit* also contains nuances that may be described in English as pain and illness. The illnesses implied in the term *sakit* are cultural specific. They are called 'folk illnesses' or 'culture bound syndromes'. The 'culture bound syndromes' speaks more about beliefs and lifestyle as illness causation rather than the germ or virus theories in the biomedical fields. Nowadays, practitioners of biomedicine are not addressing patients' emotional and spiritual needs, but instead patients are considered mere consumers of the medical market (Tan 2006:19; Idler 1979:723).

There are different cultural explanations and theories of illness causes, which are not written in the medical diagnostic categories but are enumerated by Tan as follows:

(1) The life force, equal to the Qi in Chinese context, can cause disease when obstructed, thus acupuncture is needed to allow the normal flow of the Qi. The life force also refers to a mystical force which can also cause sickness so the *anting-anting* or amulets, may be used to absorb or suck the negative force out of a person. This is how amulets are used to protect the person from harm. The amulet is also used for hunting and *gayuma* (love potion) that is believed to make the person amorous or attractive to the opposite sex. The Muslim Tausug in Mindanao believes in a "hot breath" induced by a verbal compliment that make a baby sick when giving a compliment.

(2) The Filipinos are also influenced by the Latin American belief of the evil eye (*mal de ojo* or *ojea*). It explains that one can make the person sick by staring at them, even in admiration.

(3) Pollution or contagion applies to social behaviors that are undesirable like not eating at the same dish of an adulterous man.

(4) Mystical retribution is also used by Filipinos as an inevitable source of justice or sanction when someone commits wrongdoing, the same bad thing comes back to him. It can also be caused by violation of family values.

(5) Filipinos also believe in fate, illness is personified in astrological influences of ill luck. They believe that fate can be determined through palmistry. Among the *Ilocano*, the healer examines the umbilicus to the chest bone to determine if the person is susceptible to illness.

(6) Soul loss can make the person sick or die. A soul companion of the body can wander while the host is asleep. There is a widespread belief that stepping over a sleeping person is the worst curse, which means ‘may you die while sleeping’. The soul loss can possess the body and make the person sick. While in its social meaning the amoral person is described as one without soul ‘*walang kaluluwa*’.

(7) *Bangungot* or a sudden death of the person while sleeping suggests many theories that it is due to sleep disorder, diet, or compulsive spirit or a soul loss.

(8) Illnesses can be caused by environmental spirits that are provoked or harmed when one is entering their territories so the Tagalogs say *tabi tabi po* ‘excuse me, please move aside’ (Tan,2006:61). The ghost who greets or plays with humans may also cause illness. When the fishermen go fishing, the first catch is returned to the sea as an agreement of reciprocity with the environment. The soul of the dead and the environmental spirits cause one to be ill and heal. The *Engkanto* (a Caucasian spirit) causes illness to the people. The concept of this illness causation is rooted in the history of colonization when the Spanish and Americans made the Filipino people suffer during their regime. Another colonial belief that causes illness is *kapre* or the infidel spirits. It derives from the Spanish *Cafre*, which is used to describe the Muslim infidels who are also referred as the evil spirits.

(9) Sorcerers and witches are also believed to cause illness. Belief in sorcery is widespread in the Philippines. It is used to inflict pain to the enemy, especially to get revenge. Sorcerers command insects or animals or intrude objects to hit the victims. Part of sorcery is causing illness through inhaling and exhaling which is termed *hiluanan* and *buyagan*. When the court failed to act for justice, sorcery is used to punish criminals. Culturally, the “outsider” or the “other” in a group is considered witch.

(10) Nature can also cause illness. The heat, cold, wind and dampness may overturn the balance of the body elements. Thunder and lightning are punishments from a thunder god for violating the taboo. The wind can cause respiratory ailments, muscular pain, skin diseases and indigestion. The direction of the wind and the seasonal changes may make someone sick. Moreover, the eastern monsoon reduces the fish caught and many people may suffer from the scarcity of food. The vapor from the land causes discomfort. Filipinos are also fearful of rain as it causes cold and fever.

(11) Another illness causation is diet. “Food ideology consists of attitudes, beliefs and customs affecting nutrition” (Ibid:83). The Filipino Muslims do not eat pork, dead meat and blood because the Koran forbids them. *Haram* or the forbidden elements are not pure. There are edible and inedible meat for Filipinos e.g. dog meat is forbidden because they are close companions to humans. Pork and chicken are offering food. The pork for the spirit of the earth and the chicken for the aerial spirits. For Catholics, they cannot eat meat on Friday and during the days of abstinence.

Illness caused by these religious and cultural beliefs cannot be cured in the hospitals. The illness caused by ‘cultural specifics’ must be treated hands of traditional medicine man and other unlicensed cultural and psychological healers.

### 1.3.2 Health and Medicine

The medicine man is an expert on herbs and the cycle of the nature. They also know the body parts that are mostly affected by climatic conditions and fatigue, especially the gastric system. The neomancer or the medicine man heals, gives advice and serves as the society’s doctor and priest. The folk system practitioners in the Philippines are those that heal people without the use of Western medicine and they include priests and nuns who are healers like Fr. Fernando Suarez, the sisters of the Religious of the Virgin Mary(RVM), the *hilot*<sup>3</sup> and *albularyo*.

<sup>3</sup> They help the obstruction of life force to flow normally through therapy and massage. They also assist pregnant women for delivery.

However, in the real world, medical practitioners and the folk system practitioners overlap. For example, a folk healer can have training in midwifery, the physician may be praying silently when having surgery.

Theories of ritual healing have an inclination of psychological understanding of the human person. The psychic effect of healing is common to charismatic ritual healing, Buddhist, Tantric healing, drumming and dancing rituals, touch healing and the like. According to the teachings of Buddha, the mind is so closely linked with the body that mental states affect the body's health and well being. The mind not only makes sick, it also cures which means that an optimistic patient has more chance of getting well than a patient who is worried and unhappy. The cause of suffering and disease may be a lack of contentment and being unsatisfied with the current state of living. Apart from silent meditation for pacifying passion and desire, the vocal chanting of tantras and parittas are practiced to banish evil and welcome good luck. The attainment of 'no self' is the summit of healing where the human is freed from suffering and obtain 'mental continuity' or mindfulness. Achieving mindfulness in tantras and yoga is a total no possession of memories while in charismatic ritual healing, the healing of memories is through mental recall and imagination of experiences. This healing of memory is reinterpreted in the light of forgiveness and acceptance.

In charismatic healing, the achievement of the sacred self is through self-transformation of what the self 'must be' and 'should be' according to the standard definition and orientation of a healthy self. The self imbibes or embody the spirit of Christianity mediated by the imagination of renewal, transformation and conversion of the self into the 'other'; a construct of a sacred self as an essential alterity (Csordas, 2004: 281). As mentioned above, the observation of Edith Turner for a reconstruction of selfhood in ritual healing is *communitas*. Joining a community is becoming a full person; it is the healing of the social self because it is in the presence of community where one is open to each other, belonging to each other. If one responds to the *communitas* one cannot treat another human person as an object because each soul is a part of the other person's soul (Turner, 2006:159).

Ritual healing is also reclaiming what the people had traditionally, that marks their identity. The political identity of the people of Navajo Land disappeared when Christians entered Navajo and the tradition was left behind. In order to attain healing they have to claim what is politically their own and claim what belongs to them; their tradition and their identity; the personal identity being equated to the collective identity of Navajo (Csordas, 1999). Navajos who were converted to Christianity may go back to their own roots since they realized that leaving their tradition is what caused their illness.

Therefore, illness as defined in this paper is not only the physical illness but also the search for belonging. The search of filling in the emptiness and what is lacking with the self, which leads the informants to follow the path of migration.

### **1.3.3 Migration as a Secular Pilgrimage**

General theories of migration explain the population movement through the neo-classical economic theory that migration is due to such factors as labor demand and supply, and wage differentials in every country. Scholars, whose studies have gender inclination, delve on women's participation in migration. Along with the structuralism perspective, feminist migration scholars studied the hierarchical relations and patriarchal ideology that both reinforce and challenge migratory processes.

The above stated theories are common with the structuralism perspective. Migration being theorized in religion is rare, especially in viewing it as a ritual performance. According to Catherine Bell(1992) all human actions are ritual because it contains a meaning. Thus migration phenomena are understood as a ritual practice that is interwoven with deep meaning in life's journey. The theory of migration as a ritual performance comes from the work of classic formulation, advanced by Victor Turner's (1967) rites of passage (Aguilar, 1999). The participants in the rites of passage usually undergo a transformation of self as a ritual subject, in the end attaining the ritual status. The ritual subjects is in the *liminal* process of betwixt and between- 'neither here nor there' while not attaining the rank, degree or a culturally defined social condition.

This theory of Turner's coincides with Nina Glick Schiller's (1997) transnational migration paradigm of 'transnational ways of belonging and transnational ways of being' which explains that migrants are romanticizing their past 'over there' and facing their future 'here'. A migrant is in betwixt and in between because his mind tells him that his identity belongs to his country of origin, while his being (physical body) belongs to the receiving country where he resides. This question of whether to assimilate into the receiving culture or remain isolated and belong to a certain group of minority remains an unsolvable puzzle.

Perhaps they also belong to the receiving country as they were the labor that support and fuel the economy, but their ways of belonging are vested under the economic interest of the receiving countries. This means that belonging for migrants is strictly at a superficial level and not permanent, it remains under the context of 'betwixt and between'.

The migrant's life is a secular pilgrimage, like a religious pilgrimage they are the most touching and grandiose trail of imaginations. This pilgrimage requires interpretations between time, statuses and places as a meaning-creating experience just like the journey from birth to death that gives rise to various conceptions of religions. The journey to find a new meaning of the self is a metaphor of a pilgrim to the Holy land for Christians, Mecca for Muslims and Benares for Hindus. The pilgrimage to Mecca for example, is stipulated with an objective to acquire a new status among Muslims. A migrant also came back to his origin as a new person, a person whose mind is broader and whose worldview is changed. The transformation of self is realized when a migrant goes beyond his own limit to encounter the 'otherness' of the other culture.

Migrants' secular pilgrimage and religious pilgrimage are influenced by power. The power that influences secular and religious pilgrimage is an imperialist temptation embedded by the genuine geography of domination. The secular pilgrims are the hallmarks of reterritorialization of the space with the vision to unite the collective memory of the diaspora communities.

### III. Filipino Migrants' Experience of *Albularyo* Ritual Healing

The *Albularyo* ritual healing remains a hidden practice of Filipinos in the Philippines and abroad. This is because the influence of political economy in medicine and health is strong in the Philippines who had been colonized by the Spanish from 1521 to 1898 and followed by the Americans until Philippines officially announced its independence in 1946. Within those periods, the Western religions and medicine were introduced to the country. The power and ideologies brought by the colonizers trampled the tradition and culture (Geertz, 1957; Leiban, 1960, 1962; Douglas, 1966; Comaroff, 1985). The people were forced to imitate the ideal modernity brought by the West (Rappaport, 1999:450; Asad, 1993:2; Appadurai, 1996:1). Even today, the same power control the beliefs about health and illness. Tan quoted a pathologist Rudolf Virchow who states, "Medicine as a social science and politics is nothing but medicine writ large" (Tan, 2008:13). This explains that the one in power constructs the notion of health and illness that justifies the purpose of colonialism. It also seeks to civilize the savage and render their bodies and spirits docile.

The Filipino migrant's experience of *Albularyo* ritual healing is the remnant tradition of the Filipinos, which was rooted, in colonial history. Filipinos were so weak in front of the Spanish soldiers and authorities. They fought the Spanish soldiers with their native acquired powers through their belief in *anting- anting* (amulets) that protected them from bullets, harsh treatment of the colonizers and to protect them from evil spirits. The amulets gave them courage. It protected them from harm and deadly weapons. They could disappear if they wanted through prayer rendition and constant heart purification because they also believed that only the pure hearted can wear the amulet. The *anting anting* (with Latin inscriptions) is the secret knowledge given by the Jesuit Missionaries who pitied the powerless natives as they fought against the Spaniards. They also used the INFINITO DIOS a syncretic belief that God and the *Nuno* combined their power in a rock. The Christian God and *Nuno* fought and finally agreed to combine their powers so God that Christians believe and the *Nuno* that the natives believe is one. Hence, for migrants practicing Christianity and their native religion is a worship of the same God. The use of amulets is still seen among the Filipino migrants in Korea.

*Albularyo* ritual healing is performed in different manners. The most common way is touching the painful part of the body or by laying on of hands. However, not all touch and laying of hands can heal. In the Philippines there are *albularyo* who wish longevity. They take the energy of other people by touching or laying hands on them. Others put malignant elements in the food. The person affected becomes weak, vomits, or in some cases die. For this kind of malevolent illness a powerful medicine man cures the sick with oil and herbs or allows the victim to wear a belt (amulets) to contradict the malignant effect and life-annihilating power. Sorcery is interwoven in shaman practices; a representation of social conflict.

Wishing malevolence may be done by family or a familiar person. In the case of Filipino migrants in Korea, Mrs. A's sickness was said to be caused by the malevolent wish of her first degree cousin. The cousin asked the shaman to make her sick for buying the land that her cousin was supposed to inherit. Mrs. A's stomach becomes big during high tide and gets small during low tide.

The movement of the sea becomes the movement of her stomach. She was also pestered by flying insects that bothered her while she live in Korea. She was not the only target of the malevolence; her natal family suffered the same effects. She went home to seek the ritual healing. The *albularyo* told her that it was the cousin who buried a bottle spell in front of the house ladder for the whole family to get sick. In addition, the other one is buried near the seashore so the effect of the sickness will be the movement of the ocean. The *albularyo* called the whole family for the ritual. The shaman called the spirit to heal them. During the ritual she heard her mother, who was previously deceased say a few welcoming words '*nia na diay ka day*' literally means 'you're home'. After the shaman prayed, the packed medicine was given to Mrs. A and other family members. She must wear it always to protect her from evil. The picture below (right) shows Mrs. A's pack of amulet given by the shaman healer. She is also a Catholic and wears scapulars and the cross.

**Image. 1**



Mrs. B (left) was said to be the victim of her best friend's jealousy, which led to the darkening of her face. She felt like her face was burning. The best friend spell was throwing bougainvillea thorns in her face to destroy it and make her ugly. The *Albularyo* during the ritual got many bougainvillea thorns in her face. She was given three packs of belt (*habak*) to protect her from evil and bad spells. When asked if she fought with the best friend or hurt her deeply, Mrs. B said it was because she able to go abroad and her best friend was left behind.

A deep-rooted anger or jealousy compels the family or familiar people to destroy others. Sickness in the cases above is closely linked with relationship. The women already gain strength; they forgive the perpetrators who are directly connected with them. The case above is an expression of anger, a form of a negative rhetoric and a social conflict. The cause of sickness due to family and familiar relationship among the Filipino migrants' experience of ritual healing in Korea is similar to the tribal ritual healing in Zambia. The dispute over money or land causes sickness that calls for justice and forgiveness. The spirit who is asking for justice, who spoke up through the body of the sufferer shall be offered what s/he asked for while the recompense of Filipino migrants for the healing they receive is a silent forgiveness. Ritual healing is responding to the need of the person in the body, mind and spirit.

The migrants' access to ritual healing is reclaiming their traditional identity and belief system. As mentioned above the illness of the migrants is connected with home and identity. There is also a possibility that a migrant may get sick from not speaking their language or not meeting people from their own country. The spirit of Mrs. A's mother welcomed her home. That momentous event of ritual connects her with her mother who passed away. The ritual healing is not just 'letting go' and 'letting God' do their work, it is an effort of going back to the roots where the sickness originated. The illness started from an unhealthy relationship in the homeland so the health must also be restored where it started. The victims did not mention that they met the perpetrators for a round table dialogue, but they simply forgive and this stopped the sickness.

The role played by *albularyo* is something extraordinary for being a counselor, a priest and a doctor at the same time when the sick person approaches her/him for help. Apart from healing, *albularyo* attends to different cases such as courtship and marital problems, victims of theft, collecting debt, seeking employment, and providing lucky charms when going abroad. The *Albularyo* ritual healing and Charismatic healing are similar in using ritual and body techniques. For example, the use of illocutionary and predicative force to command the spirit to depart from the patients or allow the person to obey the words that the healers pronounce like postural modes, the command for the evil spirits to come out, the inquiry of the name of the spirit and talking with the spirit. They are the same gestures applied in charismatic healing (Csordas, 1994) or the way Jesus himself used to heal people possessed by spirits and the deliverance of ancestral spirit possession in Ihamba, Zambia (Turner, 2006:11).



## V. Conclusion

*Albularyo* ritual healing must be recognized as part of the Filipino cultural heritage. Filipinos should have the freedom to practice their ritual healing and manifest the uniqueness of their belief and practices. Giving them the space and freedom to practice their tradition is in itself a healing from the ideologists and the colonial history that controls and possesses them. The *albularyo* ritual healing is effective for migrants. The effect is not mystical, but psychological. Something transforms within the migrants, which allows them to define themselves anew. They attain health and well-being by going back to the root of the problem, the home that defines their identity. They also gain status as secular pilgrims just like the change of status when a Muslim reached Mecca.

Migration as a secular pilgrimage is a trend in a borderless world. The secular pilgrims have always their way home to stress importance of what they have because it is at home where the essential transformation of the self is recognized and appreciated. Leaving home is not a total uprooting of their origin and abandonment of identity, but an extension of who they are because ethnicity is not bound by time and place. Globalization does not preclude the idea of home. The health and well-being of migrants is not just a mere imagination, but a realization of such an imaginations by doing the ritual healing that is deeply rooted in their belief system. The influence of power in religion creates a standard of what an ideal self “should be” according to the West’s definition of itself, which shaped the core institutions of modernity. Therefore, defining the self anew does not go far beyond the definition of a ‘new status’ as modern and civilized. The elimination of shaman ritual healing and practices is the result of the above definition of Western religion, the religion of the elite being contradicted by what they conceived as ominous and barbaric ritual practices.

*Albularyo* ritual healing is a real human power and the power to heal is a human faculty. The human body as well as the mind is both natural and spiritual. The mind can make sick and heal. The spirit is in the mind. The continuation of migrants’ beliefs and practices is the projection of what was left in their memories about the homeland. The moment a migrant allows the *albularyo* to heal, her mind already produces chemicals to heal the body part that needs healing. Access to *albularyo* ritual healing makes real the ‘here and now’ interplay of memory and self’s story which define one’s identity. Healing is found in the self *per se*, and it can be found with the help of others. Healing oneself naturally is not to invest in expensive medicine, but to treat the complex emotions caused by inner conflict as well as familial and social conflict. The body is the most unique pharmacy without side effects and it gives the right dosage at every single time. The human natural immune system is physical, but it is also spiritual. One cannot heal the body without healing the entire being, including the mind and spirit. Natural healing and supernatural healing is one because the spirit and the body is not a separate entity. Healing also needs the other to confirm the sickness and the result. It needs the community because every spirit and every human soul are interconnected and the functions of each member are interconnected.

The root of diseases in our modern society is emotional conflict and emptiness within. It includes loneliness and social isolation. Humans are slowly disconnected from the circuit and the interconnectedness of souls. The strong sense of competition in all walks of life cannot produce a healthy individual. Hence, one can have negative emotion that destroys relationship with the self, the other and the divine. Illnesses are signs that one has neglected personal spiritual needs and that they must pray in order to listen to what the body asks for and to forgive those who have wronged them. The body speaks when it gets tired; it gives the messages when something is going wrong within. Human tends to transgress the relationship with their body, with their neighbors and with the spirit hence, sickness emerge. Sickness originates from a wrong conception of belief.

The concept of sin tends to create a low self-esteem, sense of shame before God or deities. Healing is changing the spirituality that God first saw the good in me, cherished me, and celebrated me, a God who really likes me because the key to healing is to love oneself and to be able to find the meaning of one’s existence. Healing the self is also healing the ethnicity which is the core basis of identity. Also, relaxation is the key to healing—meditation, travel, entertainments is placing the person to be able to recharge and restore the energy deficit.

The *Albularyo* or shaman healers are primitive healers. They are society’s doctors and also priests, priestesses and counselors. When people became ill the cure is also holistic, aside from giving them herbs, the priestesses told them to pray, to forgive and to trust the deities. Ritual healing in most societies has something to do with the reconstruction of the selfhood, to see and understand the self in relation with others and in relation with the Divine.

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