

# God's Magicians

## *A Genealogy of Modern Faith Healing in the Philippines*

In the variegated landscape of Filipino religions, one phenomenon garnered worldwide attention in the last half of the twentieth century, a practice of faith healing known as “psychic surgery.” A form of spiritual healing in which the practitioner operates on the body of the patient without anesthesia and using only their hands, this practice was often interpreted by enthusiasts and researchers alike in atavistic and Indigenous terms. This talk challenges this perspective, tracing a genealogy of Filipino faith healing that, though drawing from a wide repertoire of local practices and beliefs, nevertheless dates only to the late nineteenth-century with the introduction of French spiritism to the Philippines. The localization and articulation of global *espiritismo* to Christianity was indeed distinctly Filipino, offering yet another lens through which to understand Christian pluralism in the Philippines beyond the ecumenical.

About the Speaker: **Deirdre de la Cruz** is a trained sociocultural anthropologist and Associate Professor of History and Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan. Her first book, *Mother Figured: Marian Apparitions and the Making of a Filipino Universal* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), was a finalist for the AAR's Best Book in the Analytic-Descriptive Category, and she is the author of numerous articles on Filipino religion. She is also the co-PI of *ReConnect/ReCollect: Reparative Connections to Philippine Collections at the University of Michigan*, and currently directs the U-M's Doctoral Program in Anthropology and History.



Anthony Agpaoa prepares to perform a sinusitis operation on Estelita Gacuya (1965). Harold M. Sherman Collection, University of Central Arkansas Archives.

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