

Intertextuality and the Study of Animism in the Philippines

EDUARDO M. DOMINGO, Ed.D.*

Contexts color not only the study of religions. Language, economic, political and religious contexts, among others, shape the study of religion. Concretely, historical-cultural contexts influence sociological paradigms, the subject of interests of researchers, their tools and their methods of inquiry as well. At times, un/consciously, practitioners and researchers im/properly appropriate the contexts of the paradigms and the sociology of Weber, Durkheim, Marx and others in different and/or new contexts.¹ Hence, the study of religion cannot overlook the contexts they come from and are heading to.

Texts can not simply be transported and applied to new/different contexts.² Without proper reading and understanding of

* Eduardo M. Domingo is an associate Professor of the Theology and Religious Education Department of De La Salle University-Manila, Philippines. He is a member of the International Sociological Association, RC22, and a founding member of the Philippine Association for the Sociology of Religion. He is also finishing his Doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Ecclesiastical Faculties, University of Santo Tomas. His research interests include Folk Christianity, Animism, Filipino Folk Spiritualities.

¹ Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, Singapore: Sage Publications, 2007, pp. 2-5.

² Teresita Obusan, *Mystic or Mistake*, New Manila: Institute of Spirituality in Asia, 2008, 17-25; see also Malory Nye, *Religion, The Basics*, New York: Routledge, 2008, 180.

contexts, misappropriation of texts and paradigms becomes inevitable. Studies on religions must therefore look into contexts. Historical events, intellectual currents, cultural shifts, and political contexts must be read as texts to bring new light to the understanding and application of religion.³

Studies on religions are rooted upon specific assumptions that necessitate the understanding of contexts. Taken out of contexts, theoretical assumptions on these only lead to misapplications of their theories.⁴ Thus, Davie cautions the misapplication of the secularization assumption 'that secularization (within the European Experience of Secularization) would necessarily accompany modernization wherever and whenever the latter occurred' to different/new Southeast Asian contexts. Taken and almost applied as a norm, this theoretical assumption is becoming a 'critical agenda' for today's sociology of religion.⁵ Alatas also warns on 'errors' in the specific application of Weber's Orientalist constructions and theory on Capitalism to the Southeast Asian area.⁶

Individually or as community, readers on studies of religions create meanings or interpretations to texts. Contemporary studies on religion must recognize and also read these new/different contexts of religion. There is even the need to differentiate the new contexts from conventional frameworks. As processes are fast becoming new contexts, contextual reflections and experiences are

³ Teresita Obusan, *ibid*; Although Stephen Bevans' focus was on contexts of theology, the author saw them apt to studies on religion, too. See *Models of Contextual Theology*, Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2003, 14-17. Max Stackhouse cites some social scientists who fail to acknowledge the impact of Christianity in shaping the dynamics and structures of society. See *Globalization and Grace*, USA: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc. 2007, 35-38.

⁴ Teresita Obusan, 37-50.

⁵ Grace Davie, 2007, 1-5.

⁶ Syed Farid Alatas specifically points to the misapplication on the uncritical adoption of Weber-type of Inquiry and failure to understand the complexity of Weber's argument on the nature of the relationship between Protestantism and the rise of Capitalism. "Religion, Values and Capitalism in Asia", *Local Cultures and the 'New Asia'*. ed. C.J.W.-L. Wee, Singapore: ISEAS, 2003, 107-115.

transforming the study of religions.⁷ For instance, the impact of the major religions, which secularization has previously belittled, is now emerging as a new context for sociology.⁸

Using intertextuality as key concept, this essay illustrates the importance of considering the contexts of religion/paradigms in current studies. New and changing conditions demand a reading not only of the new contexts of religions but also a re-reading of the contexts of the paradigms we use. Re-reading these contexts as texts to be appropriated, researchers are given a better and wider perspective to make the study of religion not only meaningful but truly relevant.

Intertextuality

Generally understood as the shaping of the meanings of texts' by other texts, Orr describes intertextuality as a catch-all word that deals with contexts, cultures, periods, theories and frameworks. Carried out in the reader's reading, intertextuality refers to the history of a prior text and how it is transformed. It is the complex relationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the creation or interpretation of the text.

As introduced by Julia Kristeva, the theory of intertextuality assumes that texts need contexts and that the meaning found in the texts are based on presuppositions. Since texts are conditioned by contexts for possible meanings, intertextuality will involve a 'double-voiced critical dialogue' between two axes: the vertical (connecting the texts to contexts, Figure 1) and the horizontal (connecting the author/context and the reader/context of the text, Figure 2). Involving mediation and critical dialogue, intertextuality leads towards the transformation of meaning where, at times, contexts become texts or texts become contexts, too.⁹

⁷ Although John Paul Lederach specifically discusses religions, the writer saw its applicability to sociology of religion, too. *The Moral Imagination*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, vii-xi.

⁸ Malory Nye, *Religion, The Basics*, USA: Routledge, 2008, 182-183.

⁹ Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. USA: Polity Press, 2008, 11-15.

These pages focus on illustrating the importance of vertical dialogue in intertextuality, i.e. the relation of the texts of the sociology of religion to their contexts, and the horizontal dialogue of intertextuality, i.e. the new contexts we are facing that demand new frameworks or paradigms and how these have become new texts for the study of religion. The case of Animism in the Philippines will be given attention.

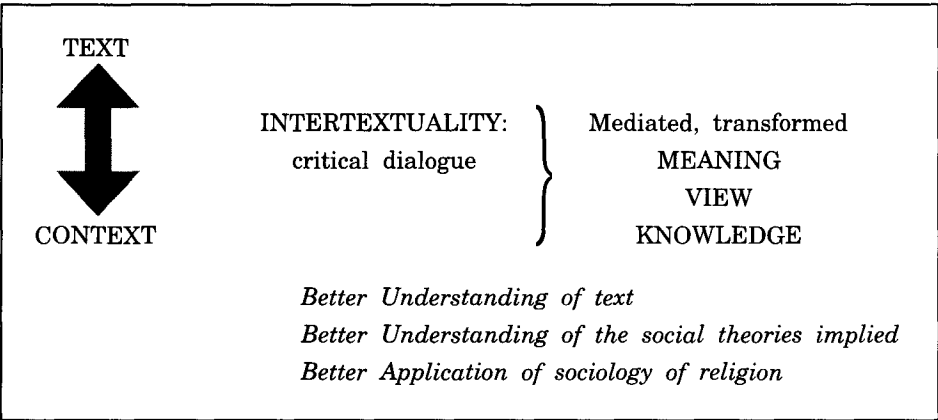


Figure 1: VERTICAL INTERTEXTUALITY

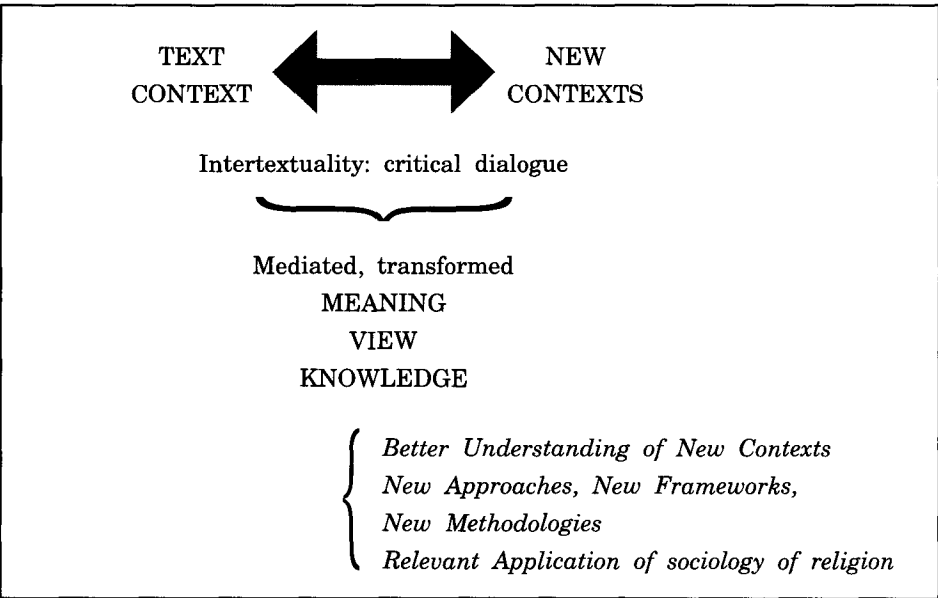


Figure 2: HORIZONTAL INTERTEXTUALITY

1. *Vertical Dialogue in Intertextuality*

Texts need contexts. Culture, in particular, provides the contexts within which texts are to be understood. Without an informed context, a text could be given many/different meanings. Contexts, therefore, can shed light to the proper understanding of texts.

Texts communicate the embodiment of the contexts of the writer, their preconceptions and their cultural – historical paradigm. It is in these historical realities where the reciprocal and critical interaction of texts and contexts take place. Thus, the very language of the texts carries their concrete culture and becomes pivotal to the understanding of sociology. After all, language not only reflects what people think, but also the way people think.¹⁰

1.1 *Reading Contexts as Texts*

Political and sociological contexts, among others, shape the texts of studies on religion. To understand better the texts and the social theories implied by these texts, one may need to read their contexts as texts. Hence, religion may be viewed as a variable and a basis for economic relations (Marx), an aspect of life that changes in time and place (Weber), an independent structure that may or may not conform to a dominant view (Gramsci), or one that functions to unite people (Durkheim).¹¹ For instance, one may have to look into the Filipino cultural contexts and in particular the contexts of the poor and the marginalized to understand better the religious texts on Philippine mysticism and animism.¹² The reading of the contexts of Hellenization or Romanization as a Universal Culture at the different periods of history gives clues to recognize two distinct Hellenistic contexts, i.e. the

¹⁰ Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988, 3-13.

¹¹ Grace Davie, 2007, 7-13, 33.

¹² Teresita Obusan, 27-34. Karl Gaspar, *Mystic Wanderers in the Land of Perpetual Departure*, New Manila: Institute of Spirituality in Asia, 2005, 70-74.

period of Greek dominance and oriental submersion and the period of reaction of the east.¹³

1.2 *Contexts as Texts for the Study of Religion*

Study of religion may come from different contexts, perspectives and paradigms. Hence, reading the contexts of religion as texts can help better understand the very texts of religion as projection or alienation (Feuerbach), as opium of the people (Marx), or psychological immaturity (Freud) among others.¹⁴ Stackhouse also mentions other prominent contexts that are slowly becoming texts for the sociology of religion:

- 1) those who reject the very idea that religion could be an important factor in social history,
- 2) those who view religion as the by product of psychological needs or social forces,
- 3) those who take nonreligious, anti-theological, amoral social theories as definitive,
- 4) those who have high contempt for modern culture and western culture as without trace of authentic morals or spirituality.¹⁵

1.3 *Contexts' Paradigms, Interpretation and Methods*

Different contexts of assumptions/theories on religions may necessitate different attitudes, models and sources to measure research. Recent researches show that contexts should not be overlooked but be read accordingly. In their recent researches, Hornedo, Obusan, and Gaspar respectively departed from the religious-cultural contexts of their subjects and even adapted methodologies which they deemed appropriate to Filipinos.¹⁶

¹³ Max Stackhouse, *Globalization and Grace*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2007, xxi.

¹⁴ Dominador Bombongan, "Cosmopolitanism, Global Ethic, and Interreligious Dialogue", *Journal of DHARMA* 33, 3 (July-September 2008), 252.

¹⁵ Max Stackhouse, 2007, 33-37.

¹⁶ See Obusan and Gaspar. See also Florentino Hornedo, *The Favor of the Gods, Essays in Filipino Religious Thought and Behavior*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2001.

Misheva, Kankaras and Moors, also maintain that theories on religion can not be properly understood outside their sociological climate and their social and psychological contexts. Cresswell even identifies the contexts of paradigms or worldviews that have corresponding implications to the interpretation of research problems and to the methods to be used. Due to different contexts, Davie warns the inappropriate application of European theories to Asian and other countries.¹⁷

1.4 *Inter-Multi Disciplinary Studies of Contexts*

Sociology, anthropology, political science, history and religious studies may indeed help attain a comprehensive contextual analysis of texts. Understanding contexts can in fact widen our interpretation and understanding of texts. Inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary studies may even enlighten the re-reading of contexts to widen our interpretation and our understanding of texts, too.¹⁸

We have seen in the preceding discussions how Vertical Intertextuality enlightens the proper understanding not only of the texts but also of the contexts of studies of religion, their frameworks, their social theories, their limitations, their proper appropriation and applications. It has also made us aware that contexts and texts of studies on religion are being transformed as new texts. All these perhaps suggest different models, approaches and methods for the study of religion.

¹⁷ Michael Kankaras and Moors Keenan, "Freedom in Chains: Religion as Enabler and Constraint in the Lives of Gay Male Anglican Clergy", ed. Abby Day, *Religion and the Individual*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008, March, 159-168; July, 557-561; John Cresswell, John. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007, 15-30; Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, Singapore: Sage Publications, 2007, 3; Vessela Misheva, "Mead: Sources in Sociology", *International Sociology*, Vol. 24 (Number 2, March 2009), 159-168; Milos Kankaras and Guy Moors, "Measurement Equivalence in Solidarity Attitudes in Europe", *International Sociology*, Vol. 24 (Number 4, July 2009), 557-561.

¹⁸ John Lagerway, "Religion and Chinese Society, A Review", *International Sociology*, Vol. 24 (Number 2, March 2009), 191-193.

2. Horizontal Dialogue in Intertextuality: New Contexts as Texts

Proper reading and understanding of new contexts of religion are important. New contexts do imply new assumptions, methodologies and/or approaches to the study of religion. For instance, the traditional study on popular religion may need a different approach or method because of new contexts: what is popular to the masses, what people simply do, or in contrast to dominant cultures.¹⁹

Among the emerging contexts that study on religions may have to consider are:

- 1) The globalization Phenomena,
- 2) New political and economic contexts,
- 3) The Impact of the New Communications and Travel, and
- 4) The Growing and Deepening relationship of sociology with other disciplines: interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches.²⁰

2.1 The Globalization Phenomenon

Until recently, except for a few, sociological work in the field of globalization did not pay attention to religion at all. Working within the global perspective, however, Robertson observes not only the transformation of new contexts but the centrality of religion... that "globalization is not a uni-dimensional, but multi-dimensional and multi-centered historical development within which religion has a central place".²¹ Hence, this global perspective is transforming the very study of religion, too.

Though initially seen and generally understood as an economic or business activity, globalization has been evolving and has been developing its own socio-political categories, communi-

¹⁹ Malory Nye, *Religion, The Basics*. USA: Routledge, 2008, 208-209.

²⁰ Geoffrey Redmond, *Science and Asian Spiritual Traditions*. USA: Greenwood Press, 2008, 14-17.

²¹ Grace Davie, 208-209.

cation-language patterns, and its own value systems.²² Recognizing such complexities and multi-disciplinary realities, studies on religion will have to consider either the heterogenizing or homogenizing tendencies of globalization as new contexts and texts.²³

The interplay of globalization, culture, religion and ethnicity are also transforming new contexts. For as globalization comes in contact with religion and identity, deeply held beliefs and identities are challenged. Traditions and religion become blurred. Religion or ethnicity may become the elementary core to which people could withstand assaults on their beliefs.²⁴ And religion in itself may be an aspect of the global forces that the study and sociology of religion has to reckon with.²⁵ These new contexts may demand new paradigms, new approaches, and new methods for research. Such complexities become new challenges for the study of religion.

2.2 *New Political and Economic Contexts*

Contemporary religions are formed by post colonialism, multiculturalism, globalization, nationalism, ethnicity and transnationalism. While cultural contexts provide a worldview to see and understand the world, religious contexts shape their economics and politics, too.²⁶ Studies on religion must therefore see the new economic and political contexts resulting from these.

Culture and cultural differences are crucial factors to understand religion. While economics may be intrinsically viewed as a value-empty discipline, cultural approaches to economics imply moral entities and values. Studies on religion, therefore, can

²² Eduardo M. Domingo, "The Homogenization of Globalization: The Survival of Animistic Religions in the Philippines", *Philippinian Sacra* Vol. XLIII No. 129 (September-December 2008), 557-561.

²³ Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity." ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash & Roland Robertson, *Global Modernities*. Sage Publications: London, 1995, 25-42.

²⁴ John Super and Briane Turley, *Religion in World History*, New York: Routledge, 2006, 15.

²⁵ Malory Nye, 185.

²⁶ Malory Nye, 210.

not escape these parameters of particularities. It can not but read the religious implications of the cultural, economic and political contexts as new texts for the study of religion. Different contexts of 'capitalism', with their political and economic implications, depend on geographical and cultural roots.²⁷

2.3 *The Impact of New Communications and Travel*

The vast and instantaneous information technology also invites sociology of religion to think globally and to think differently about religion itself. The 'new' contexts of the power and influence of Information Technology to religion, cultures and identities are transforming the study of religion.²⁸

Transnationalism or the movement of people across the globe for permanent or temporary settlement or travel is also shaping religions. As transnational individuals and communities with different cultures and religions in Diaspora experience complex situations, the study of religion may require the exploration of a variety of methodologies, include the study of texts, and the study of contexts of societies, history and cultures. Hence, hybridity, multiculturalism, integration, fundamentalism, pluralism and traditionalisation are only some of these new contexts for the study of religions.²⁹

2.4 *The Study of Religions and Other Disciplines*

The recent development of the sciences have led to a relativistic, holistic, transformative and dynamic revolution. Theories of complementarity, uncertainty, catastrophe, chaos, and dissipative structures, all require the combination of alternative viewpoints. This demand multi/inter-disciplinary approaches. This can also be said of the new and changing conditions of the study of religion.

²⁷ Charles Hampton-Turner and Fons Trompenaars, *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*, New York: Doubleday, 1993, 2-7.

²⁸ Jimmy Belita, *God was not in the Wind*, Manila: Adamson University Press, Inc., Manila, 2006, 197-199.

²⁹ Malory Nye, 192-197, 209.

For instance, religion, as a right, may require contextual analysis to clarify its constitutional understanding as an individual right from its collective right. Studies of materials may demand the collaborative work of legal texts to reveal the implicit presumptions and prejudices of a religion implied by the law.³⁰ Contemporary inter-cultural and inter-religious contexts are also emerging as new texts for the study of religion.³¹

Indeed, Horizontal Intertextuality challenges studies of religion to the possibilities of doing new areas of inquiry, of generating new ways of thinking, and even of formulating radically different canons.³² Intertextuality transforms the study of religion to become truly meaningful and relevant.

Intertextuality and Animism in the Philippines

Discussing religion, today, is a complex, multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary issue. In fact, culture, identity and religion are related in many different ways. For one, religion can be imprinted or intertwined with culture. Conversely, culture can grow out of a particular religion, too. Secondly, while the notion of culture implies identity,³³ religion can also become a directing dimension of culture and identity, too.³⁴ These complex links and inter-relationships of culture, religion and ethnicity only show the many and different contexts from which religion/animism can be seen through. Animism as a religion may/must therefore be understood and studied in its diverse and multiple cultural

³⁰ Sanderg Russell. "Religion and the Individual: A Socio-legal Perspective", ed. Abby Day, *Religion and the Individual*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2008, 157-158.

³¹ Keenan 2008, 169-175.

³² Grace Davie, 209.

³³ Paulo Suess, "Evangelization and Inculturation". *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006, 166.

³⁴ James Scherer and Steven Bevans ed. "World Council of Churches, Report from the Ecumenical Conference on World Mission and Evangelization", *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999, 200-201; Eduardo M. Domingo, "The Homogenization of Globalization: The Survival of Animistic Religions in the Philippines", *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XLIII, No. 129 (September-December, 2008), 557-562.

context/s as it exists in its concrete cultural settings.³⁵ Intertextuality may therefore help us understand these different contexts and realities of animism particularly in the Philippines.

2.1 On the Meaning and Understanding of Animism

The intercultural process, i.e. the reciprocal and critical interaction of the various elements of culture and religion take place in a concrete historical period. The contexts of the upland and the lowland, the agriculture and sea-culture, and the different geographical locations in the Philippines can become new texts for the understanding of animism.³⁶ Because of these different contexts of animism, vertical and horizontal intertextuality may play a crucial role in the understanding of the different historical and cultural contexts of animism and the various meanings of animism itself.

2.1.1 The Meaning of Animism & Vertical Intertextuality

In history, Filipinos have been denounced and demeaned as diabolical because their animism has been associated to magic, irreligion, and worship of spirits.³⁷ Their description as 'animistic' can be found in history books and other studies.³⁸ Vertical intertextuality, i.e. understanding the historical-cultural contexts of animism, may enlighten not only the historical records but our very understanding on animism itself.

³⁵ Malory Nye, 6-7.

³⁶ Florentino Hornedo, *The Favor of the Gods, Essays in Filipino Religious Thought and Behavior*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2001, 68-102; Eduardo M. Domingo, "Re-Reading the Contexts of Historical Records: Towards a Mature and Objective Appraisal of the Early History of the Church in the Philippines", *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XLII, No. 125 (May-August 2007), 427-430.

³⁷ J. Schumacher, retrieved and translated some of the early Spanish descriptions on the native Filipinos. The work is considered as a primary source by historians. See *Readings in Philippine Church History*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1987, 13-14.

³⁸ Rodney Henry. *Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church*, Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, 1986, 1-2.; Fe Susan Go. 'Mothers, maids and the creatures of the night: The Persistence of Philippine Folk Religion', *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*: 7, 186-207. J. Schumacher, 13-14.

De La Costa retraces the historical-cultural contexts of the language used in understanding animism by studying the historical contexts of the early missionaries' culture. Identifying their language as belonging to the 16th and 17th century Counter Reformation culture or the Age of the Baroque, he warns the cultural preconceptions imbedded in understanding animism. De Mesa and Maynigo also expressed similar concerns on the Missionaries' 'classical paradigm': an attitude where western civilization is considered as superior and the only culture. With such assumptions, Mercado therefore recognizes the cultural prejudice of this language, i.e. the imposition of the western norms and categories when judging religious phenomenon such as in the case of animism. And Schumacher suggests that historians make allowances for misinterpretations on the very language found in historical records due to language and cultural problems. De Mesa, therefore, calls for more understanding.³⁹

Re-reading animism in historical contexts should therefore make us understand that simply transporting the preconceptions and biased understanding on animism to new researches and new contexts will surely be detrimental. There is the need for sociology to re-read the contexts of the meaning of animism in the different periods of history as new texts. Hence, vertical intertextuality in the study of animism is relevant for the sociology of religion.

2.1.2 *New Contexts and Texts of Animism: Horizontal Intertextuality*

For over a hundred years, scholars have been using 'animism', with its negative connotations, to contrast the early religions with the more formal scripture based religions like Christianity. The

³⁹ See Horacio De La Costa, SJ. 'The Priest in Philippine Life and Society: A Historical view', *The Filipino Clergy: Historical Studies and Future Perspectives*, Loyola Papers 12, August 1979. 2,4-9; Victor Maynigo, Evangelization and Philippine Culture in the Light of the Second Vatican Council, Aachen, West Germany: MISSIO, 1978, 91-93; Jose M. De Mesa, 'Cultural Shifts and Filipino Values in the Post-Modern Society', *Quest for Insights into Faith*, ed. Jimmy Belita & Corazon Manalo, Manila: Adamson University Press, 2001, 41-42; Leonardoo Mercado. *Inter-Religious Explorations*, Manila: Logos Publications, 2004, 1-4.

shift, however, in the understanding of culture and religion led to a re-thinking.⁴⁰ While the western claim to cultural supremacy began to wane, a new context was arising: indigenous cultures striving for recognition, self-definition and assertion. Cultures were not only being recognized but were being accepted and respected simply as different life ways...

“When we speak of animism, many of us immediately think of primitive people. The word ‘animism’ carries with it for many hearers a concept of ignorance and superstition which could be confronted and easily destroyed by education and Christianity.

This is simply not the case... animism is not ignorant and superstitious, but a different way in which people explain the world around them. Its strength lies in its emphasis on the everyday concerns of people.”⁴¹

As the ideology that there is only one culture was discarded, different perceptions on reality, life, the world and religion were being heard. Animism, therefore, was slowly being understood more as a different way of viewing the world and relating to the spirits.⁴² Recent writings indeed depart from this new cultural context of ‘animism’. Mercado, Tesoro and Jose and even the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines view animism as neutral, a worldview and simply a peculiar way to live and to relate to

⁴⁰ Jose M. De Mesa, ‘Cultural Shifts and Filipino Values in the Post-Modern Society’, *Quest for Insights into Faith*, ed. Jimmy Belita & Corazon Manalo, Manila: Adamson University Press, 2001, 41-42.

⁴¹ Henry, *op. cit.*, 1-2.

⁴² See Super, John and Briane Turley. *Religion in World History*, New York: Routledge, 2006, 17-18; Luis Balquiedra. ‘The New Order of Worship for Native Filipinos’. *Pilippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XXX, No. 89: 185-250, 1995; Rodney Henry. *Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church*, Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, 1986, pp. 1-2.; Fe Susan Go. ‘Mothers, maids and the creatures of the night: The Persistence of Philippine Folk Religion’, *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*: 7, 186-207. L. Mercado, SVD, *From Pagans to Partners*, Manila: Logos Publications, 2000, 11-15.

spirits.⁴³ Hence, the importance and the need for horizontal intertextuality.⁴⁴

This new context of understanding animism indeed leaves room for horizontal intertextuality. And the study of religion in the Philippines should consider other contexts of the meaning of animism: as a worldview, a spirituality, an indigenous religion, and/or as fusion with Christianity/Islam.

2.2 Animism in the Contexts of Popular Religion

Surely the syncretism and fusion of animism with Christianity/ Islam and other religions in the Philippines have their distinctive character and variations. As animism reacts to the 8 major ethno-linguistic groups that include the Christians, Muslims and other religions in the Philippines, study of religion must recognize the distinctive contexts of animism as characterized by particular geographical locations, by socio-economic contexts, by different cultural and by different cultural-political-religious identities.⁴⁵ While some may see these new contexts of animism independently, others see their links or the dynamic fusion of the different contexts. All these may demand vertical and horizontal intertextuality for the study of religion.

2.2.1 Animism in Philippine Folk Religions

Although Christianity comprises 90% and Islam 5-7% of the population in the Philippines, Peoplegroups.org would describe

⁴³ See Mercado, L. ed. *Filipino Popular Devotions: The Interior Dialogue Between Traditional Religion and Christianity*, Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2000, 6; Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, Makati: Word and Life Publications, 1997, 15, paragraph no 43; Tesoro, D. and Joselito Jose. *The Rise of Filipino Theology*, Pasay City: Paulines, 2004, 52.

⁴⁴ Sociology of religion must therefore clarify the contexts of the topics under study together with their assumptions. This will have implications to their research method and design.

⁴⁵ Eduardo M. Domingo, "Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Philippines: Contexts and Perspectives", *Living Together Peacefully*, Palestine: Bethlehem University, 2007, 239-240.

the religions in the Philippines as basically animistic that persists despite its fusion with other religions.⁴⁶

2.2.1.1 *Folk Islam in the Philippines*

The encounter of the animism of the pre-Hispanic Filipinos with Islam did little to change their worldview and manner of relating with the divine. The result was a syncretistic form where external trappings of Islam were superimposed on the original pattern of their animistic pre-Christian beliefs and rituals. A kind of accommodation process took place between these divergent belief systems of the pre-Hispanic Filipinos with the Muslim beliefs or practices. Known also as folk religion, folk spirituality or folk Islam, the outcome was the continuation of the pre-Islamic animistic beliefs despite Islamization.⁴⁷

In his article "Snapshots of Everyday Life in a Muslim Community", Watanabe observed the difficulty of separating animism with that of the Muslim-customs. Studying a Muslim community right in the heart of Metropolitan Manila, he narrated how people continue with folk Islam. He took the case of a Tausug woman who went to a hospital for an X-Ray and check up. Eventually, she went to Abu Panday, a diviner. She told her that a *djin* (spirit) had a grudge against her and a spirit was making her ill. Abu Panday told the woman to make an offering to the spirit and bathe while chanting a *bismillah* (a prayer) to purify her body. Her illness gradually went away. Having observed other cases, Watanabe thus noted how "such 'un-Islamic' practices are imbedded in their culture".⁴⁸ Surely, the study of animism in the Philippines will have to take Folk Islam as one among the many contexts for sociology.

⁴⁶ Retrieved August 19, 2009, available from the worldwide web. <http://www.peoplegroups.org/>

⁴⁷ Juan Francisco, "The Religious Experience of the Filipino Muslim", ed. Leonardo Mercado, *Filipino Thought on Man and Society*, Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1980, 18-24.

⁴⁸ Akiko Watanabe, "Snapshots of Everyday Life in a Muslim Community", ed. Arnold Azurin and Sylvano Mahiwo. *Transborder Insights and Reminiscences*, Manila: Kultura't Wika, Inc., 2007, 214-216.

2.2.1.2 *Folk Christianity in the Philippines*

The domination of Christianity may have had its effects on the animism of the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Philippines, too. But animism persisted and the fusion or integration of animism with that of the dominating Hispanic christian culture resulted to folk Catholicism or folk Christianity. William Taft, an American Administrator during the American Period in the Philippines, thus describes: "The Filipinos... have taken from Catholicism what is suited to their Oriental temperament. They have taken the form rather than the substance: they love, after all, the beautiful ceremonies, the pilgrimages, the pomp and the music of the grand fiestas...".⁴⁹ Hence Rodney Henry, a protestant minister also describes it "as the fusion of two separate thought and behavior systems and the coexistence of the two religions in the same person without inconsistencies".⁵⁰

Hornedo's book, *The Favor of the Gods: Essays in Filipino Religious Thought and Behavior*, is equally revealing. Documenting 21 cases of christianized Ivatans (a group from the Northern part of the Philippines) who gave up their indigenous names and had diverse experiences with different forms of the *anitus* or spirits, he illustrates the fusion and persistence of animism with Christianity and describes it as... "The basic values and institutional practices of their ancestors have persisted... this persistence is evident in the contemporary Ivatan's belief in the anitus – a belief that is a living tradition that grows by assimilating new elements each time it comes into contact with a new culture."⁵¹ Surely, a study on animism must seriously consider folk christianity in the Philippines as another context for the study of religion.

⁴⁹ Op. cit. Rene Pinon, "The Work of Americans in the Philippines", ed. Marie E. Guerrero, *From Revolution to a Second Colonization: The Philippines Under Spain and the United States*, Manila: National Historical Institute, 1998, 84.

⁵⁰ Rodney Henry, 1986, 11.

⁵¹ Florentino Hornedo, 79-122.

2.2.2 *Philippine Folk Religions: Re-expressions of Animism*

Rooted in the indigenous religion and culture of the people, Philippine Folk Religions have blended with the dominating cultures. Basically a continuation of the traditional beliefs of the people, folk religions understood and expressed the dominant cultures, like Islam and Christianity, in the forms and manner of their animistic indigenous culture.⁵² Despite the external trappings and the upper stratum cultural influence of the dominating cultures, the people instinctively behave with the substratum of their animistic indigenous culture.⁵³

The fusion of the dominant culture with the animism of the Filipinos is truly amazing. For instance, Juan Francisco noted how some Muslims near the lake area continue to blend their traditional animistic beliefs with Islam. In one of their rituals, after reciting the Islamic prayer that makes references to Allah, the Maranaw farmer interspersely recites animistic indigenous prayers making references to various spirits and deities. He also observed similar rituals of Muslims in the Magindanaw area in Mindanao, Southern Philippines.⁵⁴

In Cebu, South Philippines, studies were also done related to corn, camote, and tobacco planting. In spite of the recital of christian prayers, offering practices related to the spirits were done.⁵⁵ Similar observations were also evident in the East Visayan Islands of Southern Philippines. In these places, the older form of animistic rituals related to rice were christianized. Although the ancient elements were still noticeable, the latter was given new a meaning. In some cases, the invocation to the anitos or spirits

⁵² Jose De Mesa, *Why Theology is Never Far From Home*, Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2003, 81-84.

⁵³ Leonardo Mercado, *Inter-Religious Explorations*, Manila: Logos Publications, 2004, 111.

⁵⁴ Juan Francisco, "The Religious Experience of the Filipino Muslim", ed. Leonardo Mercado. *Filipino Thought on Man and Society*, Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1980, 18-21.

⁵⁵ Mimi Trosdal, "Cebuano Folk Beliefs and Customs Connected with Planting", *Philippine. Quarterly of Culture and Society*, Vol. 3, 1975, 31-35.

of their ancestors and other spirits were omitted; the amulets, charms and other symbols, however, now became their symbolic expressions directed to God. In other instances, even in the christian rituals, the farmers still attribute to the charms themselves the power of giving the rice these qualities. Hence, together with the plants or herbs that they believe will bring the desired qualities for their rice, christian prayers like the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory are recited in honor of the Blessed Virgin, San Isidro, and the patron saint of the parish.⁵⁶

In the province of Pampanga, Cental Luzon, Philippines, Robby Tangingco has documented eight unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals that have Christian yet animistic or indigenous origins: *Lubenas*, *Ligligan Parul*, *Aguman Sensi*, *Kuraldal*, *Batalla*, *Libad*, *Sabat Santacruzán* and *Mal A Aldo*. He describes them as 'hodge-podge of Christian and animistic indigenous elements so fused so that it is impossible to tell one from the other'. His comments on the *Libad* or Fluvial Procession among the river networks of the province, only re-enforces what we have discussed all along...

"Kapampangans used to celebrate *Bayung Danum* (new water), the early floods of the season, which may have been the pre-Hispanic equivalent of new year. The Spanish friars probably Christianized this pagan practice by introducing saints like St. Peter and St. John the Baptist, whose feast days in June coincide with the ancient holidays"⁵⁷

In the study of religion, Philippine Folk Religions as re-expressions of animism are thus possible contexts and texts.

2.2.3 Philippine Animism as Expressions of Identity

The various manifestations or forms of folk religions in different places in the Philippines do not only indicate the fusion

⁵⁶ Richard Arens, "The Rice Ritual in the East Visayan Islands", *Folk Practices and Beliefs of Leyte and Samar*, ed. Gregorio Lurangco, Tacloban City: Divine Word Publications, 1982, 3-11.

⁵⁷ Robby Tangingco, "Unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals", *Singsing*. Vol. 3, No. 2, Angeles City: The Juan Nepomuceno Center for Kapampangan Studies, 14-42.

of the animistic elements with the dominating cultures.⁵⁸ These also show the capacity of folk religions to assert themselves culturally and to self identity.⁵⁹

In a study of the Beraperangan, a popular Islamic story of Maranaos, done by Japanese scholar Kawashima Midori, her observations and documentations clearly show how the Islamic and Christian elements were interwoven into the native stories to make it relevant to their prevailing conditions. Supposed to encourage people to fight bravely against foreign aggressors without fear and death, the versions of the Beraperangan story were again narrated in 1969-1972. Adapting them to the social and political surrounding of the Philippine Muslim society during the said period, accommodation became an excellent means to foster the teachings of Islam.⁶⁰

In a similar study made by Aligan on the *Pasyon*, a form of poetic literature used in commemoration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, he saw the creativity and ingenuity on the way Aquino de Belen, the author, assimilated into the local culture the Christian message. Aligan comments that by selective assimilation of christian tradition, the author remained faithful to the traditional teaching of the Church. Yet by inserting the christian elements into the existing local folk poetry, imagination and idiom, he proved the creativity, ingenuity and capability of local culture expressing these in a truly Filipino context and thus re-expressing their local identity, too.⁶¹

In the Philippines, festivals or fiestas are rooted in the indigenous and animistic cultures/religions, too. Although the fusion particularly of animism with Christianity is evident in the fiestas, Reinhard Wendt notes that these were not only instruments of cultural imperialism. Philippine fiestas were also opportunities and occasions of resistance and self determination for the Filipinos.

⁵⁸ Trosdal 1975, 31-35; Arens 1982, 3-5.

⁵⁹ Reinhard Wendt, "Philippine Fiesta and Colonial Culture", *Philippine Studies*. Vol. 46, First Quarter 1998, 3-22.

⁶⁰ Unpublished lecture 2006 delivered during the 3rd IAHA International Conference at the Philippine Plaza Hotel, Makati, Philippines.

⁶¹ Rodel Aligan, *Pasyon*, Manila: UST Publishing House, 2001, 3, 9-12, 51-69.

In his study, he illustrates how the indigenous population present the Fiestas as means to assert themselves culturally. While imported attributes commingled with the native, the indigenous population continue their own worldviews and belief system with new forms. They adapt the festival calendar to their local climatic conditions to suit their own needs. Gradually, Filipinos appropriate formerly foreign cultural elements, make them their own and turn them into mass rallies in support of the new order.⁶²

Today, animism as expressions of Identity or ethnicity are seen in their persistence disguised with the clothing of the dominant Filipino animistic culture. And these have even taken different forms of expressions and re-expressions. Tangingco, for instance, observed in Pampanga the inclusion of their animistic traditions in the yearly celebrations of the fluvial processions of the Christian images of Mary and the saints.

“Kapampangans seem to nurture their spirit by returning regularly to the cradle of their civilization – the river after which their land was named – in the same manner that the Hindus, for example, make regular pilgrimages to the Ganges and bathe in its banks at least once a year for spiritual renewal.”⁶³

Despite Christianization and influence of technology, today, Filipinos continue to live and will continue to live with their animistic indigenous belief system.⁶⁴ Despite global cosmopolitanism, Filipino animistic worldview survives. It is their first and last line of defense against meaninglessness and disintegration.⁶⁵ The religious animistic identity of the Filipinos has not been lost. In fact, dominant cultures have contributed to the rise of

⁶² Reinhard Wendt, “Philippine Fiesta and Colonial Culture”, *Philippine Studies*. Vol. 46, First Quarter 1998, 3-22.

⁶³ *Singsing*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 32.

⁶⁴ Jimmy Belita, *And God Said Hala*, Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1991, 19-23.

⁶⁵ Randolph David, “Foreword”, Katrin De Guia, *Kapwa: The Self in the Other*, Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc. 2005, iv-v.

many cults, denominations and churches in the Philippines.⁶⁶ Animism as Identity is therefore a context to contend for the study of religion.

Summary and Conclusion

The importance and relevance of intertextuality in the study of religion can not be ignored. As multi/inter disciplinary approaches enlighten the contextual analysis of texts, vertical intertextuality allows re-reading of said texts and transforms our understanding of religious issues. Similarly, horizontal intertextuality opens the study of religion to new contexts, frameworks, and methodologies. As intertextuality forewarns us of misappropriations and misapplications of texts, contexts, theories and methods, it also challenges the study of religion to generate new models, approaches and methods when confronting new realities: hybridity, multiculturalism, integration, pluralism, globalization, localization, migration and traditionalization.

The study of religion/s in the Philippines can not but face off with the survival and different contexts of animism. As vertical and horizontal intertextuality allows sociology of religion to understand the various meanings and contexts of animism, intertextuality also allows researchers to see the myriad of complexities and particularities of Philippine animism: historical, cultural and socio-economic-political-geographical settings. As the interplay of religion, culture, and identity are transforming the contexts of animism, any study of religion can not but deal with these new texts of animism. Intertextuality therefore makes the study of religion not only meaningful and appropriate but truly relevant particularly in the Philippines. □

⁶⁶ Elesterio Fernando, *Three Essays on Philippine Religious Culture*, Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1989, 14-16.