



Healing and Well-Being as Tools of Decolonization and Social Justice: Anti-Colonial Praxis of Indigenous Women in the Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter uncovers how Aeta women healers in the Philippines practice decolonization and social justice. Aeta Indigenous women have resisted oppression and colonization by nourishing individual and collective spirit as the core of human health and well-being. They have passed on their healing practices to younger generations after generation thus ensuring the survival of local knowledge in the face of colonization and exploitation. This chapter is based on my research conducted among Aeta women

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healers in the Philippines in 2010 (Torres, 2012). Aeta is one of the Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, resisting colonization through their healing practices.

Their knowledge of healing was passed to them by their ancestors through the word of mouth. Healing for Aeta women healers is about focusing on overall well-being of an individual which is spiritual, mental, physical, and psychological. To them, if one of their aspects of themselves is not functioning, then it will result in “*sakit*” or sickness. Their focus is to ensure that their children are knowledgeable about their worldviews, cultures, and traditions. This chapter is aimed at providing historical evidence of the healing power of Aeta women healers in the Philippines and how they use their healing practices and the well-being as a form of resistance against imperialism. I will also discuss healing and well-being as a form of decolonization and social justice. I employed talking circles as a methodology which Aeta women healers have been employing for their teachings to transmit their culture and healing practices. Talking circle is one of the Indigenous decolonizing research methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Restoule, 2004; Smith, 1999). The methodology gives the participants a chance to share their knowledge and to question the researcher (Kovach, 2009; Torres, 2012). Through this methodology, colonial research process is questioned and troubled to center narratives from the margins. It transforms the politics between the researcher and the participants in such a way that they are co-producers of knowledge. It is also a methodology that gives equal power to the participants and the researcher (Kovach, 2009; Torres & Nyaga, 2016).

Aeta women healers know that society is changing and that they need to start having written materials that relate to their culture and healing practices, as both a means of reaching out to the people outside of their community and a means of sustaining their knowledge. They know that non-Aeta people need to build relationships with them in order to change their perceptions of the Aeta people and that of other Indigenous peoples in the world. I employ the following questions to guide me through this chapter: How can the spirit be healed? What is healing of the spirit? Why is the healing of the spirit important for the body? Can the spirit be corrupted?

My questions enabled me to hold a conversation with the healers who indicated to me that, first and foremost, the spirit is central to our well-being. If the spirit is weak, then the mind and the body are weak. If the spirit is weak, certain rituals are held to bring back balance and harmony. For the outsider, the ritual has a semblance of ordinary prayers; however,

these are special ways of communicating with the Creator and the ancestors. The healers engage in conversation with the “*spirito*” or spirit by chanting and calling ancestral spirits to join them in the healing practice. Once the spirit is healed, the healers focus on the mind and the body of the person to achieve holistic healing. In relation to the corruption of the spirit, the healers explained that a spirit cannot be corrupted but can be possessed. In order to make sense of the conversation that I held with the healers, I will provide narratives from them. My intention is not to engage in an analysis of these narratives, but to leave it to the reader to have a moment to reflect on the words of the healers. That is through this ritual, the spirit’s well-being is restored. In addition to healing practices, I will provide historical evidence of how Aeta women healers employed their healing practices as a form of resistance against imperialism. I situate this work on anti-colonial theory.

Anti-colonial Framework

Anti-colonial framework speaks to Aeta women forms of resistance to colonization. Anti-colonial work recognizes the body of knowledge that is embedded in the history, experiences, and cultures of the subjugated and brings their experiential reality to the forefront. It violently dismantles the colonial mind-set in the lives of the colonized and reminds the oppressed to look back and admire what they have lost both culturally and spiritually in their communities. The axiomatic claim of the paradigm is that lost culture is worth reclaiming as is the restoration of the lost pride of the endemic population. To many colonized people, their language was taken away through the education system. This robbed them of their cultural ways of knowing. The Aeta women, who participated in this study, lamented the fact that the young people had lost their local language. Wa Thiongo (1986) explains the importance of local language. By acknowledging the local dialect, Wa Thiongo (1986) sees this as a standpoint through which full emancipation of the colonized can be realized. He believes that culture is embedded in the language that we use and so, to define ourselves, full emancipation has to start from where we missed the step. To him, language is an imperative tool in decolonization. The Aeta women healers concede that language is a prerequisite for the preservation of their culture and traditions. Through their language, they know that they are able to put into context the love that their ancestors gave them. They speak Agta and Ilokano and they use

these languages to educate their children about the importance of adhering to Aeta morals and values.

Anti-colonial theory teaches us how to “resist oppression, assimilation and annihilation by encouraging us to use alternative knowledge, oral histories, literatures, and cultural products as a counterpart to hegemonic forms of knowledges” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2005, p. 65). This is what the Aeta women did. They held on to their spiritual healing practices. We need to be aware of the full spectrum of oppressive techniques because the colonialists, “through their methods of writing and teaching, as well as through production, validation, and dissemination of knowledge, [compel] the colonized subjects to view themselves, their cultures, their language, their ancestors, their histories and their identities negatively” (ibid.). Anti-colonial theory “encourages the colonized bodies and communities to define themselves and to articulate their condition through their own voice” (ibid., p. 66). Anti-colonial theory places Indigenous knowledge that would have been excluded from the academy at the center of academic discourse. However, placing Indigenous knowledge at the core of discourse does not mean excluding other forms of knowledge.

Anti-colonial theory captures the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the academy as well as the anti-colonial struggle against imperialism, racism, sexism, impoverishment, homophobia, and other forms of colonial domination. Anti-colonial theory can speak to the issues faced by Aeta women healers because it focuses on agencies and resistance that Indigenous peoples practice and because it recognizes marginalized groups as subjects of their own histories, knowledge, and experience (Dei, 2002; Fanon, 1963; Foucault, 1980; Memmi, 1965). It is because of the focus on the wide variety of pertinent themes, such as the contribution of women, dismantling of dominating influences, use of language in the battle against colonialism, agency, and resistance or race, highlighted by the anti-colonial theory, that this study selected to this framework as a means of bringing forth the significance of the role of the Aeta healers.

Finally, anti-colonial theory captures the essence of why we need to acknowledge the Aeta cosmology and practice and why we need to dismantle the notion that knowing by means of Western knowledge is the only valid way of knowing. Anti-colonial theory celebrates the different forms of resistance of the colonized (Wane, 2009). It brings the histories of knowledge production, “epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the Indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness” (Dei,

2002) to the spotlight. It also recognizes the complicities and responsibilities of every colonized individual, hence its appropriateness for this paper.

Complexities of Spiritual Healing

Spiritual healing, I came to make sense of, is a complex phenomenon. This is revealed by Aludig words:

I can tell when somebody is being possessed by a “dakes nga spirito” or bad spirit through their eyes, actions, and behavior. One day, I was in the farm. I was tilling the land when somebody started shouting. The person was not drunk or drugged. I looked at him on the eyes and it was so sharp and red. And so..., I started talking to the spirit. I asked, I know you are not Juan (the name of the person who was possessed), who are you? The spirit said something that I did not understand. I believe, the spirit had demands, but, I said “you do not belong to this world, and right now I want you to go back to where you belong, and do not disturb Juan again”. Then, I prayed and suddenly, Juan fell on the ground. I waited for few minutes, then I talked to Juan and he responded in a respectful way. I knew then, that the spirit of Juan is healed. That is why we must nourish our own spirit through love and care of one another. The nourishment of our spirit is like the way we take care of our mind and our body. We must ensure that we do good things, we eat good food. We need to know how to share, and we must help one another. These things cannot be done by an individual alone, it must be done by the whole community.

The above captured what many healers understanding of being possessed. Conversation with a spirit that is inhabiting a human being is easily identifiable by looking at their eyes. What is amazing is the healers know the names of the bad spirits that are creating chaos for the person they have taken over their mind, body, and spirit. During the healing process, relationship building is important. In this relationship building, the healer and the patient must trust and respect one another. If the patient does not trust and respect the healer and vice versa, the process becomes complicated. This relationship building can be attained through open communication between the healer and the patient as well as the spirit.

Aludig narrative above reveals that it is not just removing of the bad spirit, but the importance of self care, through nourishment of the body and mind, through food and love, respectively. The question to ask is, can all the dispossession of the spirit have emanated from colonization? Of

course, I am alluding to the fact that we did have dispossession of the spirit before colonization. What we do know is that when the colonizer came to the Philippines hundreds of years ago, they knew that the first thing they needed was to disturb the spirit of a person. Some who were not spiritually prepared to resist colonization were dislocated and completely alienated from the spirit of our ancestors.

The practice and assumptions are neither the value system nor the methodological standard practices of Western trained healers; instead, they bear remarkably similar insights to those of many other Indigenous cultures. The American South West Navaho have the concept of *Koyaanisqats* or “life out of balance.” The concept speaks about the violation of nature and imbalance leading to “illness” or absence of wellness. These are ideas now embraced by many, arguing for an ecological and environmental approach to health and life. Aeta women healers systemically argue that it is deleterious for the body because it creates imbalances in the system that result in headaches and body pains, among other ailments. Their healing practice therefore is to counter the work of colonization and, more recently, the work of global capitalism, whose aims are to generate profits. These women probably have not read Amy Chua’s “World on Fire” (despite the fact that she is Chinese-Filipino/American) yet their life and cultural experiences material reality and ontological insights lead them to similar conclusions about the pejorative effects of exporting “global democracy” and its resulting racism, environmental degradation, and acrogenic consequences. Aeta women healers also know that while colonizers from Britain or Spain may no longer be present in the Philippines, their presence on ontological curricular models, informal learning and “taken for granted truths,” and cultural prejudice continues to be felt (2003).

Aeta healers have maintained the healing practices that their ancestors employed as a way of resisting these oppressive forces. They work in the possibility of hope, a hope that gives them the strength to carry on their culture and tradition. They know that their identity has been damaged; they have been essentialized on the basis of their gender, race, and class and have been ridiculed on the basis of their culture, and Sterling (2002) documents that her grandmothers possess the knowledge we need in order to live a successful life. They have the experience and knowledge about how to heal and how to maintain the well-being of their community. They are the cultural professors. They know what it takes to be healthy. Their healing practices go beyond making the physical body strong, instead adopting a

holistic focus on ensuring that the social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of a person is also taken care of. They can communicate with the terrestrial world as well as the celestial world. They believe that everything is related and interconnected. We cannot live without the presence of the “other.” They believe, like many African tribes, and Indigenous groups in both North and South America and across the globe, that it is a circle of interrelationship in which a break can be the cause of the loss of social, cultural, and political, as well as economic and personal well-being. To Aeta women healers, their environment should be respected if they are to live in harmony.

According to Nyaga and Torres (2015, p. 753) that:

The Aeta women healers’ “credentials”, which are to be represented, are based on their spirituality and the extensive experiential study of how this plays out in nature, medicine, and healing practices. Their spirituality is the source of their strength and power in the struggle against colonization. Their spirituality is an instrument for sustaining both their identity and agency. Their spirituality is one of their sources of healing. It gives them the confidence to heal and to perform their responsibilities as members of their community. They acknowledge their awareness of Christianity and attend to its truths rather than summarily dismissing it. In fact, they respect the teachings and recognize that it shares common truths with their own beliefs; we are, after all, human—all with the same strengths and flaws. Nonetheless, they would like to maintain the spirituality that they learned from their ancestors and sustain it despite having different struggles, oppressions, and dismissals. They would like to be identified by their spirituality because this would explain who they are and what morals and values they have in life. If the non-Aeta people appreciate Aeta spirituality, then the Aeta women healers believe that the stereotypes about the Aeta will cease.

The above quotes give us a glimpse of the source of healing powers of the Aeta women healers. While foregrounding the historical legacy of Aeta women’s healing power in the Philippines, this passage above endeavors to campaign for the maintenance and sustenance of the knowledge of these women. For the Aeta women, their identity is marked by their healing practices. They are proud to carry that responsibility for the well-being of their community. Their spiritual healing practices are their form of teaching. According to Nyaga and Torres (2015) that:

The history of Philippine medicine historically required the use of herbs and followed the belief that sickness was brought on by the spirits. Historians thus concluded that the earliest practice of medicine was in line with the indigenous healer practices (De La Cruz 1984). Nevertheless, when Spaniards established their colony in the nineteenth century in the Philippines, they brought with them physicians from Spain. Indeed, the creation of public health and Western medicine “were integral parts of the ideology of empire” (King 2002: 765). This “ideology of colonial healing” is one of the justifications given by colonizers for their invasion on the pretext that they were bringing the best quality of life for indigenous peoples. The idea that the Spaniards were out to save the newly found heathens from their uncivilized way of living was implanted in the minds of the indigenous peoples. (p. 753)

Indigenous medicine has provided balance for the Aeta community for hundreds of years. However, when the colonizers arrived in the Philippines, they did not recognize the herbs or the rituals that this community employed. The colonizers came to save the Aeta community, even when their justification for saving the society was fraudulent. Let me turn to a deeper analysis of the narratives of the Aeta women spiritual healers.

DISCUSSION ON THE NARRATIVES OF AETA WOMEN HEALERS USING THE ANTI-COLONIAL FRAMEWORK

How can healing and well-being be used as tools for decolonization and social justice? What is decolonization? What is social justice? For Aeta women healers, decolonization is about recognizing the impact of colonization in the lives of the people. It is also about knowing how to reclaim the practices, traditions, ways of knowing, and among others that have been affected by colonization. For example, one of the impacts of colonization in the Philippines is division and hatred among the populace. There is a division between the Indigenous peoples and one of them the Aeta people and the colonized Filipinos. There has been an ongoing problem of grabbing the land of the Aeta people, or abuse when they go to town. Aeta women healers know the root cause of all these problems. They decided to focus on their healing practices to reclaim and restore the peace and unity of the Philippines. They know that it takes a while to do the work, like Aludig mentions:

To heal is not a one-time process. In fact, it can take a long time. But, I do not focus on the time. But, I focus on the purpose of the healing. And that

is to attain well-being of the people that will result to peace and unity that have taken away from us (colonizer). For example, our neighbor who have been suffering of sickness for a long time came to me and asked me why he has been sick for such a long time. I begun my healing with her through a conversation about her life histories, then moving on to her life styles and so on. I decided to do a healing that compose of rituals, offerings and taking herbs for her strength. It is still an *on-going process*. *But, I have faith she will get well.*

Through this, they believe that social justice can be attained. Amay states what social justice entails:

We can say that there is social justice if we enjoy the same rights as human being. It is an absence of abuse, brutality, discrimination against, and violation of human rights.

In just this material and intellectual understanding, the Aeta women healers form part of the vanguard of organic intellectuals who have been utilizing their healing knowledge to reclaim their political, social, cultural, and spiritual power outside of their community. Aludig explains:

My healing is for all... I heal Aeta people or other people that do not belong to our community or group. I believe that being healthy is not only for the benefit of an individual but for the nation. I always think that if we are all healthy than we can always fight against injustices in our small places that we belong to. And what I mean by well-being is about being healthy spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and physically. That is why my healing is for all.

They actively participate in reclaiming their indigeneity in a practical sense. These “intellectuals” fully understand that societies house machinations and encoded rules as well as patterns of governance, and they are ready to make changes that suit the well-being of the whole society. Rima states:

My knowledge of healing was passed to me freely. I believe that I was given this talent and skills of healing not for my own benefit. Healing for me is for all those people who need it and believe it. What I mean “believe” is acknowledging the power of healing because without believing it, then, it is impossible for somebody to get healed. Healing is for all because we belong to one community and to one nation. If we are all healthy than we will be able to help each other economically, politically, socially, and spiritually. But, if one of us is not well than it can affect all of us. One of the common disease

that I usually hear from people is “high blood pressure”. I heard that people who have this kind of problem takes a lot of medication. I cannot judge the efficacy of this medication, but, a person who came to me with this health problem, I asked him to take an herb that can normalize his blood. I also ask him to pay attention to the food that he takes and his relationships to others.

They are experienced and knowledgeable in their endogenous and external cultural practices, laws, and norms and are ready to overcome oppression as engaged activists (Rima, Aeta healer).

In addition, Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio, among others, were the leaders of revolutionary movements in the Philippines. Jose Rizal wrote novels, such as *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, to expose the grievous act of the Spaniards against the Filipinos, while Andres Bonifacio led his troops to the mountains to end the injustices of the colonizers. Aludig, states:

There have so many on-going injustices in this nation. Like for example, killing one another, raping women and children, mining, using dynamite in fishing, and so many others. When you try to talk to people and beg them to stop what they’re doing, they even abuse you. So, to me my way of helping my community is to include them in my prayers and in my offerings. Because, that our creator will intervene. And so when a person comes and asks me to heal her/him, it is a joy for me. Because I know that this is a beginning of healing the whole community as well. I begin my healing through heart conversation. We talk about the Philippines before the coming of colonizer (dayuhan). Then, we talk about the problem of our community. Then I begin the process of healing.

Though they all came from different vantage points when analyzing the colonial nature, we can see that they had unity in their goal: to resist and to explain the work of colonization while simultaneously reclaiming decolonization. Fear was not sufficient to trump action since without such proactive steps; cultural genocide and domination would result. It was cultural survival that maintained the claim to human self-determination which was itself the prize. Amay explains:

I know in my heart that when a person is healthy or “nasalun-at” than the whole community is also healthy. And when we are all healthy than we can stop acknowledging the power of colonization in us. I believe that all of us are better off without outsiders in our community. My healing is all from

nature and believing that our creator will help us in order to achieve a healthy community.

According to Young (2001), "...many histories, rebellions, political campaigns, cultural identification and theoretical formulations that evolved during the twentieth century as part of the anti-colonial struggle that together, at great human cost, freed the world from colonial domination in a remarkably short period of time" (pp. 427–428). However, these could not have happened without the help of women. Women had a role to play, supplying men with both food and Indigenous medication made from their herbs. Talna also explains:

Healing for all, means achieving and practicing social justice. There are many injustices in this country. In our community alone, outsiders have taken away some parts of our ancestral land. Some of us are being beaten up, rape, or harassed. We are not given the rights to vote and our opinion are being considered by the government. We are considered as being illiterate people therefore we do not know anything, and so on. Everything that I told you in this circle are not many, but, it serves as an example of injustices in our society. I chose to be a healer to attain social justice. That in my healing I heal the mind, the body, and the spirit. I have this strong belief that if we are healed holistically we refrain from committing injustices in our community. For example, in our community one way of preventing social injustices is to practice sharing and reciprocity. If others need so food and you have some, share to do those who do not have. We usually practice these kinds of values in our community.

Fanon (1963) expresses his recognition of and confidence in the capacity of women in overthrowing colonization: "the women could not be conceived of as a replacement product, but as an element capable of adequately meeting the new tasks" (p. 48).

In addition to these proponents of anti-colonial thought, this paper includes here the Indigenous peoples in the world, including the Aeta women healers who have been resisting tyrannical pedagogies and reclaiming their space. Maya notes:

Philippines is so divided. Aeta people versus the Filipino people became enemy because of psychological impact of colonization. We are at war at each other. Therefore, we need to be healed to have peace in this nation. We

need to examine our values-how do we see each other? Why do we need to discriminate others?

Human collective success always works at many levels as we have tried to do. It is important to acknowledge the important epics and paradigmatic models written about anti-colonialism while neither devaluing nor forgetting the work of ground-level intellectuals who were and are the front-line personnel and ground-level organic intellectuals of anti-colonial struggle and thought. Since the inception of colonization, Indigenous peoples—with the Aeta women healers as both a text book example and role models—have been skirmishing against oppression and challenging false cultural characterizations.

A holistic and full account of the anti-colonial struggle involves laying out the schematic and diagrammatic parts of the struggle. Hence, it is essential to describe anti-colonial thought while simultaneously acknowledging that the original people who exemplify resistance work against colonization are the Indigenous peoples, including the Aeta. Amay expresses her opinion:

I am hopeful for our nation despite our differences I believe we can attain justice. For me, I heal everybody, Aeta, non-Aeta, men, women, children, adults. Because I believe that if I show kindness and love and compassion through healing this will resonate to others. That is why, when I was called by a family of a police, I went not just to heal him, but, to show, that it is fine to be kind and loving to those people who do not belong to the same community.

This is not to romanticize the Indigenous peoples but rather to fill in unspoken segments of the empirical basis of human life from all humanity and to therefore start acknowledging those who are frequently excluded or (misrepresented) for both political and economic convenience (from the colonial perspective of) knowledge production of theory and “fact.” We must exert due diligence in our own method and rigor in our investigations of critical work or we may end up re-colonizing and misrepresenting the actual richness of cultural belonging to the Indigenous peoples in our theories and “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973). We have to highlight the dynamics, intelligence, and uniqueness of their ways of life and how they have mastered the struggles resulting from being eclipsed by reductionist representation, and in these representations, we must be sympathetic

yet critical as we watch the unfolding strategies of how Indigenous people like the Aeta are standing firmly for their cultures and traditions and not succumbing to domination and marginalization. Talna explains what well-being as a form of social justice is:

The root cause of injustices in our nation is complex and cannot be solved by medicine. It is systemic, in fact it's already ingrained in our psych that it is "okay" to commit injustice especially when you don't feel good about other people. This kind of behavior is "sick" in nature. That is why I heal everybody, anybody because well-being for all is necessary to counter injustices. When a person is well, he/she has the capacity to determine right or wrong, then, he/she's wellness is a result of justice in our community.

This paper further notes that anti-colonial analysis does not sufficiently highlight the contributions of both non-Indigenous women and Indigenous women against colonization (Spivak, 1995) and "often reproduce patriarchal, hierarchical models as the ideals for sovereignty" (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 8). This paper seeks to partially address this oversight and is the central reason for the inclusion of the Aeta women healers with the tactical and intellectual hopes of chronicling and recording their voices as part of the growing chorus rising as anti-colonial proponents. Again, this paper addresses the gap created by the absence of the Aeta from the literature. Anti-colonial theory is nevertheless relevant in theorizing how the Aeta women healers have been rupturing the work of colonization in their community through their healing practices, and how the agency of Indigenous peoples has been celebrated since it gives us an analytical template that fits many who endured the Euro-colonial paradigm.

According to Amay,

If we do not act now, when? I believe personally that healing and the well-being can counter the work of colonization. When we heal, we also discuss what we need to do as community. We discuss strategies, issues, and different forms of healing. We also identify who needs healing in our community. I also teach my children and the children of others to heal so that I am no longer strong, then somebody can continue the work. And as we continue to heal, to support, and to love one another, the work of "dayuhan" (colonizer) will cease.

Amay expresses the urgency of decolonization because she knows that every time we sit back and think that colonization is over, then, this is the time

that we let colonization continue to colonize us. That is why for Amay and all the healers, healing is a continual process to achieve decolonization. And as long as colonization is ongoing, then healing is also ongoing.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that Aeta women healer's knowledge of healing and well-being is a tool and the optimal strategy for decolonization of their community. Their success, persistence, and generosity offers a model of knowledge production that the academic community would do well to learn from. In the course of many honest exchanges and the simple, but powerful, act of listening, the Aeta healers in the circle taught me that I should always be ready to reference the ultimate library of knowledge: what our Mother Nature is willing to give to us. These are lessons in limits and possibilities, and truths such as that we are made from nature and neither the controller nor arbiter of the possible. These ecological, biological, physical, and emotional truths are such that Western science and ecology are only now rediscovering. When I met them, this set of caring women taught me how to pay attention to their way of life and practices. The study methodology—talking circle—is a safe place for them (and as I discovered to my delight, also for me). It symbolizes interconnection, love, respect, and openness to one another. The women taught me not to impose upon their lives, but, rather, to respect and be willing to make changes.

Finally, I offer empirical findings and a conclusion about the women with whom we discussed decolonization as a process that has to be dealt with. Despite the continued challenges from outside their community that they must endure, the women's determination not to give up only increases. They make a concerted effort to use their healing practice as a tool for change in their community, as they interact with both their own people and the non-Aeta people. They may not have received a Eurocentric education, but they apprehend what is happening externally. Nonetheless, however, through their healing practices, they believe that their race will continue to exist. They are human, highly intelligent, and understand life and nature, including the dynamics of power assimilation, knowledge production, and the healing power of caring.

The strength of this chapter is in highlighting and documenting the knowledge of the Aeta with respect to healing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being as a tool for decolonization. My ethnographic records from the circle thematically document and emphasize the distinct

identity of the Aeta in general and of their women healers in particular. My thematic elements focus on their different forms of agency and resilience and strive to comprehend the empirical and conceptual schemata. This schemata is conceptually rich and complex since it describes the interplay of society, nature, and human adaptation. This chapter documents that the Aeta women are not docile, primitive or backwards. Alternatively, they are healers, community custodians and sages. My chapter chronicles the cultural richness of the Aeta women healers.

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