

IMAG(IN)ING SAINT LUCY: THE NARRATIVE AND PERFORMATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE *KURALDAL* IN SASMUAN, PHILIPPINES

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Held annually beginning the 6th of January, the *kuraldal*, an impassioned ritualistic dance usually associated with fertility, is performed by the Catholic community in Sasmuan in Pampanga, Philippines. Participants are usually childless couples whose participation is an act of *panata* (religious pledge and sacrifice). Apung Lucia (Saint Lucy), the patroness of the town, is believed to be the 'divine authority' who answers the devotees' intentions especially in relation to child bearing. This paper asserts that this Catholic community continuously constructs narratives about Apung Lucia based on several scripts of interpretations: negotiations between the orthodox doctrine(s) and the non-orthodox narratives. These negotiations are woven together providing the performative text(s) of the *kuraldal* and then undergo traditionalization. It is argued that the performance is a continuous traditionalization as well as a celebration of the ongoing imagined image(s) of Apung Lucia, which are not necessarily derivatives of the Catholic Church narratives.

HELD ANNUALLY BEGINNING THE 6TH OF JANUARY, THE *KURALDAL* IS AN IMPASSIONED RITUALISTIC DANCE usually associated with fertility and performed by the members of the Catholic community in Sasmuan, Pampanga.¹ Devotees in this dance are usually childless couples, who believe that their participation is part of carrying out a *panata* (religious pledge and sacrifice); a way of communicating their intentions to God. Apung Lucia (Saint Lucy), patroness of this village, is believed to mediate between the devotees and God (see fig. 1). However, most devotees attest that Apung Lucia herself is the "Divine authority" who answers their intentions, especially in relation to child bearing. The role of mediator as imposed

by the Church on Catholic saints is shattered by the presence of this iconic image. Devotees also have various narratives about Apung Lucia, most of which contradict the very narratives of the Catholic Church. Relying on cultural anthropologist Fenella Cannell's (in Cannell ed. 2006) discourse on Christianity, I will focus on paradoxes and irregularities within the performance of this Catholic dance-ritual. Like Cannell, I am convinced that the *kuraldal*, although based on Catholic doctrine, does not hold just one single script of interpretation. Cannell (*ibid.*, 43) suggests that "however unyielding orthodox the form of Christianity that may be visited on another culture, it can never contain only a single message with a single possibility of interpretation, because Christian doctrine is in itself paradoxical."



Figure 1. The image of Saint Lucy (Apung Lucia) owned by the Tayag Family in Sasmuan (Photo by Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco)

In the next pages, I will assert that members of this Catholic community in Pampanga are continuously constructing narratives about Apung Lucia based on several scripts of interpretations: their negotiations between the orthodox doctrine(s) (the Catholic Church) and the non-orthodox (the devotees' stories). These negotiations are then woven together providing the text(s) of *kuraldal* and

then undergo what folklorists Dorothy Noyes and Roger D. Abraham (in Eriksen 2005) call traditionalization.² Towards the end of this paper, I will argue that the performance of this dance-ritual is a continuous traditionalization as well as a celebration of the ongoing imagined image(s) of Apung Lucia, which are not necessarily direct derivatives of the Catholic Church narrative. My aim is not to identify the kuraldal as a performance tradition of an “unofficial” religion but rather to feature how the performance constructs a rupture in positing the hierarchy (i.e., the official and the folk or the unofficial religion as in Yoder 1974 and Primiano 1995) in the study of folklore and/in religion. In my discussion of traditionalization and celebration of negotiations, I will argue that the devotees’ narratives inform the Filipino-Catholic orthodox narrative on divinity and performance and at the same time the orthodox narrative informs the performances of the devotees and their constructions of “religious” meanings. In a sense, the rupture blurs the boundaries of the official and the unofficial religious practice proposed as the “official” dichotomy in folklore studies (Yoder 1974).

The bulk of my arguments are mostly based on the narratives of some devotees of this Catholic community that I started visiting in January 2009. My actual participation and observation in the dance-ritual beginning on 13 December 2009, the actual feast day of Apung Lucia in the Catholic calendar, to the nine-day novena commencing on 28 December and the actual kuraldal performance from 6 to 10 January are crucial in my analysis.

Dancing with Apung Lucia

Kuraldal is performed in Sasmuan in honor of the town’s patron, Apung Lucia. The performance is described as an “unchoreographed movement of jumping, leaping and marching while shouting ‘Viva Apung Lucia! Pwera Sakit! Pwera Silab!’ (Hail Apung Lucia! Away with illnesses! Away with fire!)” (Tomen 2008, 33). One informant Rodrigo M. Sicat identifies kuraldal as the “endless body movement of arms and feet in a merry environment” (ibid., 16). Etymologically, it is argued that kuraldal traces its origin from the Hispanic word “curar” which means “to heal.” As will be discussed in this paper, the performance is in a way connected to healing.

The actual performance began immediately after the 9 AM (usually) concelebrated mass with the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Fernando, Pampanga (Archbishop Paciano Aniceto at the time of field work).³ Days before the actual kuraldal performance, the Catholic community in this small village celebrated and performed various activities, which may be considered as the grand overture and/or prologue of the main act of the kuraldal.

On 13 December, during the recognized feast day of Saint Lucy in the Catholic Church calendar, this Catholic community celebrated a Holy Mass presided by Fr. Lino Mandap. After which, Banda 31 (a local brass band) ignited the euphoric mood with their playing of the *batalla*⁴ (a localized Hispanic music of 3/3 beat similar to the music played in a *komedya*⁵ performance). It was followed by an impassioned dancing inside the parish hall. While the community engaged in dancing, escalating shouts of “Viva Apung Lucia, puwera sakit!” (Hail Saint Lucy, spare us from illnesses) were heard. The festive celebration was momentarily cut by the Christmas festivities until 28 December when the community observed the “kick-off” to the grand festival. At 1 A.M., the small image of Apung Lucia enshrined at the Santa Lucia Chapel, 300 meters away from the parish, was paraded around the village. Accompanied by the same Banda 31, devotees euphorically danced as the image passed by their houses. Around 4 A.M., the image was returned inside the chapel. Rev. Fr. Mandap then celebrated what the Catholic Church calls the first day of the nine-day novena mass in honor of Apung Lucia. In the following days (from the second day of the novena to the last day on 5 January), Eucharistic celebrations were held every afternoon at the parish church. These Masses were followed by various activities sponsored by the Parish Fiesta Committee: a singing competition, ballroom dancing, a quiz show, a beauty pageant, a dance competition, among others.

On 5 January, the arrival of the Tayag family increased the excitement among devotees. Considered to be one of the wealthiest families in this village, the Tayag family owns the image of Saint Lucy, which is traditionally used during the first day procession of the *kuraldal*. Most members of this family are no longer residing in Sasmuan. Some migrated to the United States. Others established themselves in city-centers like Quezon City in the Greater Manila Area, as well as Angeles City and San Fernando in Pampanga. According to the *kamarera* (caretaker) and representative of the Tayag family Tess Tayag (2009), it has always been a family tradition to go home during the *kuraldal* in homage to Apung Lucia and their hometown. Images of saints owned by a wealthy family is not something unusual in the Philippines. Cannell (1995, 379) points out that “it is a distinctive feature of Filipino Catholicism that most images of ‘saints’ are not kept in Churches, but are privately owned by local families and kept in family homes except during the processions of religious festivals.” On the other hand, these rich families become patrons of the church for two reasons: to highlight their social status and to show their gratitude to the Almighty for giving them such social stature. In addition, the autonomy of the saint is based on the dichotomy of rich family owning an image and the personification of the image as someone who is taking good care of the land (or the community) (de la Paz 2008).⁶

Being the owner of the image, the Tayags made sure Apung Lucia was dressed beautifully and that the karo (procession wagon) was extravagantly decorated with flowers. By 4:45 in the afternoon, a group of young men whom the community refers to as FROLICS (Samahan ng mga Manginginom na Nagpapanata ka Apu Lucia or Association of Drinkers who are Devotees of Apung Lucia) arrived at the ancestral house of the Tayags to prepare for the procession. The FROLICS are like watchmen or, in popular literature, the Medieval Knights Templar who guard the Holy Grail.⁷ They control the frenzied devotees during the procession. They make sure that nothing touches the fragile image of Apung Lucia during the procession from its shelter at the Tayag residence to the parish hall and back.

The arrival of Father Mandap signaled the start of the procession. The procession brought the image to its temporary shelter for the day at the parish church. The procession then moved around the town plaza until it reached the parish hall. There followed a Eucharistic celebration by Father Mandap.

By nighttime, *dayo* (non-local devotees) arrived. To entertain the crowd, Banda 31 played popular music in the town plaza until the first mass of the *kuraldal* was celebrated at one in the morning the following day. Priests invited by the Fiesta Committee celebrated Masses until nine in the morning,⁸ the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Fernando in Pampanga presided over the final mass of the first day of the festivity. Immediately after the final blessing of the Archbishop, euphoric emotions of the devotees could not be contained especially since the brass band came in on cue playing the *batalla*, which signaled the start of impassioned dancing.

The FROLICS slowly moved the revered image out of the parish for the procession. Devotees jumped, leaped, waved their hands, or did whatever movements that suited the beat and tempo of the *batalla*. Four members of the FROLICS acted as safe-keepers of the image especially since most devotees wanted to touch the image of Apung Lucia. Devotees threw pieces of cloth to FROLICS members for them to wipe onto the image, and later returned to the devotees. Devotees believe that these pieces of cloth are transformed into sacred objects or, in local lore, into *anting-anting* (amulets) after having been touched by Apung Lucia. Devotees commonly use these as therapeutic paraphernalia. For instance, a wife of a paralytic devotee kept the handkerchief that had been wiped on the image. According to her, she would wipe it on her husband's paralyzed legs for them to be healed by Apung Lucia's power.

When the image arrived at the Santa Lucia chapel at around noon, the dancing devotees became even more euphoric. There were at least 15,000 devotees

(as estimated by Father Mandap) who wanted to dance for Apung Lucia. The narrow streets of Sasmuan were filled with crowds of ecstatic bodies (see fig. 2). No one minded the humid atmosphere as though the devotees did not feel the need to stop and rest. As one informant mentioned, Apung Lucia's presence gave everyone the energy to dance tirelessly. Other devotees climbed onto the rooftops of some houses and performed their impassioned dancing there. There were locals who threw water on the dancing crowds to refresh them.



Figure 2 The narrow streets of Sasmuan in the Pampanga province in the Philippines during the kuraldal (Photo by Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco)

The dancing eventually subsided when the litany to the patron began. At 4:00 in the afternoon, the batalla was once again played. Apung Lucia was again paraded in the streets. The devotees engaged in impassioned dancing one more time. In addition, a male member of the Tayag family began to remove the flowers from the karo and tossed them to the ecstatic crowd. The devotees would keep the flowers because they believe these now possess some of Apung Lucia's therapeutic attributes, as do the pieces of cloth mentioned earlier.

The image was finally returned to the residence of the Tayags. It is interesting to note that while the image passed by the narrow streets, several devotees were observed with children seated on their shoulders (see fig. 3). These devotees danced as if these kids were being offered to Apung Lucia. As explained by a devotee, these children are "products" of their participation in the ritualistic dance.



Figure 3. A child sitting on his father's shoulder during the kuraldal (Photo by Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco)

In the next three days, a group of women called the *hermanas* (see fig. 4) perform what is known as the *pangunguraldal*. The *hermanas* act as “council of elders” or the village’s advisory council for the celebrations of the *kuraldal*. The performance of the *pangunguraldal* is a semi-impromptu dancing where the *hermanas* dance before patrons or sponsors in exchange for any kind of support (especially financial support) for the celebration of the *kuraldal*. For *pangunguraldal*, the *hermanas* either look for sponsors or themselves finance some aspects of the performances, like the production of various flaglets printed with Apung Lucia’s face which are distributed to the devotees during the first day of the festivity on 6 January. The *hermanas* are also responsible for the food of the *manguraldal* (participants of *pangunguraldal*) during the three-day *pangunguraldal*. Most importantly, the *hermanas* look for financial support for the renovation or improvement of the chapel where the small image (considered to be the community’s image) of Apung Lucia is kept. One has to be elected to become a *hermana*. No one refuses the role for fear of offending Apung Lucia. To be elected as *hermana* is believed to be a privilege akin to being their patron’s choice. However, former *hermana* Nympha Beltran (2009) explains that sometimes there are those who were not elected but volunteered to be one. The volunteering is due to what they call *sitsit* (whisper) from above inviting them to be *hermanas*. Beltran herself was prompted to become a *hermana* because of *sitsit*. Just like being elected, when a *sitsit* is heard, no one refuses it.



Figure 4. The *hermanas* (former and recent) in their red dresses (Photo by Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco)

Old women and children often join the *hermanas* in visiting houses to gather donations. The *hermanas* perform their choreographed dance to the tune of the *batalla*. This dance is similar to the *cariñosa* and the *basulto*.⁹ Like these aforementioned Philippine traditional dances, the *hermanas*' movements are similar to the steps of a waltz dance. Their arms delicately sway from left to right. Visited households were expected to give cash (or in kind).

On the first day of the *pangunguraldal*, the *hermanas*' first stop was the Tayag residence. As the *hermanas* swayed and waved their colorful handkerchiefs to the beat of the *batalla*, Tess Tayag handed over twenty pesos to each of the children and then to each of the older women. After the dance, Tess donated five hundred pesos to the *hermanas*, which was later placed in the bag-for-donation being carried by Beltran, a former *hermana* who was now one of the leaders of the *pangunguraldal*.

They then moved to the *kumbento* (parish house). Father Mandap and members of the Knights of the Blessed Sacrament were eagerly waiting on the veranda. Halfway through the performance, Father Mandap threw some coins to the ground which the children enthusiastically picked up. After the the dancing, Father Mandap also donated five hundred pesos.

Guided by Beltran, the hermanas moved from house to house and performed the same dancing. At the end of the first day of pangunguraldal, the group collected around seventeen thousand pesos. The same dancing was performed for the next two days until the kawakasan (last day) on 10 January. All in all, the group collected around fifty thousand pesos. The money collected would be used for the renovation of the chapel. In previous years, Beltran explained that donations were used for the karo of the small image of Apung Lucia recently used on the occasion of the 28 December procession.

During the kawakasan, the Holy Mass at 6 P.M. was concelebrated by Father Mandap and Archbishop Aniceto outside the Santa Lucia Chapel to accommodate more devotees.¹⁰ After the Holy Mass, Banda 31 played the batalla for the last time signaling the last day of the kuraldal. The small image of Apung Lucia at the chapel was once more paraded around the town (see fig. 5). Again, devotees danced, leaped, waved their hands, and shouted “Viva Apung Lucia, pwera sakit, pwera silab.” Most devotees who participated during this time, according to Father Mandap (2009) and Rosalina Mangalindan (2009), petition Apung Lucia for a child. The euphoric dancing ended at 12 in the morning when the small image of Apung Lucia was finally returned to the chapel.



Figure 5. The small image of Apung Lucia, considered as the community's image, is paraded during the kawakasan (last night) on 10 January (Photo by Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco)

Imag(in)ing Apung Lucia: Contested Narratives

In the Catholic tradition, Saint Lucy is the patroness of the blind (Catholic Encyclopedia Online 2009). It is said that for a person with health problems related to the eyes, Saint Lucy is the best mediator between the believer and God. Literally, her name means “light,” with the same root as “lucid” which means clear, radiant, and understandable (Catholic Online 2010). Sometimes, light here is interpreted as “to see clearly.”

Catholic Online narrates that Saint Lucy was pledged by her mother to marry a wealthy pagan. However, young Lucy took a secret vow to consecrate her virginity to Christ. When her mother became very sick, Lucy persuaded her to visit Saint Agatha’s tomb and pray. Miraculously, her ailing mother recovered. It was after this recovery that Lucy revealed to her mother her consecration and her desire to bestow her fortune on the poor (Confraternity of Penitents n.d.). Convinced about her vocation, Lucy’s mother decided not to pursue the marriage. Angered by this decision, Lucy’s suitor went to the court of Diocletian and reported Lucy as a Christian. Lucy’s martyrdom was on 13 December 304. Her eyes are believed to have been offered to her suitor on a disk.

One interesting feature of Filipino Catholicism is its attribution of icons as Divine in contrast to the doctrinal teaching that these icons are mere representations of the Divine (Alaras 1988; Tiatco 2010). For instance, Catholic communities in Apalit and in Cutud, two Pampanga towns close to Sasmuan, consider their ritual performances incomplete “without the participations of the community’s symbolic representation of their Catholic faith” (Tiatco 2010, 98). The iconic images of the “Divine” are not just artificial figures but are believed to be Divine. In Apalit, for example, Saint Peter is commonly represented as a playful old man who, once in a while, leaves his shrine and visits every household inviting them to participate in the fluvial ritual held in his honor. It is also interesting how these Apalit Catholics likened Saint Peter to a hero:

The community’s narrative then made Apung Iru more than a Christian image. Local historian Vicente Catacutan, mentions that when Japanese soldiers during the 2nd world war left Apalit, Apaliteños associated their liberation with Apung Iru. Mang (old man) Serge, Rev. Fr. Larry Sarmiento and Tita (aunt) Connie altogether declare that when two factories emitting chemicals killed many fishes in the Pampanga River and the factories were closed, Apaliteños cried Viva Apung Iru! Vicente Catacutan and Dr. Ederlinda Bahdenhop also expound that when the Americans supposedly arrived as ‘liberators’ from the Japanese occupying army, the Cathedral’s bells rang in honor of Apung Iru’s victory. (Tiatco 2008, 94)

Similar narratives are also prevalent in Sasmuan. Eighty year-old Carlos de Luna, Sr. (2010) narrates that when the original image of Saint Lucy (Apung Lucia in their narratives)¹¹ was brought by the Spaniards to Sasmuan, the village was spared from raids conducted by pirates back then. De Luna relates that a beautiful woman in a small boat appeared before the pirates and conversed with their leaders who were somehow convinced by her to leave the villagers in peace. De Luna explains that the beautiful woman came to be identified as Saint Lucy as soon as the townspeople heard the story that when one of the pirate leaders entered the village chapel, he claimed that the beautiful woman they saw and an image of Saint Lucy inside were one and the same. De Luna also narrates that during the Japanese Occupation, the Japanese army invaded the Church where the villagers were seeking refuge. When the soldiers fired their guns at them, Apung Lucia appeared before the soldiers and they were “blinded” by a great light. As a result, no one was hurt in the shooting.

Stories about either an old woman or a young beautiful woman visiting every household encouraging them to participate in the kuraldal is also dominant in the village. Rosalinda Mangalindan (2009) recalls that Apung Lucia knocks on every household telling them that if they visit Sasmuan for the fiesta and join the kuraldal, their petition would be granted. Mary Vicda has been participating in the kuraldal for twenty years. She states that one time, there was this household who refused to give alms to an old lady. A household member even cursed the old lady. When the old lady left, the house burned for some unexplainable reason (Vicda 2009). According to Vicda, the old lady was actually Apung Lucia who was testing the faith of the household. This, according to her, is the reason why there are times when devotees would shout “pwera silab” (except fire) during the kuraldal.

Filipino Catholics usually identify themselves with their icons—paralleling certain narratives to their personal experiences. Cannell (1995, 383) explicates, “Local women, for instance, often talked about parallels between their experience of deaths of their children, and Mary’s feelings as described in burial passage.” This for Cannell is peculiar to Filipino Catholicism as compared to European Catholicism: “But they (referring to the Bicolanos, the community she studied) did not regard the Virgin Mother as the model of womanhood, as has been suggested for European Catholicism. Instead of feeling that they should be like her, they remarked that she was rather like them.” The Catholic community in Sasmuan, like the Bicolanos in Cannell’s ethnography, does not see the representation of the community’s Catholicism (Apung Lucia) as a role model but is regarded as someone who is like them and with them. Apung Lucia is in fact personified as a friend. “Sumbungan ng problema dahil nakikingin naman siya” (someone whom you can approach if you

have problem because she listens) says Mangalindan (2009). Especially in times of crises, the townsfolk likens Apung Lucia to a close friend who never leaves until the trying times are over.

The Catholic Church always associates Saint Lucy's feast day with "light." Confraternity of Penitents Online explains that her martyrdom coincidentally was also the shortest day of the year (winter solstice) in the Julian calendar. This explains why her official Catholic feast day is associated with the lengthening of the day and the desire for sunlight. Metaphorically, it suggests a desire to see truth (light as truth). But more so, this desire for truth is also associated with the popular story pertaining to her eyes offered before a flask at first to Emperor Diocletian and then to her jilted suitor. Albeit the Catholic Church in the Philippines also recognizes Saint Lucy as the patroness of the blind or a saint associated with "light," the Catholics in Sasmuan perceive her as the patroness of fertility.¹² Although the Gregorian calendar (modern calendar) changed the date of winter solstice to 21 December, Saint Lucy's feast day has been retained on 13 December. Sweden and Italy usually celebrate Saint Lucy's day with the lighting of candles (or in Venice and Sicily the lighting of bonfires) to signify the start of winter. The candle lighting is also widely considered as a petition for the patron to protect every household from the "evil of dark winter" (Catholic Online 2010).

As mentioned earlier, in Sasmuan, a grand festivity in honor of Apung Lucia is observed on the 6th of January. There are various narratives explaining why the Apung Lucia festivity in Sasmuan is celebrated a month later than the recognized date of the Catholic Church. Father Mandap explains that sometime in the mid-nineteenth century, the feast day of Saint Lucy was interrupted by a strong typhoon. In addition to this, even during the official Saint Lucy day of 13 December, the Catholic Church has already started to become busy preparing for and celebrating the Christmas season, which is considered one of the more important Catholic events in the country. In effect, there was no time and hardly any resources to celebrate the feast of Saint Lucy on its day. On the Catholic Church celebration of the Epiphany (usually the second Sunday of January), the then parish priest decided to parade the image of Saint Lucy as belated celebration of the town's feast day. That it was the 6th of January was coincidental. The community became exuberant that when the brass band played the music, the folks began leaping, dancing, and shouting. Since then, Saint Lucy's day in Sasmuan became 6 January.

Domingo Mangalin (2009), on the other hand, narrates that during the Spanish era, there was an epidemic in the village. Due to the epidemic, the feast

day of Saint Lucy was not celebrated. However, the people persisted in celebrating Saint Lucy's special day even through a simple Mass. Weeks later, infected locals who attended the Mass were miraculously cured. Locals gathered together and it was 6 January. The priest then decided to parade Saint Lucy's image in recognition of the miracle that was attributed to her. The community became frenetic during the procession. As Mangalin reports, the locals began leaping and dancing which may explain the nature of the ritualistic dance.

Another interesting story about the reason for holding the *kuraldal* on 6 January is that of a local historian and expert on Kapampangan culture, Nina Tomen:

On January 6, as the image of Sta. Lucia was being brought out of the church, a sudden gust of wind like that of an *alisus* (tornado) came about, throwing off everything along its path towards the belfry. There the peddlers' wares of *duman* (young glutinous rice), *putu* (native delicacy made of rice flour), *tamales*, *kalame* (native rice cake), earthened cookware, etc. flew in circles, frightening everybody and causing the band to stop playing. This went on without the knowledge of the people who were inside the church, waiting to come out for the *limbun* (procession). They proceeded to walk on unaware of the *alisus* outside. As the image of Sta. Lucia was brought out and positioned in front of the Church, a miracle happened. (Tomen 2008, 40)

Mangalin adds that when the church door opened and the image was moved out of the parish, suddenly the gusty wind stopped. Similar to a slow-motion movie scene, everything that the tornado took during its ferocious rupture went back to its original place. From then on, it was believed that *Apung Lucia* spared the village from the disaster that the tornado may have caused. All these narratives are also attributions on how the *kuraldal* could have started as a special performance of Catholicism in Sasmuan in honor of their *Apung Lucia*.

Performing the *Kuraldal*, Performing *Panata*

Tomen (2008, 52) explains that "during the *kuraldal*, no intention or wish is too trivial for anyone to ask of the saint." For the devotees, especially the Catholics in Sasmuan, the festivity is a dance of thanksgiving, more so linked as a dance of *panata*. Most literature about Catholic rituals in the Philippines report *panata* as the core of these performances (Baciera 1977; Alcantara 1987; Ness 1992; De Mesa 1994; Barker 1998; Cannell 1995, 1999; Llana 2002, 2009; Bonilla 2001; Gonzales-Villegas 2001, 2008; Mandia 2002;; Alcedo 2007; Peterson 2007; Tiatco and Ramolete 2008; Tiatco 2006, 2008, 2010). *Panata* is oftentimes discussed as the public display of one's faith. In the Philippines, performing *panata* is very common to

devout Catholics. It is usually performed yearly—depending on the number of years promised by a devotee to the Almighty. What is noteworthy in this performance is its actualization, which most of the time involves “physical violence” (Peterson 2007, 322).

It is important according to Dance Studies expert Patrick Alcedo (2007, 117) “for any panata to be viewed as such, the elements of suffering and transformation should be experienced through one’s own body and be rendered visible every year.” This performance is “potency for the future, actualized in the present” (de la Paz 2008, 115) because it is commonly a sacrificial vow in hopes of being rewarded by Divine responses (Tiatco 2010).

The complexity of the performativity of panata is often explained by the Catholic Church as “redemptive suffering” or as what Philippine theologian (and Bishop) Pablo David (in Tiatco 2006) explains, the “theology of the redemptive cross.” Using the narrative of the suffering servant,¹³ David elucidates that there is meaning in the supposedly meaningless sufferings that an individual experiences. The narrative of the suffering servant is most of the time interpreted as analogy to the suffering that the Israelites (particularly the Jews) experienced in their history: their exile from Canaan in the ancient times and the holocaust during the Second World War. In this sense, the suffering servant is meant to transcend the imbedded senselessness of pain and suffering that the Jews experienced by constructing the idea of “necessary pain,” which has some redemptive attributes. This according to David is the same sense of meaning-making that Catholics (Filipino Catholics in particular) imposed on the sufferings of Jesus when he was sentenced to die. It is also the context implicated in the panata. As a Catholic concept, panata is a form of sacrifice either for the self, or more importantly for others. By way of sacrifice, Catholic devotees usually do extraordinary acts like participating in a frenzied dancing ritual in the case of kuraldal. As Mangilan exclaims, “the dance was overwhelming and tiring. The devotees do not think of the fatigue. What is important for them is to finish the dancing even if it takes a whole day.”

Some devotees participate in the kuraldal for health reasons (i.e., for themselves or for a loved one who is sick). Other petitions are also invoked: to pass the board exam, to win a lottery, to find a husband or a wife, among others. Although petitions and intentions are diverse, the most common is the petition of childless couples to have kids (or the petition of a mother or a father for a married child to have kids, or a petition of a grandmother or a grandfather for a married grandchild to have kids). It is said that Apung Lucia listens to every prayer of childless couples. This

particular belief is said to have its origins from an anonymous woman who visited the town during the kuraldal a long time ago. The woman wanted to have a baby after almost ten years of marriage. Two months after her dancing, she found herself pregnant. A year later, she returned to the village to give thanks to Apung Lucia.

As manifested by the narrative of the woman, sacrificial performance is not confined to the idea of petition for it is also attached to the notion of thanksgiving. Tomen (2008, 54) even considers performance of devotees as “dance of thanksgiving.” Mangalindan for instance participated in the kuraldal after two of her children survived in separate accidents (her youngest pulled through a near fatal drowning and her eldest withstood serious injury after a coconut fell on him). Immediately after the eldest recovered from his head trauma, she vowed to actively participate in the kuraldal as a performative sacrifice of thanksgiving.

The performance of panata as thanksgiving comes after a petition has been granted, like the case of Juanita Laxamana (in Tomen 2008) who at first participated in the kuraldal for her paralytic mother. When her mother began to miraculously be able to stand up and walked again, she vowed to continue dancing in the kuraldal for as long as her body permits. Laxamana since then danced the kuraldal as a panata of thanksgiving. This act of thanksgiving is especially genuine in the case of those who were able to bear children after having participated in the dance-ritual (again, a reference to the anonymous woman in the community narrative). As mentioned earlier, it is worth noting that several participants brought with them their kids. These children were sitted on the shoulders of their fathers or wrapped in the arms of their mothers as if they were about to be “offered” to Apung Lucia. Mangilan and Renato Velasco (2009) explain that these were the “anak nang Apung Lucia” (children of Apung Lucia)—the children whom the community believes to have been born via the Divine intervention of the saint.

Panata in the kuraldal may also be seen as an alternative performance of penance. However, the Catholic Church dismisses panata as such because the it is wary about the practice being transformed into fanaticism (Tiatco 2010). At the same time, it tends to make Filipino Catholics forget the efficacy of the sacrament of Reconciliation as the proper and only medium of seeking absolution. But many Catholic rituals in the Philippines manifest that performing a panata is more effective than going to a priest for a confession (Barker 1998; Alcedo 2007; Tiatco 2008 and 2010). Albeit isolated cases, the notion of penance in panata in the kuraldal is also connected to the desire of having kids of one’s own. In Alcedo’s (2007, 118) ethnographic study of the Ati-atihan in the Visayan islands, his main

informant Tay Augus sacrificially performed what Alcedo calls a sacred camp with this principle: “if he danced hard enough and deadened all the discomfort caused by his act of mimicry, he could ask forgiveness for the transgressions of his neighbors.”¹⁴ In Sasmuan, there are devotees who believe that they could ask “forgiveness for the transgressions” of others through the dancing. A devotee expressed that she has been participating in the ritual for her son and her daughter-in-law who have been married for three years. The couple has not been fortunate to have a baby. The devotee believes that this unfortunate scenario was caused by the transgression committed by her husband who cheated on her some fifteen years ago.

However, in these acts of panata (whether in the form of petition, thanksgiving, or penance), a paradox may be pinpointed. In the fluvial ritual and festival in Apalit, the Catholic community members recognize the redemptive power of their patron in order for them to be saved, to receive sympathy, or to be heard (Tiatco 2008). Through the power of the town’s patron, all petitions of the locals would probably be granted. However, through this act of panata, the locals are also in effect exercising their sense of power or authority by obligating their patron to reciprocate the devotion cum sacrifice that they actualize through performance. Herein lies implicit imposition on the patron to give what they ask for. A similar stance is present in the devotees of the kuraldal. The tiring dancing is a sacrificial performance whereby the Catholics in Sasmuan implicitly offer to Apung Lucia so she would grant what they ask for. When their desires are not granted, devotees become disappointed and question the Divine authority of the patron. This feeling of being ignored is at times the reason for discontinuance of the practice or in most cases, transformation of the potency of the dance-ritual into something invalid.

In an almost similar stance, Cannell (1999, 194) observes in her ethnographic study in the Bicol region that before a devotee attests to perform a sacrificial vow, an assured assistance must take place:

[A] devotee usually does not begin his ‘sacrifice’ until after the ‘help’ requested (such as recovery of a child) has been delivered; on the other, there is the notion that one should say at the outset, ‘what it is you are going to give back to the dear God’ and even the possibility of Divine retaliation if, having made the bargain, one defaults on the terms.

Although the term bargain is seemingly unusual in such a religious activity, panata is really about bargaining: It is a contract of obligatory reciprocity. As Mangalin professed, “Apung Lucia usually favors those who are able to dance

the whole day. In most cases, the devotees who can keep their feet tirelessly moving are the most successful ones as compared to those who easily get tired and give up.” Mangilan’s pronouncement indicates the relational bargain between the devotees and the Almighty.

Apung Lucia and the Complexity of Performed Catholicism in Sasmuan

Looking closely into the performance of the *kuraldal*, the interwoven narratives of the devotees and their performances of *panata*, it can be argued that Apung Lucia is more than just an image in the Catholic faith. In fact, Saint Lucy as Apung Lucia becomes a completely complicated if not a totally different Catholic figure. Apung Lucia apparently is not just an intercessor or a mediator between the lay people and God. She is most of the time distinguished as a supernatural figure perhaps analogous to God (see Alaras 1988 for a similar narrative). This is manifested in the different narratives regarding her supernatural power to heal, to provide, or to save the small village from dangers like in the story about a tornado and in the story about how locals were saved by Apung Lucia from the hands of Japanese soldiers. In Tomen’s (2008, 46) account, devotees tend to recall Apung Lucia in times of flooding when “people would see her wading in the streets or rowing a boat. She is petite and beautiful. She wears a red dress. She looks exactly the way she appears in her pictures and images.” In addition, similar to the tornado story, locals believe that their village was spared from a tornado that hit the village on 10 May 2006, when supposedly Apung Lucia herself swept away the strong twister (Mangalindan 2009; Mangalin 2009).

The complexity of Apung Lucia as a Catholic saint in this village is based on the community’s ambivalence towards the idea of “heaven” or, as put by Cannell (1999, 196), refusal to the logic of transcendence, which is supposed to accompany the advent of Christianity (or Catholicism). The performances of the rituals of the crucifixion in Cutud and the fluvial parade in Apalit are incomplete without the actual participation of these towns’ icons: the cross in Cutud and Saint Peter in Apalit. More than just ordinary images (the cross being made of wood and the image of Saint Peter being an ivory sculpture), these figures, especially during actual ritual performances, become sacred figures. In the case of Saint Peter in Apalit, Saint Peter is in fact considered as an honorary member—a respected and venerated authority in the town. In the case of Cutud, the cross appears to be regarded as a very important amulet that should be taken care of. These figures are embodiment of the Divine (Tiatco 2010). Apung Lucia is like Saint Peter of the Apalit community and the cross of the Cutud community. She is more than the sanctioned patroness of the light of the Church but the Divine authority responsible for fertility and other petitions.

Another complication of Catholicism in this small village is related to the relationship of the devotees with Apung Lucia, which can be likened to the relationship of a superior and a subject. Subjects do tend to place themselves in a “dependent position” in order to throw themselves “on someone’s mercy, to admit need” (Cannell 1999, 196). Subjects are confident that their needs or requests will be immediately given by their superior. Here lies a kind of assistance rendered by someone who would never abandon and who would not disown. Likewise, the assistance, “may come from your good superiors, who have plenty to give, or your parents; it may also come from your good neighbours, if on some particular occasion they have something and you do not, and in that case they will expect you to return the favour later” (*ibid.*, 192).

This performance implies that the relationship features a sense of ambiguity towards what the Church teaches about Divine providence. It is analogous to what Cannell (1999) argues regarding the indistinguishable difference that Bicolano Catholics have imposed on the notions of *tabang* (help) and *utang* (debt). Help or assistance from God that the devotees in Bicol, and similarly in Sasmuan, are not necessarily understood (although recognized) as a gift, contrary to what the Catholic Church usually inscribes.

This complexity creates ambiguity in the doctrine of Catholicism. Catholicism never contains a single message with a single interpretation (Cannell 2006). Perhaps, this ambiguity is rooted in precolonial religious practices of the community that may still be hovering around the sensibility of the villagers. Although there is no written account that specifically refer to *kuraldal* as a ritual that the colonizers have witnessed during the early days of inquisition, we cannot disregard the fact that Spanish annotators and chroniclers did report to their king practices of precolonial communities that are analogous to that of Catholics in Sasmuan. For instance, the deep reverence to idols was reported by them as one of the more astonishing aspects of social life in the colony (Jocano 2001).

Coming from Benedict Anderson, Cannell (1999) argues that the worldview of the precolonial Bicolanos has a probable connection with the present-day Catholicism especially if we were to look at the community’s notion of power. According to Cannell (*ibid.*, 25), “Bicolanos’ view of power relationship in which both powerful and less powerful are liable to affect each other, and in which the hope of those ‘who have nothing’ is always that the gap between the two parties may be somewhat lessened by what they do, and what they say, even if it cannot be closed altogether.” Power among the Bicolanos is fluid and in a constant flux.

A similar sense of power is articulated in Sasmuan, especially in looking at the relationship of the devotees and their Apung Lucia as discussed earlier.

Catholicism therefore did not dismiss precolonial cultural life but supplemented and modified it. In other words, Catholicism in this village did not involve “simply the imposition of the Western culture onto local traditions but, rather, highly variable processes of local re-interpretation and contestation” (Whitehouse 2006, 295). It may be argued that instead of looking at the village’s cultural practices as simply Catholicized, the villagers have actually made Catholicism part of their culture.

The potency of the Divine in Apung Lucia and the ambiguous relationship of the devotees and their Apung Lucia, however, may also be understood as the authority of the community members over the icon as manifested in their tendency to impose the efficacy of Apung Lucia. This efficacy is made possible because the Catholic community members in Sasmuan engage in a process of traditionalization (Eriksen 2005). This traditionalization is the potency of the narratives combined with the different panata in constructing the performativity of the kuraldal as a distinct Sasmuanon Catholic tradition.

Traditionalizing Catholicism in the Kuraldal

Folklorist Anne Eriksen rearticulates that no tradition existed on its own. She reminds us that tradition as a cultural fact is always fluid and dynamic. Tradition is always a production of endless streams of repetitions “with no first voice” of ultimate authority—everything is in flux (in Schechner 2006). In this sense, even tradition is an “active agent in the shaping of its own tradition” (Eriksen 2005, 296) and cultures are always in a process of traditionalization—agents (the human actors) are always modifying traditions if not inventing new ones.

I have asserted earlier that the origin of the kuraldal may be rooted from our precolonial past and from it later crossing paths with the religion imposed by the colonizers. The resulting hybridization of two traditions constructed a new modified one—a specific Catholic tradition specifically performed in Sasmuan or a specific Sasmuanon tradition performed by the Catholics in Sasmuan. I have also asserted that the potency of Apung Lucia as a supernatural figure is a product of the ongoing construction of narratives on Apung Lucia based on how the patron is imagined. In this connection, these narratives are performed due to the imbedded panata of the actors (the devotees). With the combination of these narratives and performativities, the kuraldal has been traditionalized. Borrowing from Dorothy

Noyes and Roger D. Abrahams, Eriksen (2005, 299) presents that traditionalization is a strategy to modify tradition or even invent one. Eriksen illustrates that traditionalization involves customary memory, practical traditionalization, ideological traditionalization, and the construction of the tradition. Looking at the *kuraldal*, I now suggest that the ritual is an invented (and modified) tradition based on the continuous constructions of narratives and performativities on Apung Lucia.

Noyes and Abrahams (in Eriksen 2005, 299) probably would describe the *kuraldal* as “the mindfulness of the body, the incorporation of past experience in forceful ways that both allow the body to reproduce it and call the conscious mind to a realm of feeling usually left articulated.” The different narratives of the Catholic community in Sasmuan about Apung Lucia combined with the individual *panata* allowed the devotees’ bodies to articulate a performance—perhaps a distinct communal performance. The community then elaborated these performances into a sort of categorization—an order, a “process of name-setting and evaluation: The custom becomes an object to speak about, to be proud of, and to collect, showing one is folklorist” (in *ibid.*). Thus, everyone in Sasmuan collectively calls it the *kuraldal*.

Noyes and Abrahams also points out that in the process of maintaining the tradition—stripping it from its “constructed-ness”—hegemonic authorities (primarily the elite) usually come into the picture. This is a common phenomenon in most Catholic festivities in the Philippines (Ness 1992; Cannell 1995; Peterson 2007, de la Paz 2008, Tiatco 2008, 2010). In Sasmuan, the *Tayags* serves as one of the hegemonic authorities as the venerated image is theirs. The Church as represented by the parish priest is also an authority who always helps sustain the tradition. Without the blessing of the Church, the *kuraldal* may not be performed. In the first place, it was the Church that introduced the patron to the folks. It was the Church patron that negotiated with the community’s religious psyche. The Catholic emblem is a very important factor in the making of the community’s tradition, specifically that which is distinctly Kapampangan Catholic. The priest is always consulted on how the procession should be conducted. Father Mandap’s wish of a fluvial procession in the future is being strongly considered as future performance strategy by the Fiesta Committee members. The *hermanas* are also hegemonic authorities that are always cited regarding how the festivity should be performed. As observed during the time of field work, former *hermanas* always negotiated with the present-day *hermanas* regarding costumes for the *pangunguraldal*, or the music for the three-day dancing. Competing voices of authorities negotiate with each other. It is these negotiations that put the performance in its place.

Finally, the tradition is introduced in what Noyes and Abrahams calls a “wider horizon” (sometimes stripped off its local context) (in Eriksen 2005, 299). As mentioned earlier, Father Mandap (2009) suggested to the elders that the *kuraldal* should be performed in the river similar to the fluvial rituals in Pampanga and other regions in the Philippines. This for him is a pragmatic way to attract local and foreign tourists.

This ongoing traditionalization suggests that despite the hegemony of Catholicism, “Filipinos have particular ways of performing their ambivalent reactions to the Church.... Filipino Catholicism is not a passively embodied dogmatic tradition” (Tiatco 2010). Through this ongoing instance of traditionalization as seen in the *kuraldal*, Catholic communities in the Philippines (like the Sasmuan Catholic community) always engage in a dialogue with the institution (Catholic Church). Catholic communities do not passively submit to the doctrines of the Church but always strategize to make Catholicism their own. Thus, the *kuraldal* may be conceived of as performative strategy in this small fishing village to assert their sense of belonging and to assert their sense of identity that are distinct from the rest of the Kapampangan communities and from the entire archipelago; a distinct Catholic community from that of other Catholic communities in the country and perhaps in the world.

Concluding Reflection

Don Yoder (1974, 5) tells us that religion as a system is involved in both levels of the culture hierarchy of the “official” and the “folk.” He asserts that folk religion is always in tension with the former. Looking at how he discusses this dichotomy, the *kuraldal* appears to be a category of folk religion because there is apparent sense of survivability of beliefs, behaviors, and customs inherited from an earlier stage of the development of Pampangan culture. *Kuraldal* may also be understood as a synthesis of two or more forms of religions in this complex Kapampangan community. Finally, the *kuraldal* may also be perceived as the reinterpretation or the expression of the official religion on a “folk level.”

It should be understood that despite the dichotomy, the relationship between “official” religion and “folk” religion is dynamic, which does not always lead to an identification of a sect by the “official” religion (Primiano 1995). The study of folk religious tradition must not be centered on this dichotomy as this model “consistently named religious beliefs in residualistic, derogatory ways as ‘folk,’ ‘unofficial,’ or ‘popular’ religion, and have then juxtaposed these terms... with ‘official’ religion” (ibid., 38). In other words, there is a tendency to assign folk beliefs

and practices as unofficial or even illegitimate. This is why Primiano asserts to study folk religious practices anchored on lived experiences and not on the doctrine of the orthodoxy. In this decentering, focus is primarily allotted to the “integrity of individuals” (ibid., 41)—the embodiment of the practice. Thus, for Primiano, folk religion should rather be referred to as “vernacular” so as to remove the prejudice of unofficiality in the practice.

The performance of the *kuraldal* in Sasmuan suggests that although Catholicism is the dominant religion in the Philippines, Catholics always engage in continuous negotiations. Even as members profess their being Catholics, they continuously and dramatically perform their Catholicism by doing what social anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (2006) suggests as “writ[ing] against” the homogenizing character of culture. In the case of the *kuraldal*, it is performance against the homogenizing character of culture. Abu-Lughod maintains that the performer, in this case the Catholic, although determined by the ‘stable’ qualities of his / her culture, also constructs certain shifts and turns in that culture (in this case Catholicism). Cannell (1999, 254) believes that these shifts and turns are social facts. She points out, “perhaps, that ambiguity, irony and irresolution are also kinds of social fact, not to be explained simply as a way-station en route to a higher degree of culture certainty.”

I am quite ambivalent to categorize the *kuraldal* as a folk religious practice. Like Yoder, I can attest that there is continuation of a former religious practice and there is a formation of two or more religious perspectives in the *kuraldal*. However, in my discussion, *kuraldal* created a rupture on these notions of “official” and “unofficial” or the “orthodox” and “non-orthodox” religious narratives and performances. The irony in this Catholic ritual is: The *kuraldal*, a non-orthodox narrative and performance, appears to be the official ritual of the official religion in Sasmuan. In this regard, I am also hesitant to identify it as an exclusively vernacular religious practice (as in Primiano 1995). Specifically, the connotation of the vernacular is always associated with the indigenous as emphasized by Primiano. Indigenous is a loaded concept especially in a postcolonial setting like the Philippines. Perhaps, a better way of situating the performance is not through the assertion of it as either an indigenized or Catholicized performance tradition but through the assertion of it as both indigenized and Catholicized. I definitely share the conviction of Primiano regarding the formation of an institutionalized religion as inspired and continued by ordinary men and women. But something is being missed out here. The study of religious cultural performances such as the *kuraldal* remains incomplete by only situating how they are performed, practiced, and

engaged by individuals. The orthodoxy, the doctrine, and the official institution are also important tools towards adequately understanding the multivalent character of any religious cultural performance.

Moreover, the performance of the *kuraldal* as product of traditionalization produces irregularities and paradoxes, creating a sense of ambiguity on the doctrine of Catholicism. This ambiguity can best be represented by the perceived ambivalence towards the orthodox positions of the Catholic Church. Cannell (2006, 7) points out:

even where particular Christian churches have, at given times and places adopted certain theological positions as orthodox and policed them as such, the unorthodox position remains hanging in the air, readable between the lines in Scripture, and implied as the logical opposite of what is most insisted upon authorities. Hence the heretical is constantly and being reinvented in new forms.

The performance of *kuraldal* has redirected the orthodox position of the Catholic Church about Saint Lucy. As already argued, the “official” is effectively rendered ambiguous when the status of the “unofficial” is heightened. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church has also been having its part in this performance of ambiguity. In the *kuraldal*, the conceived unorthodox is not really “hanging in the air.” In a way, it may be inferred that in this performance, the “heretical” has already been renewed and re-modified not only by the narratives and the performances of the devotees but also through the active participation of the Church.

Notes

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1 Although the ritual is held in Sasmuan, several devotees come from other towns in Pampanga and

from other provinces of the Philippines (particularly the nearby provinces of Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Pangasinan, and Zambales).

2 Anne Eriksen explains traditionalization as another way of illustrating the construction or the invention of tradition. In this essay, traditionalization is centered on the concept of performativity. In a way, traditionalization is the result of repetitive performance. My concept of the performative is informed by J. Neil Garcia's (2007, 8) reading of Judith Butler. As Garcia points out, performativity is a "ritualistic imitation—of norms that cannot in fact be achieved, only ever so slightly approximates." Garcia's articulation is centered on identity politics of the bakla (Filipino gay man), my use of the performative is associated with the naturalization (therefore, traditionalization) of a cultural performance by repetitions.

3 Rev. Fr. Lino Mandap explains that there are some occasions where the Archbishop could not make it as a concelebrator. Instead, a representative was sent.

4 Nina Tomen (2008, 23) describes the batalla as another type of dance ritual: "a variation of the kuraldal." Tomen is correct in saying that it is a dance form but to trace its origin back to the kuraldal is problematic. Batalla was introduced to the country by the Spaniards along with the evangelical theatrical form *commedia*. *Commedia* was first introduced in the Visayan islands before gaining its popularity in Luzon, where Pampanga province is located. *Commedia* became very popular and eventually was indigenized as *komedya*. The batalla is the most awaited spectacle in a *komedya* performance. Pampanga had its *komedya* performance. Nicanor G. Tiongson (1999) asserts that kuraldal was the Pampangan rendition of this theatre form. Nonetheless, looking at how kuraldal will be discussed in this paper, it seems that Tiongson's identification of kuraldal with *komedya* is incorrect. Perhaps, the Kapampangan communities simply find the batalla very interesting so that in most Catholic rituals rendered by them, it has become the centerpiece. Batalla is mostly performed in the southwestern towns of Pampanga like Masantol, Macabebe, and San Simon. Literally meaning "battle," this dance ritual "uses the same music that has a marching tilt (Tomen 2008, 23)" similar to that of the traditional dance in *komedya*.

5 *Komedya* is a traditional theatre form in the Philippines, which was introduced by the Spaniards during inquisition. It is a traditional theatrical tradition with plots that revolve around the social, political, and religious conflicts between the Muslim and Christian heroes, usually presented during religious fiestas of the Catholic community in the Philippines (see Tiatco 2009). Nicanor G. Tiongson and Doreen Fernandez (in Tiatco 2009) explain the batalla as a big production number depicting "battle" between Christian troops and Muslim troops.

6 For similar narratives see Tiatco 2008, 2010, and Gonzales-Villegas 2008.

7 In Apalit, Pampanga, a group of men who call themselves Knights of Saint Peter controlled the crowd (devotees) during the procession of Apung Iru (Saint Peter): "Frenzied devotees wishing to have their pieces of cloth or handkerchiefs wiped on the image are given access only through the undertakings of the Knights" (Tiatco 2008, 95). The image, like the Holy Grail of the medieval legend, is protected that Knights members do not allow any element to touch it (like the ray of the sun and the water caused by the water exchanges during the ritual and festival). The head of this confraternity used an elegant umbrella during the parade to protect the image from the sun. Two members covered the image with a waterproof garment protecting it from water from the exchanges of the devotees (Tiatco 2008).

8 A total of nine Eucharistic celebrations were held from 1 A.M. to 10 A.M. The 9 A.M. mass was the most attended, followed by the first mass at 1 A.M..

9 The *carinosa* or the *basulto* are traditional dances in the Philippines. In these dances, many devices are used: a blanket, a handkerchief, a fan, a hat, and even drinking glasses. Traditionally, gestures by the female dancer are modest and undemonstrative to help sustain a subterfuge. The male dancer on the other hand is aggressive and persistent (see Villaluz 1989). *Basulto* is a Kapampangan love song. When this satirical love song is danced, it usually comes after a stanza or a verse is sung either by the female dancer or the male singer-dancer. Movement patterns are very similar to the swaying of the arms and the use of handkerchief or a fan to signify flirtation in the *carinosa* (see Aquino 1978).

10 Father Mandap explained that yearly devotees double during the *kawakasan*. In 2009, it was reported by the Fiesta Committee through Domingo Mangalin that the estimated number of devotees was 15,000. In 2010, Father Mandap believes that more people participated in the dance ritual.

11 Fr. Mandap explains that this old image was devoured by fire during a great fire in Sasmuan in the 18th century.

12 See for example Philippine Fiesta Online (2008), Alex Castro's Blog site "View from the Pampang" (Castro 2009), and World Events Guide (2010).

13 In the book of the prophet Isaiah, the suffering servant is paralleled to Jesus: "it was our infirmities that he bore, our suffering that he endured, . . . He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole; By his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all" (Is 53: 4 – 6).

14 Sacred camp is coined by Patrick Alcedo based on Jonathan Smith's notion of the sacred and Susan Sontag's camp. The *panaad* (or *panata*) in the *ati-atihan* is a sacred performance as it belongs to "a special dimension" and its efficacy as sacred transforms the performers' lives. It should also be noted that the efficacy of the "sacred" comes from the concentrated attention that the community gives to the performance, therefore making it of transcendental quality (Alcedo 2007, 121-122). On the other hand, the notion of camp is an exaggerated play on the form, a special kind of ludic behaviour replete with innocence and unintentionality, it is enacted with tender feelings but always with pathetic and theatrical seriousness (*ibid.*). The sacred camp is the paradox in the *ati-atihan* performance, particularly that of Tay Augusto as his transgenering becomes an act of religious offering. Although I mentioned in this piece that Augusto's performance is tied with penance for his neighbors, it should be noted that this is just one aspect of that performance. Like other performances of *panata*, Augusto's prime participation is very personal. Alcedo explains that there are many factors on the participation of Augusto in the performance: for himself and for his loved-ones. This intention of seeking "penance" for his neighbors is highlighted in this piece as there are some devotees in the *kuraldal* who sees the performance as an opportunity to seek penance for the transgressions of others.

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