THE ‘SWINE TURN’: A Review of JON HENRIK ZIEGLER REMME, PIGS AND PERSONS IN THE PHILIPPINES. HUMAN-ANIMAL ENTANGLEMENTS IN IFUGAO RITUAL.

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Abstract: This much-anticipated book on Ifugao ethnography, regrettably, appears to be rather disappointing. It claims theoretical novelty while failing to substantiate it, and at the same time fails to acknowledge regional literature and to go deeper into the sources to verify claims and facts. In my view, it is indicative of an alarming broader trend to disregard existing scholarship in present-day anthropology. It appears as though the success of a publication hinges upon opposing oneself to the previous research tradition and presenting one’s research out of its context. Systematically tracing the role of pigs in all spheres of life in Batad (a tourist centre of the Ifugao province), following the longstanding research tradition of the Austronesian area, but in terms of human-animal relations studies, J. Remme claims that his approach is totally innovative, having ‘opened up a new avenue to understanding the Ifugao and their lives’. He reduces the previous tradition of Ifugao studies to being ‘rice-field-centered’, whereas in fact century-long Ifugao studies have until recently focused mostly on mythology, ritual and its traditional religious system, with abundant discourse and data on exchange and sacrifice of objects and animals. Traditional culture is a multi-channel system; the ‘pig code’ is just one of many cultural codes. Laudable as it is, its study should not be proclaimed supreme or serve to understate the importance of other avenues of research. The conclusions are often based on factual mistakes. For example, Remme claims that dogs and water buffalos are never sacrificed (p. 9) in Ifugao, while we have multiple evidences of the latter (buffalo sacrifice being one of the markers of Southeast Asian cultures in general) and several solid evidences of the former in early and present-day Ifugao culture. The discussion of pigs and gender (pp. 100–6) based on terminology for male and female age groups of pigs completely falls apart in case the reader can etymologise the untranslated Ifugao terms given by the author. The claim that wild animals are never sacrificed is equally wrong. Remme exoticises the people that he studies and expands his conclusions based on Batad material to the whole province of the Ifugao, failing to contextualise his own fieldwork.

Keywords: Ifugao ethnography, human-animal relations, pigs, the Philippines.


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The ‘Swine Turn’

Jon Remme is a graduate of Oslo University who took his Master’s degree there on the subject of the book under review [Remme 2006] and a PhD on Pentecostalism and traditional beliefs in the culture of the Ifugao, a mountain people of the Philippines [Remme 2012], and is now Reader in Social Anthropology. He defines his book as the ‘swine turn’ in Ifugao anthropology, which he has ‘changed radically’ ‘by allowing pigs to enter the analytical space’ (p. 136–7). He regards the basic subject of the book as the formation of personality within the social interrelations that take place in the process of activities connected with pigs.
**The structure of the book**

The book consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion (sections 1–6). The introduction (pp. 1–25) begins by defining the task: to show that in the culture of the Ifugao, who are best known for growing rice on terraces, pigs are as central as rice. The second section, ‘Pigs Make Kin’ (pp. 27–53), deals mostly with the circulation of pigs and the sharing of the meat of sacrificial animals in gift exchange. The third, ‘Pigs and Human-Ɓā’i Relations’ (pp. 27–53), is devoted to an analysis of the pig-human and human-spirit relationships at the ritual level, and the interaction between people, spirits, souls and gods. The fourth section, ‘Pigs and Social Differentiation’ (pp. 79–106), is intended to prove that pigs ‘add an important dynamic to Ifugao social ranking’ (p. 81). The fifth section ‘Unmaking a Person’ (pp. 107–33), is devoted to burial rituals and the concept of the soul. There follow the conclusions, bibliography and subject index.

**Human-animal relations**

The area now known as human-animal relations, which is a section of the wider field of human-non-human / other-than-human relations, is one of the oldest in anthropology / ethnology / ethnography. Over time, of course, the methodology and lexical structuring, or terminology, have changed. However, it is the same research subject, and the lines of comparison were drawn in the classic works by S. M. Shirokogorov, V. G. Bogoraz, Marcel Mauss, Bronisław Malinowski and Margaret Mead, written on material from Siberia and Oceania: relationships with wild animals (bears, crocodiles) and domestic animals (deer, pigs) and their functions in culture and society. Slightly exaggerating, one could say that present-day researchers are studying the same problems as their predecessors, but some of them are slightly ashamed to admit it: at best they refer to the facts contained in the older studies, but represent their own approach as entirely novel. In the Siberian material, the problem is quite rightly pointed out by V. N. Davydov in his comments on the article by Charles Stepanoff and others on the relationships between humans and animals [Davydov 2017: 72].

The pig and the domestic chicken are the main domestic animals of the Austronesians, who carried them with them in their boats as they settled the Pacific. Historians, ethnographers, geographers, archaeologists and palaeozoologists have joined forces to research the role of pigs in Austronesian culture [Nelson 1998; Persoon, de Iongh 2004; Piper et al. 2009]. Pigs were domesticated independently in various centres in India, China and South-East Asia [Larson et al. 2010; Xiang et al. 2017], and the South Sea migration routes can be traced by the genetic characteristics of pigs and chickens.
Batad, where Remme worked, is a mountain amphitheatre on the slopes of which houses nestle among paddy fields. This mountain settlement is situated in the Municipality of Banaue in the Province of Ifugao, in the north of the Philippine Islands. In 1995 UNESCO designated the rice terraces of Banaue a world heritage site in the category of ‘artificial landscapes’, which turned this part of the province into a world brand and one of the symbols of the country. Batad, which is a very beautiful place, became its main attraction. As early as the 1990s, before these events took place, Batad appeared to me as a ‘spoilt field’, and the nearest town, Banaue, a touristic hell; since the designation the flow of tourists has been increasing every year [Stanyukovich 2014a]. Working as I do in the remote tourist-free municipalities of Kiangan and Asipulo in the same province, I rarely visit the vicinity of Batad myself. Therefore, when I met Jon Remme at a conference in Baguio in 2008, I was surprised at his choice of field. Remme’s paper was on Pentecostals in Batad; he argued with enthusiasm that in Batad ‘to be a Pentecostal means to be an Ifugao’. I even questioned him cautiously on his own religious views.

The province of Ifugao is one of the few places in the Philippines where there are regions in which the traditional mountain culture is well preserved. It seemed strange to me to define the Ifugao identity through Pentecostalism. In the past, missionaries who worked in the Cordillera Central — the Catholics Juan Villaverde and Francis Lambrecht, the Evangelical Protestants William Henry Scott and Jules de Raedt, and the members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) Leonard Newell, Anne West, and Lou and Dick Hohulin — had studied the languages and cultures there and written outstanding works. However, the Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists who are working in the Cordilleras now are Christian fundamentalists who eradicate every trace of tradition without recording it at all, and not only rituals and beliefs, but also songs, dances and material culture. I have been observing the expansion of these ‘enlighteners’, which began much later in Asipulo than in Batad, for many years now: a convert of the Jehovah’s Witnesses who has come a long distance for the bogwa — the second burial of his / her grandfather’s remains — stays in the house and cannot accompany everyone else to this ‘pagan’ ritual, and instead of hudhud ni nosi (funeral narratives in the Yattuka language) the deceased’s relatives and neighbours sing Irish drinking songs, recommended as ‘properly Christian’ in the presence of his / her remains. In Batad the annihilation of traditional culture began much earlier and has gone much further.

So why did Remme choose Batad? There is a logic to it: ideal logistics, good roads, a thoroughly well studied region, maps and
a dictionary of the local dialect do make one’s entry into the field much easier.

Batad is not far from the village of Bangaan, where Harold Conklin, a classic figure in world anthropology and the teacher of many generations of Philippinists (including the writer of this review), worked. He compiled a bibliography of published and manuscript work on Ifugao [Conklin 1968], and systematically studied the basic aspects of the culture and economy of this part of the province (North-Central area), paying particular attention to the use of natural resources, ethnoecology, ethnobotany and rice culture. His atlas of the Ifugao rice terraces [Conklin 1980] is justly esteemed a unique achievement. The region where Batad is situated is represented on hundreds of maps and photographs to various scales, from macro photography to aerial photography and even satellite photography. The detail is such that the maps show every house, every rice terrace and every path that existed at the time of publication. Now pictures of that sort are available to everyone through Google Maps, but a picture is one thing, and the lines drawn over it demarcating farmland used for different purposes are quite another, not to mention the fact that it is only thanks to Conklin’s atlas that we can compare the situation today with that in the 1970s. The analytical aspect is represented by tables showing the distribution of soils, types of vegetation, variations in the agricultural cycles connected with rice and other crops, sets of rituals, counting systems, etc.

There are several languages and dialects spoken in the province, and they differ from one another greatly. Leonard Newell, the chief lexicographer at the SIL, lived in Batad for twenty-five years and published a Batad Ifugao Dictionary with Ethnographic Notes [Newell 1993]. By choosing a settlement where the people spoke the only idiom that had been described at that time, Remme made the task of learning the language easier. The influence of Newell’s masterpiece is even felt in the composition of the book, in particular in the separate tables of names of rise wine jars, breeds of pig, etc. Having hard time for decades before the publication of the Yattuka dictionary in 2018, and still struggling with the lack of any decent maps of Asipulo, and any earlier work on the folklore and rituals of the south of Ifugao Province that could be relied on for diachronic comparisons, I can appreciate the advantages of Remme’s choice.

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1 On Newell’s role in the creation of multimedia field instruments see: [Stanyukovich 2012].
2 This was the first, and until recently the only dictionary of one of the languages of Ifugao Province published by SIL. Dictionaries of Tuwali Ifugao and Keley-i have recently been published [Hohulin, Hohulin 2014; Hohulin, Hohulin, Maddawat 2018]. The grammar of another language, Yattuka, was first described by S. B. Klimenko in his PhD [Klimenko 2017] — and he is the only person who could compile a dictionary of this small language.
Time and its indicators

There is no indication in the book of when the fieldwork was done, nor any reference to the author’s field materials, nor quotations from his field diaries, nor are there any photographs. Multiple vignettes (‘my Ifugao friend and I went to such-and-such a place and saw such-and-such’) are suspended in timelessness. Emphasizing that there is no electricity and largely omitting the fact that Batad is a tourist centre creates an impression of the profound archaism of the society under study, which is reinforced by the rhetoric of first discovery. Sometimes modernity breaks through: the hero of the sketch about funeral rites neglects his paddy fields because he earns his living posing for tourists at a viewing platform (p. 108). The presence of Christians in Batad (and we should remember the importance that Remme attached to them earlier) is mentioned only in the introduction and conclusions of this book, and then only to explain their exclusion from the main text: Pentecostals do not take part in the sacrifice of pigs and do not accept shares of the meat of animals ‘sacrificed to Satan’ (pp. 24, 140–1). Is this an inability or unwillingness to switch codes or deliberate archaisation? This is no idle question. Francis Lambrecht, one of the ‘giants’ of Ifugao research, wrote just like that: about weaving separately, and about mythology separately, without even indicating the ways in which they were interconnected (unlike R. F. Barton, for example, in whose work research into any subject preserves its vital links with everything else, allowing us to see the culture in all its complexity). The overall ‘pioneering explorer’’s’ tone of Remme’s work rather suggests intentional archaisation. Perhaps the author considered that a turn (the ‘swine turn’) in the understanding of the life of the Ifugao based on research material from a tourist centre would not be all that convincing.

The place of rice in Ifugao culture and the research tradition

Like other peoples of the Philippines, South-East Asia and a large part of Asia as a whole, the Ifugao regard rice as the only ‘real food’, and ‘the staff of life’ [Revunenkova 1992]. However, the assertion by the author of this book that rice has always been the staple food of the Ifugao and the rice terraces its main source is an overstatement. As R. F. Barton had already shown in Ifugao Economics [Barton 1922], rice is a sacral and prestigious food, and the basic foodstuffs were unprenigious roots and tubers, ‘the food of the poor’. The labour-intensive process of cultivating rice in flooded fields, which does not seem to be justified in a society with a sparse population and an abundance of land suitable for cultivation, is founded not on its material value but on its cultural prestige. In other words, rice occupies a central place in Ifugao culture not for economic reasons, but for cultural ones. Barton’s book is in Remme’s bibliography, and
the author himself lets slip on the basis of his field observations that the basis of the food of the Ifugao of Batad is not rice, but vegetables from the gardens on steep mountain slopes (p. 103). And this is now, when the local strains of rice that gave only one harvest a year have universally been replaced by lowland varieties that give two or three harvests. Further on, proceeding from rice to pigs, Remme asserts that his approach changes our understanding of Ifugao culture: ‘I hope to have opened up a new avenue to understanding the Ifugao and their lives.’ His predecessors focused their attention on the rice terraces, but the ‘swine turn’ allows us to concentrate on the connections within Ifugao society and see how they come into being (pp. 136–7).

The premise that the ethnography of the Ifugao revolved around the rice terraces is a misunderstanding arising from a logical error and a confusion of concepts. Yes, in agrarian societies the primary culture and the land on which it is cultivated occupy an important place in the system of values. However, that does not at all mean that, for example, the anthropological tradition of studying the Ndembu concentrates on cassava (manioc): Victor Turner, who set its direction, was occupied with other subjects. Hundreds of works have been written on Ifugao culture during the last hundred years, but most of them have been about their belief system, mythology, folklore, social organisation, material culture, ethnolinguistics, ethnobotany and headhunting. This is clearly visible in the annotated bibliography of works on the Ifugao rice terraces [Zialcita et al. 2015]: it consists primarily of publications dealing with other subjects in which only a small place is devoted to the rice terraces. Conklin, the only anthropologist who really was focused on the rice terraces, only began to work in Ifugao in the 1960s. Thanks to his authority, the Ifugao rice terraces did receive the UNESCO nomination in 1995, which increased interest in the subject. There were dissertations on their archaeology [Acabado 2010] and on Ifugao land use [Charette-Castonguay 2014]. Not long ago Stephen Acabado, a Filipino archaeologist, and Marlon Martin, a prominent member of Ifugao society and the head of the local SITMO, Save the Ifugao Rice Terraces Movement, set up an annual field school of archaeology in Ifugao. They are actively publishing. Let us take note that their names are not mentioned in the book, nor are the names of many other specialists on Ifugao. So the tradition of research on Ifugao was, until recently, not at all ‘rice-centred’. Before Conklin the tone had been set by three great men: Villaverde (religion and mythology), Barton (religion, mythology, ritual, the establishment of personality in culture) and Lambrecht (ritual, epic, material culture).

1 The archaeologist R. F. Maher had undertaken excavations in Ifugao before him, in the 1970s and 80s.
Ill. 1. Important prestigious rituals are accompanied by the sacrifice of many chickens, pigs and water buffaloes. The *kolot*, the rite of passage for a boy, conferring high status on him. Salamagi, Lamut municipality, Ifugao province, 2012. Photo by M. Stanyukovich

Ill. 2. The sacrifice of a pig in a healing ritual. The priest is pulling the sacrificial pig’s soul on a string. Lungut, Kiangan municipality, Ifugao province, 2011. Photo by M. Stanyukovich
Let us remember that our author's aim is to show that the establishment of personal status in Ifugao takes place through operations with pigs. So what about pigs? From a dietary point of view they are part of a wide range of sources of animal protein, together with chickens, water buffalo, goats, dogs, ducks and game — deer, wild buffalo, wild boar and many lesser kinds of game (civets, wildfowl, monitor lizards, snakes, etc.). From a ritual point of view they are part of a more restricted range of sacrificial animals (together with chickens and buffalo, both wild and domesticated), and also of a significantly wider circle of objects of sacrifice and ritual exchange. In the sacrificial hierarchy the first place is occupied by the ingredients for betel chewing, without which no communication with the gods and spirits is possible [Stanyukovich 2010a; 2010b]. Next come rice wine (and more recently — commercial gin), traditional textiles (loincloths, skirts, blankets, shrouds), and, in recent decades, modern clothing. On a higher level there are chickens, as the smallest kind of blood offering, then the pig, and finally the buffalo. Previously the Ifugao did not raise buffaloes themselves. They caught them for sacrificial purposes in the woods or obtained them for sacrifice from the plains, a difficult and dangerous business in mountain regions without roads, further complicated by traditional headhunting. Buffalo sacrifice is regarded as one of the cultural markers of the indigenous peoples of South-East Asia. It is the priest who determines how many animals, and of what sort, should be offered. For example, in Kiangan, according to my informants, there are rituals in which a month-old chick which is just beginning to fledge is offered. Barton speaks of the sacrifice of ducks in Central Ifugao and dogs in Kiangan [Barton 1946]. In 2015 S. B. Klimenko recorded information in Asipulo (southern Ifugao) about the sacrifice of dogs of a particular colour. Remme's reluctance to venture beyond the tourist spot of Batad for his fieldwork, and his neglect of the literature have led him astray again. In the introduction he proposes that buffaloes and dogs are eaten, but not sacrificed (p. 9), an assertion that is so extravagant that it is hard to know how to criticise it. Furthermore, he mistakenly supposes that wild animals are never sacrificed. Although the data on that is scarce in the old literature, it is quite positive about it; according to my field material, memories of the sacrifice of wild buffaloes in Kiangan and Asipulo are still very fresh.

The distribution of shares of meat is a particular instance of ritual exchange, and this instance is not limited to the distribution of shares of a sacrificial pig: shares of a sacrificed buffalo, wild or domesticated, are distributed in just the same way. Moreover, shares of the game were traditionally distributed to various categories of people after any successful hunt [Barton 1946: 107]. As well as shares of meat, during a ritual relatives might be given shares of rice beer, and there were special richly ornamented large bamboo vessels for carrying it.
Inanimate material objects such as shrouds also play a very important part in ritual exchange. In Ifugao they are brought to the funeral by the relations by marriage of the deceased. When his kin have used one for the dead man, they must quickly redistribute the rest for fear of magical ill consequences. The social mechanisms for the circulation of shrouds among a nearby people, the Kalinga, have been studied by R. Shedden [Shedden 2009; 2012]. I shall not mention such important objects of ritual exchange as songs and dances, the exchange mechanism for which has hardly been studied at all from Filipino material [Stanyukovich 2017: 294–5].

**Pigs and spirits**

The author makes it his task to show that the meaning of the ritual consists in the movement of the spirits (ba’i) towards the sacrificial pigs and, conversely, the movement of the souls (lennawa) of the pigs towards the gods and spirits of the Ifugao pantheon. He gives detailed descriptions of the rituals that he has witnessed, valuable regional material on Batad, which supplements the classic descriptions by Barton and Lambrecht on the Ifugao municipalities of Kiangan, Asipulo and Mayoyao, and more recent publications. In my opinion, interaction between people and pigs should not be assigned the central role in the ritual, as it is by this author in accordance with the aim of his book. Yes, as anyone who has studied Ifugao ritual in the field, or only read the classical literature on it, knows very well, the pig is a go-between, he is sent on his way with the words ‘Pig, don’t be lazy, go to such and such gods of the Underworld (or the Sky world), and say...’ [Barton 1946; 1955]. But any sacrificial object is regarded as go-between, be it betel, hen, or buffalo. Betel, the chewed stimulant, is connected with the sphere of ‘mouth and speech’, with eloquence, and it can laugh (the sphere of the emotions, important for Remme), wink, communicate by word or action, for example acting upon the being who is addressed by growing from a nut into a heavy areca palm in the lap of a divinity who does not wish to go where the performers of the ritual are calling him [Barton 1946; 1955; Stanyukovich 2014c].

Culture, like language, is a multi-channel system, and information in it is reduplicated to avoid loss. It is justifiable to place the phenomena under study in a single row, so long as the row thus constructed is not accorded disproportionate significance. The betel or, more widely, the plant code, the animal code, the dietary code or any other are all objects worthy of study. However, to speak of a ‘swine turn’ in the study of culture is going too far.

The aforesaid also applies to the section on lennawa — the souls of people and pigs, which are studied in greater detail in a separate article of Remme’s [Remme 2017]. The author makes a contribution
to the subjects of funeral rites and the concept of the soul, which have been developed and formulated in greater or lesser detail on the basis of material from Kiangan, Asipulo, Mayoyao and other regions of Ifugao in older and more recent works [Beyer, Barton 1911; Barton 1930a; 1930b; 1946; 1955; Lambrecht 1932; Stanyukovich 2011; 2013]. At the same time Remme presents his work as if he were the first to discover it.

**The system of ranks, inheritance and the economy of prestige**

The main criterion of wealth in traditional Ifugao society were the rice terraces and heritable objects of prestige, primarily gongs and rice wine jars. The opening paragraph in the section on ‘Prestige Objects’ begins with a scene of the beating of gongs to accompany the drinking of rice wine from porcelain and earthenware jars: ‘I understood that these objects might be as significant as the other things that so far had attracted my attention’ (p. 84). It is strange to see such words in a book published in 2014, considering how much has been published on the symbolism and significance of gongs and rice wine jars in Ifugao and other Philippine mountain cultures over the past hundred years (not to mention the prestige economy and theory and practice of exchange in the Pacific region).

The author opposes the pigs, which are personal possessions, to the rice terraces, gongs and wine jars, which belong to the ‘clan’¹ and are transmitted by inheritance — this is an accurate contention, but by no means a new one. He stresses that pigs and the gift of pork and the distribution of shares of meat are a ‘currency’ and play a leading role in accumulating prestige and power, including modern political power (in elections) (p. 100).

The chapter ends with a review of gender aspects. Rightly indicating the equal position of men and women in the cultures of the part of South-East Asia to which the Philippines belong [Errington 1990], and noting that according to [Rosaldo 1992] the sphere of headhunting is an exception (the only one), Remme adds another of his own — relations with pigs. His arguments are the taboo on the place sheltering a woman in labour or a sow in farrow, the ‘feminine’ character of the words for different ages of pig, and the fact that only men conduct the sacrifice of pigs [and all other blood sacrifices. — M.S.]. I can see nothing gendered in the definition of small piglets as ‘sucklings’. Terms for females are everywhere distinguished on the principle of ‘not having given birth — having given birth’ (as in

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¹ Acabado considers it an unforgivable error on Remme’s part to say that the Ifugao have clans [Acabado 2015: 656]. When they speak English, the Ifugao themselves do use this word in the sense of ‘a group of relations’. However, in academic discourse it is indeed dubious how this term is to be understood — in its classical sense as a lineage, in the post-Murdockian tradition as a kin grouping, or in its modern application to politically or economically powerful family groups.
Russian for cows: *yalovaya [korova]*, a barren cow, *netel*, a heifer, *pervotelka*, a cow that has borne its first calf, and so on) whereas there is no such distinction for males; mature individuals of the female sex are denoted by a word meaning ‘ready for reproduction’, and the males by a word meaning ‘ready for castration’.

Remme says that pigs belong to the female sphere: the terms for sows differ according to how often they have farrowed, and the corresponding males are denoted as their brothers. These terms are given untranslated, so that no one who does not speak Ifugao can make any sense of them. However, they are by no means equivalent: alongside those which do indicate sex and age there are those which are derived from the value of the animal. For example, it says that a *mabinuhlan* boar and a *ma’empatan* boar are the brothers of a *pi’at* sow, indicated in the first instance as a sow that has had two litters, and in the second as one that has had three. A reader who does not know the language and the realities will understand the names for the males as kinship terms — older brother, say, or younger brother, or twin. But a *pi’at* is simply a sow at the peak of its reproductive period, i.e. at its most valuable. Such a sow, and the most valuable boars, will be regarded as equivalent, hence the correspondence between them. A boar is a negotiable asset, its function is to be sold or sacrificed (whereas a sow will be kept until it becomes feeble), and therefore it is defined according to its price, and not by any kinship terms (‘the sow’s brother’). Once upon a time, when woven items were very rare and expensive in Ifugao, its price was that of a loincloth (*binuhlan*) or even a shroud (*empat*). The goods equivalent of a *boghah* — a sow that is not yet full-grown and has farrowed for the first time — is a young, not yet fully grown boar, which costs less, and which is therefore called a *mahinagat* from *hinagat*, a cheaper sort of loincloth which is not woven but made of bark. These explanations, which would have made the text meaningful and transparent, are omitted, possibly accidentally, but more likely because this transparency would not have suited the gender discourse, not to mention the fact that it contradicts the author’s premise about the determining role of pigs, as it shows that they are interchangeable with inanimate prestige objects and named after them.

**Determining one’s place in the scholarly tradition**

The context in which Remme places his work is that of recent research on human-animal relations. This would be fine by itself, so long as it took account of other contexts — the tradition of research into the people that the book is about and into the region of which

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1 I assume that Remme’s *boghah* is a misprint, and give the word as in the list of Batad terms for a pig in Newell’s dictionary [Newell 1993: 562]. It is worth pointing out that according to Newell these terms are equally applicable to wild and domesticated pigs.
the Philippines are a part. But the book lacks any indication of its heritage from the powerful anthropological tradition that studies ‘pig-human’ relations. The classic books on this subject — *Pigs for the Ancestors* [Rappaport 1984] and *Ancestors for the Pigs* [Nelson 1998], which bring together anthropologists, archaeologists, palaeozoologists and zoogeneticists — are even absent from the bibliography. Excellent works by Thomas Gibson [Gibson 1986], crucial for the topic, are just briefly mentioned in the introduction, largely out of context. Common courtesy would require at least a reference to Deirdre McKay’s work on the role of pigs in the formation of kinship relations among the Filipinos of Hong Kong [McKay 2010], and not least because McKay conducted fieldwork in Ifugao. However, here we encounter another peculiarity of the determination of Remme’s place in the tradition: his book does not mention a single (Lynn Kwiatkowski being the only exception) researcher who has worked with the Ifugao after the 1980s, either Filipino or from abroad. Besides Stephen Acabado, Marlon Martin and Deirdre McKay, who have already been mentioned, this means Y. Kikuchi, Lourdes Dulawan, Manuel Dulawan, Rosario De Santos Del Rosario, Lynne Milgram, Fredeliza Campos, and a range of others.

I shall quote here the first record in the annotated bibliography on *The Importance of the Pig in Pacific Island Culture* [The Importance... 2006], which runs to over forty pages and includes over 150 works published from 1887 to the first years of the twenty-first century, when Remme first visited the field:

- Pigs are central to many Melanesian cultures.
- They are considered a family’s financial capital.
- They underpin the village economy.
- They can cause war and make peace, are sacrificed and are used to right wrongs.
- Without pigs, things would not feel right, marriage would be more difficult to arrange and ceremonies would lose their potency.
- If cash is required, perhaps to pay school fees, a pig may be sold.
- If one family decides to court another, with marriage in mind, a pig is presented to open negotiations.
- If there is an argument between neighbouring communities, the gift of a pig is usually the first clause of a peace settlement [The Importance... 2006: 5].

It is easy to see that the range of roles that Remme’s book (which is supposed to be a turning-point in scholarship) attributes to pigs is practically the same as the list of those described by previous researchers into the cultures of the South Seas.
Finally, the author has obviously not considered how his book will be received by Ifugao society or how it will affect relations between the Ifugao and the lowland Filipinos. Such expressions as ‘the swine turn’ in research into the Ifugao’ or ‘swine family members’ (‘... women <...> provide food for their swine family members’) (p. 103), or the conclusion that among the Ifugao personality is established through operations with pigs, all sound offensive to the Ifugao, as a Filipino colleague has already pointed out in his review [Acabado 2015: 656]. It is no wonder that the book has provoked a negative reaction among the inhabitants of the province. In his work on animal metaphors in Tagalog Sergey Klimenko has shown that in Filipino cultures pigs have exclusively negative connotations, and are associated with both physical and moral dirtiness [Klimenko 2010: 11, 14]. The Ifugao are famous as warriors (nowadays many of them are soldiers or policemen employed outside the province). Being compared to a dangerous crocodile is traditional and honourable for a warrior in the Philippines [van der Ploeg et al. 2011], but being compared to a pig is, on the contrary, unacceptable. The book The Djigit and the Wolf [Karpov 1996], which studies the mythic and ritual connections between the mountain warrior and a wolf, another fierce predator, had a positive reception in communities in the Caucasus for whom sheep play practically the same role as pigs among the Ifugao. I doubt whether The Djigit and the Sheep would have had the same success. Besides, the author should have considered that the indigenous peoples still face a certain degree of discrimination in the Philippines. Their reputation among the lowlanders is only just being rehabilitated after centuries of confrontation caused by colonial administrations that juxtaposed the Christian majority to the un-conquered ‘Igorotes infidels’, ‘mountain savages’, animists and shamanists [Stanyukovich 2014b].

Another reproach from the Ifugao community is the extended use of the term ‘Ifugao’ and the application of observations made in Batad to the whole province, in which there are very marked local differences. This goes for the terminology too: Batad Ifugao is very different from other dialects of Ifugao in the Cordillera Central, not to mention the southern Cordillera languages spoken in Asipulo and Tinoc in the south of the province.

**Conclusion**

The deficiencies in Remme’s work call to mind several worrying tendencies in contemporary anthropology. How has it come about that success in our discipline requires methods that have nothing to do with scholarship, a demonstrative departure from tradition and an emphasis on one’s own originality? Why has the style of a grant application
intruded into research? This is not a detergent advertisement, in which the book is the brand being advertised and all previous scholarship is the anonymous packet of ‘ordinary powder’. The general disaster is that less attention is paid to the subject of the research (including verification of the facts on which a theory is based) and more to the instruments, a fetishisation of the language of research, the introduction of deliberately complex ‘innovative’ terminology instead of that which is established in a given field, the breaking off of traditions and the invention of new ones. The terminological game, which reminds one of the unfolding kennings of the Scandinavian skalds, takes up an inordinate amount of space in contemporary publications. M. I. Steblin-Kamenskiy, that brilliant researcher into skaldic poetry, defined its peculiarities as follows: the skald, like any mediaeval author, took the contents of his poem freely from his predecessors (without, of course, referring to them), and his authorial contribution was to make the form as complicated as possible [Steblin-Kamenskiy 1978]. It would be regrettable if we were to revert to these mediaeval norms.

References


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