

The Myth and Piety in *Maytinis*: A Ritual of Christmas Celebration in Kawit

Sydney Gonzales-Villegas

Introduction

Theater as a form of art continuously mirrors man's ideals, beliefs, philosophies, customs and ways of living. Its immediacy and liveness as it uses human beings as symbols recreate life in movement, action, conflict, and language. Its nature as a collaborative art provides audiences with spectacle and pageantry that enhance and enrich the magic of dramatic experience. As a form of communication, theater brings the audience and the actors together. Each performance enables them to share an experience and thus become part of the larger group. Audiences expect the satisfaction of experiencing the performance and the satisfaction of sharing that experience with one another. There is, it seems, in the heart of every man, a consciousness, however dim, that he needs to share his individual experiences with others, a community where he functions as part of the larger body.

One of the many theatrical forms which have reached a wider audience is the religious play. Introduced during the Spanish period in the Philippines, the religious drama helped in the evangelization of the conquered people. Since the majority of Filipinos did not understand Latin, drama and theater became important means of vivifying church doctrines and inculcating loyalty to Spain.

The spirit of the Spanish era in the Philippines has survived in the Religious drama. It is an undeniable fact that their propagation of the Christian faith has greatly contributed to the spiritual growth of every Filipino. The religious festivities commemorated every year have continuously awakened people's reverence for and faith in God. They have also strengthened the Christian values, beliefs, and traditions that permeated the Filipino culture. Such traditions have maintained social order through the fulfillment of responsibilities that come with every celebration. More importantly, the Religious drama has provided opportunity for the members of the community to look for ingenious ways of strengthening social relationships and religious faith.