

The Polysemy of the Minangyan (Hanunoo) Term 'āpu

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This paper deals with the polysemy of the term 'āpu used by the Mangyan Patag of the Philippines, a society of some 15,000 people speaking the Minangyan language.¹ In their works on the Mangyan Patag, H. Conklin, R. Kasberg, and E. Iturralde usually translate the term 'āpu by "owner", "master", and sometimes "spirit possessor", "leader". They also define it as "ascending kin (GEN-5, GEN-6 and GEN-7)". M. Miyamoto also chooses the term "spirit" that is closer to my own gloss as "ancestors".

The above-mentioned authors (Miyamoto partly aside) stress the notions of property and ownership, and do not clarify the master relationship. And yet, the problematic term 'āpu signifies more than a simple ownership relation. I will show in this paper that these glosses are not (entirely) satisfying. Rather than "master" or "owner", translations which seem to impoverish/weaken the polysemous senses, I will argue--giving some concrete examples--that the polysemy of the term 'āpu appears to imply more fundamental meanings. I propose to take into account different significances of 'āpu such as "relation; ancestor; efficiency" which organize the relations between the living and the dead. Thus 'āpu turns out to be a tool to understand these relations.

In short, the analysis of the term 'āpu reveals the following senses:²

1. Belonging (nominal use): an animal, a plant or an object exists in reference to/is part of something or somebody; for example: "Utu [proper name] is the 'āpu of this coconut tree".
2. The relation of the container and the contents constituting a whole (nominal use); "Where is the 'āpu of this lid?" (Signifying "where is the cooking pot?"), "The person is the 'āpu of its blood", "The soul came back into its 'āpu [the body]" or "This bird is the 'āpu of this nest".
3. The relation (in a verbal use) between two beings: a human and an ancestor. "The *dāniw* officiant made 'āpu [get in relation] the *dāniw* ancestors with the novice". Between a human being and all types of ancestors.
4. The relation between a person and a ritual action (nominal use) such as "the person accomplishing a ritual 'to offer to the sea ancestors' [for example] is the 'āpu of this ritual at the moment of the performance", meaning if this person is accomplishing the ritual, then he is the 'āpu of this ritual.

¹ I conducted fieldwork in the south of oriental Mindoro for 3 years, from 1990 to 1994.

² I will elaborate on the differences between the nominal and verbal uses in the paper, and give the vernacular.

5. The ancestors: *'āpu dagat* "sea ancestor(s)", *'āpu danum* "water ancestor(s)", *'āpu parawan* "underworld ancestor(s)", etc. or ancestors which are in relation to the human beings.