



## Separating Encounters

### Tangency in an Interreligious Encounter in Ifugao, the Philippines

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**Abstract.** – In this article I contribute to an understanding of interreligious encounters that underlines the processes of separation. By an analysis of the meaning-generating processes that were found to be operative in a burial ritual, observed among the Ifugao of northern Luzon, the Philippines, I discuss how the encounter between the traditional Ifugao religion and Protestant belief and practices can be understood to generate separate metaphorical ideologies. I take issue with theories of syncretism and hybridity and argue that a theoretical perspective in which these two systems are seen as tangent can account for the meaning-generating processes that occur in their encounter. [*Ifugao, Luzon, Philippines, hybridity, ritual, meaning, metaphor, tangency*]

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#### Introduction

How can an encounter between different belief systems be conducive to the generation of meaning? Are theories of syncretization and hybridization sufficient to understand the processes that become operative in such encounters? Based on fieldwork among the Ifugao, a people inhabiting the Central Cordilleran mountains of northern Luzon, the Philippines, this article will address these issues by focusing on a burial ritual, where different religious practices were operative at the same time.<sup>1</sup> I will

argue that an understanding of such encounters not necessarily benefits from an analysis based on the analytical concepts of syncretization and hybridization, but that we in many interreligious encounters can identify processes where tangent belief systems generate mutually meaningful relations. I argue that the religions involved in many such encounters can be understood to operate in a situation of tangency, where the meaning generating processes may produce separation and not, as in theories of syncretization and hybridization, amalgamation. I draw here partly on Bakhtin’s (1981) theory of intentional hybrids that to a certain but limited extent can clarify the dialogical aspect of these processes. However, Bakhtin’s theory is not specific enough, and I, therefore, develop, by aid of Wagner’s (1972) theory on innovative extensions, the concept of tangency, which I find to better explain these meaning generating processes. However, this is not to say that the concepts of syncretization and hybridization have no analytical value. Tangency as an analytical concept is intended to nuance these concepts and create a more complex analytical apparatus to analyze interreligious encounters.

<sup>1</sup> Most Ifugao in the region, except small children, have through schooling and contact with tourists acquired competence in speaking English. The fieldwork was, therefore, in the beginning mainly conducted with English as a working language, while the local dialect of Ifugao was increasingly used later on. Citations and emic concepts in this article are, therefore, noted according to what language these data were produced in.

## The Ifugao

In the precipitous Central Cordillera mountains that cover the eastern part of northern Luzon, the Ifugao have carved the mountains into an extensive system of irrigated rice terraces. Together with the other groups inhabiting these highlands, Bontoc, Kankaney, Ibaloi, and Kalinga to name a few, these people have gained a reputation as both fierce headhunters and skilled agriculturalists. In steep mountain sides and deep valleys, the Ifugao rice terraces provide them with wet rice which is supplemented with sweet potatoes and other vegetables grown in swiddens. Clusters of small wooden houses, built on piles and covered by a pyramid-shaped thatched roof, are scattered around in the terrain; some on top of mountain ridges, some clinging to the hillside in the shade of the palm trees, and others situated in the middle of a giant amphitheater of rice terraces. Together these clusters of houses make the village of Batad, which with its 900 inhabitants lays an hour's walk or so from the road. Almost all households practice wet rice cultivation and some animal husbandry, but some work temporarily on road construction in the region or as guest workers in cities like Banaue, Lagawe, Baguio, and Manila. Due to the extensive and famously beautiful Ifugao rice terraces, the village also attracts a fair amount of tourists. Some households have established lodges to provide for these guests, and guiding them through the maze of paths through the rice terraces has developed into a not inconsiderable source of income.

The Ifugaos' reputation as vicious headhunters might by gradually vanishing but their traditional polytheistic religion is still widely practiced. This religion contains numerous spirits and deities which broadly can be divided into three general kinds: ancestral spirits, spirits inhabiting large stones, tall trees, mountain tops, waterfalls, etc., and deities associated with meteorological phenomena and other personalized deities. Even though these spiritual beings share much of their spatial locations with the humans, they still exist in a different dimension distinct from the human world. The spiritual world and the human world stand in a relation of mutual dependency. The humans depend on the generosity of the spirits as these control both their health and the agricultural yields. The spirits, on the other hand, depend on the humans to provide them with the material items they want, particularly chickens and pigs. To enable these items to be transmitted into the spiritual domain, rituals must be held. In these rituals, specially trained male priests dance, sing, and invoke the spirits and thus create a conjunction of the two worlds. In some cases, the spir-

its take possession of the body of one of the priests, so that the participants can confer directly with the spirits, who are thought to be present at the subsequent ritual feast where the sacrificed pork and rice wine are served. The conjunction of the two worlds is, however, potentially dangerous since prolonged contact with the spiritual world may result in illness and possibly death. Therefore, the participants must observe a number of taboos in the days following the ritual. The reason for arranging these rituals varies, but they are very often responses to a family member's illness, which is interpreted as caused by a spirit's discontent. Propitiating the spirit by sacrificing pigs, chickens, spears, clothes, or money will then heal the patient.

While the majority of the inhabitants of Batad practice this traditional religion, the rest have quite recently converted to various versions of Protestantism.<sup>2</sup> They are opposed to everything they consider belonging to the traditional religion. The skulls and jaws of sacrificed animals that used to decorate the outer house walls have been removed. The rice god idols that were kept in the rice granaries have been thrown away, and they do not participate in any ceremony where the traditional priests officiate, which in practice also excludes them from taking part in the kin generating meat exchanges that are central in these rituals. They also bury their dead in individual graves and not, as is common among the non-Protestants, in the clan-owned burial caves. This indicates that they have different ideas about the relations between illness, body, and person.<sup>3</sup> While the Protestants believe that the soul can only leave the body at death and then – hopefully – ends up in Heaven, the traditional religion contains a more loose connection between body and soul. The ancestors and other spirits might steal one's soul and then create a temporary separation between the soul and the body, a condition that causes illness, and if this separation becomes prolonged, the patient will die. And this is, according to some, exactly what happened in the burial case which now follows.

2 These include both Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations.

3 I should add that this characteristic is a generalization. It does not mean that there is no variation between the Protestants' ideas, but that it is possible to identify at least some common features that distinguish their ideas from those of the traditional religion. These generalizations are methodologically based on interviews with a selection of representatives from the different Protestant congregations subsequent to the described ritual.

## An Interreligious Burial Ritual

On a late afternoon, when darkness rises with the sound of buzzing insects, I heard a knock on my door. It was Ramon, a short, friendly-looking man who had been my main informant for a few weeks now, who had come to see me. "You see, my nephew just died," he informed me almost matter-of-factly. And now, he had come to invite me to the burial ritual that would take place the following days. As we sat chatting for a while, he revealed what had happened. His nephew, a young man in his twenties, studied in Manila. Suddenly he had some kind of heart trouble and was rushed to hospital, where the doctors could not find anything wrong. Soon after he died, and now the family and friends from Manila were taking the body to Batad, so that he could be buried in his native village. The mother of the deceased lives in the US, where she had married a Protestant priest. She had expressed quite clearly that she wanted him to be buried according to the Protestant practice and that no traditional rituals should be held. The boy should also be buried in an individual tomb and not together with the bones of his ancestors in the clan burial cave, down in the forest below Ramon's house. Ramon would have liked to comply with his sister's demands, but he knew that other relatives would find it totally unacceptable, even dangerous, to offend the local spirits and deities in this way. For what had caused the young man's death, after all, if not the ancestral spirits themselves? Ramon conferred with his older brother, a much respected man in the village, and they decided that they had to compromise. They, therefore, invited both the traditional priests and the Protestant pastors and decided that the bones of the boy's grandparents should, as custom directs, be exhumed from the cave and put together with the coffin at Ramon's house. And what did they see, when they opened the burial cave? Of course, some commented, it was infested by ants. No wonder, the ancestral spirits were unhappy. No wonder, they let their anger cause illness and death. It was, therefore, now of great importance, that they were propitiated with sacrificed pigs lest more illness and death would strike.

The Protestant relatives were skeptical of everything associated with the traditional religion. However, being Protestant does not mean that they do not believe in the local spirits and deities anymore. They have instead redefined them and included them in a different worldview, where these spiritual beings are understood as representatives of the devil.<sup>4</sup> Eat-

ing pork sacrificed to them, "the evil spirits," is considered a sin. For the Ifugao this taboo creates a potential problem. In most rituals, pigs are sacrificed. After the priests have finished their invocations, the pigs are slaughtered and divided into pieces according to a predefined pattern, however, seldom without quarreling and occasional fights. Some of these meat cuts are given to the relatives of the family arranging the ritual and is thus involved in the process of kinning (Howell 2003) by contributing to the activation and objectivization of kin relations. If such a meat exchange is not reciprocated later, the relation is considered broken and what remains is a kin relation with little or any practical meaning (Remme 2006). The sacrifice of pigs also contributes to the establishment of the sponsor's social prestige, it includes both economical and religious aspects, and can, therefore, be considered a total social phenomenon (Mauss 1990 [1924]). The Protestants' taboo against consuming sacrificed meat has then a number of repercussions that extend beyond the mere eating of meat. It means, for instance, that meat is not exchanged and that kin relations thereby are imperiled. However, since the Protestants do not taboo the consumption of non-sacrificed meat, the uncles of the deceased decided that two sets of pigs should be slaughtered, the first set was sacrificed to the spirits, the second set simply slaughtered without any sacrificial rituals. This set the standard for the subsequent part of the funeral. Both belief systems and their associated practices were operative at the same time and at the same place.

When the dead body arrived in the village, people started to gather around the house of Ramon. Under the pile-raised house relatives and the boy's girlfriend sat around the open coffin, silently waving away the flies that kept buzzing around the body. Two bundles of bones wrapped in red- and black-striped burial blankets were placed beside the coffin. These were the bones of the boy's deceased grandparents. At the other end of the courtyard, a couple of men were busy boiling rice in a large metal vat, while most other men squatted on the ground, either playing or watching a game of cards. In the evening, a group of Protestants gathered around the light of a small gas lamp outside the house entrance to pray and sing. A few steps up the ladder and inside the house, the traditional priests had gathered around the rice wine jar. They soon started to invoke the spirits, their particular rhythmic, slightly melodic, and mumbling prayers blending with the melody of "What a friend we have in Jesus" from the Protestants outside. The priests were not disturbed, however, and continued their rituals while the Protestants carried on with their religious songs and prayers.

<sup>4</sup> See Robbins (1995, 2004) on similar redefinitions among the Urapmin, Papua New Guinea.

According to the Ifugao custom, a dead body is carried around to the houses of the deceased's relatives, where they slaughter pigs and hold sacrificial rituals. The number of days this goes on and the number of pigs slaughtered indicate the prestige of both, the deceased and his relatives. For the very rich, and in Ifugao that means those who own much rice terraces land,<sup>5</sup> the duration of this period can be up to a couple of weeks or more before the body is finally entombed in the clan burial cave. The young man in this case was not of a particularly prestigious family, so the burial period would last only three days. The body was, as his Protestant mother wanted, not carried around to the relatives' houses. Instead, an individual cement tomb was built behind Ramon's house and the body was put in there, while some of the men sang psalms and read a few passages from the Bible.

When the man who put the body in the tomb crawled out again, another man held a grass leaf tied to a particular spirit-averting knot at the tomb entrance, pulled it slowly out, while the soul of the deceased was asked to come out of the tomb because "it's the house of the dead and of ghosts." The action is based on the traditional religion's notions about the relation between the body and the *lennāwa* (soul). These two parts stand in a more or less loose relation with each other. The *lennāwa* can leave the body for a period and thus interact with the spiritual world. Such prolonged separations between the body and the *lennāwa* entail illness, and, if this temporary separation lasts too long, it eventually becomes permanent, and this is what the Ifugao define as death. The ancestor spirits are notorious for luring the *lennāwa* of their relatives, and during burial rituals this becomes particularly relevant. The deceased wants to take with him his family to the spirit world, so certain precautions must be taken to preclude this. By pulling the grass leaf out of the tomb, they ensure that the soul of the one who put the coffin there is not taken by the spirit of the deceased.

During the days the funeral lasted, the relatives of the deceased distanced themselves from most of the traditional priests' activities. The priests communicated with the spirit of the deceased during these rituals, thus entailing a considerable risk for the relatives participating in them. However, the relatives participated without much worry in the Protestant parts of the funeral and suspended then the important separation. Why was this not dangerous

to them? Is the spirit of the deceased not there all the time, also during the Protestant parts? I talked with the participants during the various activities and was, of course, given different answers at different times. "He's around, and if he talks to us, it's dangerous," they insisted, when the traditional priests did their invocations, whereas during the Protestant activities they asserted that the soul now was – hopefully – safely in heaven and had joined Apo Dios, God.

Interviews conducted, both during and after the funeral, often led to comments about the different practices. The Protestants described the traditional practices as pagan and the old practice, while they gave the Protestant practices labels such as civilized and modern. The concepts pagan and the old practice were also central among the traditionalist informants, but they gave these practices and their labels a positive value, when they also described them as authentic, and saw themselves as central in preserving an endangered culture. By labeling these practices in this way, both groups created a temporal distinction between the two systems, but the moral evaluation of them was different: i.e., in one case a moral condemnation of a sinful past, in the other case skepticism towards a culture threatening modernity. A central role in this discussion was the concept *ugāli*, which originally means habit, character, or conduct, which is learned through social/relational interaction. *Ugāli* has eventually been used as a label for the traditional belief and practice system, distinguishing it from the Protestant and, according to some, modern belief system.<sup>6</sup> Hence, this word and the described practices have been given new meanings, which were generated by the encounter between the different belief systems. The encounter creates new and more meanings for these practices and concepts. The analytical challenge is then to establish a theoretical model of understanding, which can elucidate these meaning generating processes. I will in the following argue that theories of syncretization and hybridization do not illuminate these processes in a sufficient way. Instead, I analyze how a situation, where two belief and practice systems are tangent to each other, creates new relations between the elements within the systems and thus contributes to changing the meaning of these elements.

5 Even if wealth is measured primarily in terms of ownership of rice terrace land, the social prestige entailing this must be confirmed and maintained by ritual pig feasts.

6 We can trace a distinction here between the traditional system as relationally based and the Protestant one as individually based (Tan 2002; Robbins 2004).

### Syncretism and Hybridity as Possible Models?

The way of looking at the description of the funeral makes it clear that we are dealing with an example of an interreligious encounter. The problem we are faced with is how we should understand this situation. Those models of understanding we apply depend on what point of view we have in relation to the semantic and pragmatic field we try to understand. If we stand outside and look at the funeral as a whole, it will probably appear as an amalgamation of different religious practices. If we step into this whole, however, other analytical perspectives will emerge as more applicable. But which perspectives could be used accurately to make sense of the processes operative in the empirical case presented here? Are syncretism and hybridity sufficient enough to cover these processes?

The concept of syncretism refers to a hybridization or amalgamation of two or more cultural traditions (Lindstrom 2002). The concept is particularly used in relation with the new religious systems and practices that were developed in the colonies as a response to the negative consequences of the European colonization. African Zionism was, for instance, understood as “attempt to reform the received world by means of a syncretism of images and practices, a syncretism drawn from the local and global systems whose contradictory merger it seeks to transcend” (Comaroff 1985: 250). The concept has, however, lost some of its explanatory value as it has been established that all cultures consist of a number of “borrowed” elements. When all religions, for instance, are products of syncretism, it is rather misleading to characterize some religions as “pure” and others as “amalgamations.” Included in this, of course, is also a political aspect. Syncretism has thus been used both as a negative characteristic of various forms of combination theologies and as an example of resistance against different kinds of imperialism in terms of appropriation of colonial belief systems (Stewart and Shaw 1994). Theories on network and transnational/cultural boundary transgressions have at the same time problematized concepts such as “culture” and “society,” that have been important preconditions for theories of syncretization. As an alternative, the concept of hybridization has been launched to cover the processes of interaction that occur in so-called contact zones (Rosaldo 1989). Even if these theories and concepts in some cases represent new and more complex approaches to a changed and more complex reality, an idea that different traditions and practices in one way or another fusion is sustained. “The ethnoscape of the borderlands breeds cultural hybridity in which

multiple traditions fuse” (Lindstrom 2002: 540). In a world where boundaries constantly are transgressed and category distinctions are challenged – or at least in a world where anthropologists increasingly focus on such processes – the combination theories, including theories of hybridization, have gained a dominant role as model of understanding of so-called cultural encounters. Some even claim that the concept of hybrids has almost gotten out of control and that it has “been pressed into interpretative service to the point of surfeit” (Strathern 1996: 519; see also Papastergiadis 1995). Latour (1993) argued that the proliferation of hybrids is caused by our awareness of the suppression of hybrids that occurs in the process of categorization; the more we categorize, the more hybrids we produce, and our awareness of this makes hybrids visible. However, it appears that our awareness about and our focus on hybridization has resulted in a situation where the categories now have taken the previous suppressed role of the hybrids; the more we become aware of the hybrids, the harder it gets to keep categories as ontological units. I will not go further into a debate on categories as existential preconditions for hybrids, but will argue that the categories have certainly not lost their relevance, and particularly so the processes operative in the presented funeral case.

It was in fact quite tempting to interpret the compromise-filled burial ritual by referring to theories on syncretization and hybridization. One should perhaps think that we have here an example of different belief systems, blending together and creating a new fusion of elements from different traditions. If we study the funeral from outside and as a whole, it does consist of practices from different religions. However, if we step inside this whole, or eventually dissolve it, and rather study the elements which are operative within it, we see that we can identify two parallel belief and practice systems or categories that meet, but which not necessarily fusion to a hybrid, unless one redefines hybrids to also cover such situations. Bakhtin (1981) argues exactly for a concept of hybridity which allows two or more systems to be parallel. He was concerned with demonstrating how the novel as a phenomenon could be understood as a product of an artistic organization of linguistic diversity. The internal stratification, which is present in any language (dialects, sociolects, jargon, etc.), is a precondition for the novel as a phenomena and is thematized in it. One of the methods to represent the linguistic diversity in a novel is hybridization. Bakhtin distinguishes, however, between two types of hybridity. Organic hybridity is that process of amalgamation which occurs unintended and unconsciously in the historical develop-

ment of all languages i.e., several languages merge and coexist within a single language. Intentional hybridity, on the other hand, is defined as:

... a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor (Bakhtin 1981: 358).

The intentional hybrid is, therefore, a product of the author's artistic orchestration of different languages which thereby "... come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance" (Bakhtin 1981: 360). The two languages do not merge together, but they are opposed to each other by the author in a dialogical way and, at the same time, expressed in one single utterance. Bakhtin thereby opens up for a concept of hybridity, where two voices or points of view remain separate while, at the same time, they relate dialogically to each other.

Bakhtin's differentiated concept of hybridity was developed to study the novel, but his theories could very well be put to other analytical tasks. In this way, the Bakhtinian concept of intentional hybridity could be useful to understand the relations between the different practices described in the Ifugao burial ritual. The problem is, however, that he does not specify well enough the processes which actually become operative in such dialogical hybrids. He describes them only in terms of such vague passages as "the illumination of one language by means of another (1981: 361).<sup>7</sup> His point about the dialogical character of intentional hybrids leads us a little bit further, but his illumination metaphor is not sufficient to understand the meaning-generating processes involved in the encounter. Hence, we need to identify and specify what processes become operative when two different and to a certain extent oppositional belief systems meet, and which are tangent and relate dialogically to each other.

<sup>7</sup> In a passage where he describes another technique called stylization he specifies what he thinks goes on in it: "Contemporaneous language casts a special light over the stylized language: it highlights some elements, leaves others in shade, creates a special pattern of accents that has the effect of making its various aspects all aspects of language, creating specific resonances between all stylized language and the linguistic consciousnesses contemporaneous with it ..." (Bakhtin 1981: 362). We see clearly that the specifications of the processes that are operative in the encounters between the sociolinguistic languages are presented both as visual (illumination, light, highlight, shade) and as musical (accent, resonance, orchestration) metaphors in Bakhtin's writings.

## Tangency and Meaning-Generating Processes

I will argue that in the presented empirical case, as in probably many other similar cases, we are dealing with a complex situation that theories on syncretization and hybridization can account for. Here we can identify processes where the encountering categories do not merge but remain different and even strengthen their separate existence. We could imagine a situation where the encountering categories are totally independent of each other, but the empirical case presented here does not provide evidence for such a situation. However, in the described burial ritual we have an example of what I call tangency: an encounter in which two or more religions meet and remain separate or even strengthen their separateness, but at the same time engage in mutual meaning-generating processes. The two categories relate to each other but remain separate, and in this way the practices associated with them create new and additive relational connections between the elements of which they consist. In the following I will explain this in more detail.

Roy Wagner demonstrates in his analysis of a ceremony among the Daribi of Papua New Guinea how he thinks meaning is created through metaphors. Metaphor, he states, "constitutes the dynamic expression of a meaningful relation in a culture" (1972: 6). He contrasts the metaphor with what he calls lexical signification, where a sign stands in an arbitrary relation to the signified element. This means that, for instance, the letter "A" is a lexical signifier for a certain sound, or in fact for several more or less distinct sounds. Further, these lexical signs can be combined and put together in a grammatical acceptable way and thus produce sentences, like the Ifugao do when they say "that is an *umīdaw*"<sup>8</sup> with reference to a living creature, which according to certain established criteria can be classified as this particular kind of bird. Such an expression does nothing more than classifying; it gives us the word that, in presence of the signified elements, is used for signifying that element. A lexical signification is thus only meaningful in a tautological sense, which means, that its only effect is repeating its own definition criteria (Wagner 1972: 5). Metaphors, on the other hand, are produced by the extension of a lexical sign, which already signifies one element, to also signify another element. A relation thereby is constructed between the two elements which the former lexical sign, now transformed into a metaphor, then refers to. When signification ini-

<sup>8</sup> Blue-headed Fantail (*Rhipidura cyaniceps*, Muscicapidae Family).

tially means that something stands for something else, it also means that there necessarily is a contrast between the sign and the signified. With the construction of metaphor this contrast is supplemented with an analogue relation between the sign and the signified. The word *umīdaw* is also used by the Ifugao as a signifier for a particular class of spirits. When the Ifugao call a bird *umīdaw*, they extend a lexical signifier to be also a signifier for something else, namely a spirit. The word *umīdaw* thereby signifies a relation between the bird and the spirit, and this relation includes both a contrast and an analogy between them. Through their combination of contrast and analogy, metaphors generate relations of opposition, where the elements remain distinct from each other while being mutually dependent on each other (Wagner 1972: 6). Metaphors thus extend the elements, drawing them into new relations and create in this way new meanings; a process Wagner calls innovative extension.

The relations between different metaphors within a culture can either be complementary or contradictory. Wagner calls a complementary metaphor set an ideology. The point here is that also distinct ideologies stand in a relation of innovative extension with each other. When such ideologies, understood as categories, meet, they are brought into relation with each other, but they do not necessarily engage in a complementary relation. They could very well relate contradictory with each other. Nevertheless, this contradictory relation will extend and create new connections between the elements internal to the categories. Hence, innovative extensions also occur, when different ideologies are in a situation of tangency.

I will argue that we can take this theoretical framework as a point of departure to understand which meaning-generating processes were involved in the tangency situation of the described burial ritual. The different belief systems with their contradictory ideas about personhood and the relation between body and soul, understood as ideologies in a Wagnerian sense, are not independent and simply alternative metaphorical models of understanding, but two models of understanding that stand in an innovative and extensive relation with each other. They do not merge, but sustain their status as more or less separate categories. To act according to cultural ideology or one set of metaphors, therefore, means to operate with a set of oppositional relations, both internal or within the metaphor set but also in relation to an external contradictory, or for that matter possibly also an external analogue metaphor set. In a Bakhtinian sense, they are in dialogue with each other, but the dialogue is, as has

been pointed out here, a process where contrasts and analogies operate simultaneously and which in the end generate and change meanings. Bakhtin's concept of intentional hybrids is too imprecise to cover these processes. In addition, the dialogical situation which emerges with the encounter between the categories or metaphor sets is here not a product of an authoritative orchestration, but is nevertheless intentional in a phenomenological sense, as the categories directed towards each other and thus enter into a contradictory relation.

In a situation as the one I have described here, we find an ongoing process of innovative extensions where meaning is established and more or less changed. In the traditional religion the signs, for instance, head and jaws of sacrificed animals and rice god idols in the rice granaries, are extended to also refer to elements such as the old practice, pagan, and authentic. The word *ugāli* has been given a role as the central metaphor for the entire traditional metaphor set, as a metaphor for the traditional ideology. It is exactly in the encounters with the Protestant category, now including references to elements as for instance civilized and modern, that these extensions take place. The different belief systems are in a situation of tangency and are thus involved in processes where their meaningful content is renegotiated, while they sustain their oppositional contrast.

## Conclusion

The different ideas about a person's life after death, which we find in the traditional and Protestant models, stand in a contradictory but at the same time mutually meaning-generating relation with each other. The participation of the Ifugao in both models must, therefore, be understood as contributing to the generation of meaning to both two metaphor sets. When they actively participate in the Protestant model of understanding, they contrast it at the same time with its opposition, and this activated oppositional relation produces innovative and extensive meaning to both sets. In effect, the result of the oppositional interchange we identify in this burial ritual is that both models remain meaningful, not alone, however, but also, and as a consequence of, their mutual contradictory relations.

In a period where the Ifugao often experience such encounters, it becomes important for us as anthropologists to include these aspects in our analyses. The presented burial ritual demonstrates the importance of not treating traditional belief systems as units totally separated from other alternative belief systems. The effect of the presence of different reli-

gions must be included in our understanding of their internal semantic content and the interaction between them. At the same time, we should acknowledge that such a processual and relational approach does not exclude the possibility that the analyzed processes could create boundaries around categories and even strengthen these boundaries and thus produce separate, although not totally independent, units. The traditional Ifugao religion exists today not only as a way of being-in-the-world but rather as a particular one, which has gained its particularity in its encounter with alternative ways of being-in-the-world. The same applies to the Protestant religion in Ifugao. As a consequence of innovative extensions, the involved elements of the systems have gotten extended and changed meanings where concepts, such as tradition and modern, play a particularly important role and have been given ethical and aesthetic values. These ideas are not only valid for religious systems but also for encounters, for instance, between different knowledge systems about agriculture and rice terrace cultivation. I think, therefore, that the theory of tangency will lend itself easily to studies of other kinds of encounters.

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