

## **Performing Cosmopolitan Entanglement in the Philippine *Pista*: Sariaya *Agawan* Festival**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This essay proposes cosmopolitan entanglement as a conceptual framework for the understanding of the Philippine *pista* (fiesta). The *pista* is a cosmopolitan phenomenon because communities engage in a disposition of cultural openness with the strange and the stranger. It is a performance of entanglement because it is a complex cultural phenomenon projected to be solemn yet secular, a festivity that neither the State nor the Church is in an ultimate position of authority, a parade of divinity, and a procession of spectacle. In arguing for cosmopolitan entanglement in the *pista*, the essay explores the 2007 *Agawan* festivity in Sariaya, Quezon, some 120 km south of Manila, as a case study. The first part is a conceptualization of cosmopolitanism as related to the *pista* using the Catholic dogma as lens. The analysis of Catholic dogma is necessary because in the Philippines the *pista* has its origin in Catholicism, its celebrations often coinciding with the feast day of a community's patron saint. The second part examines the *pista* as a performance of entanglement. The final section describes the Sariaya *pista* via the *Agawan* festival as a case of cosmopolitan entanglement. The *pista* in Sariaya is an exemplar of cosmopolitan entanglement because community members perform cultural openness, which is also a mixing and matching of different performance activities, a strategy of combining the secular and the sacred, and a welcoming gesture to both the familiar and the stranger.

*Keywords:* Sameness plus difference, Philippine fiesta, Catholicism, performance, hospitality to strangers, communion

This essay proposes cosmopolitan entanglement as a conceptual model for the understanding of the Philippine *pista* (fiesta). As observed in different *pista* celebrations of Catholic communities in the archipelago, several activities provide glimpses of the cosmopolitan; at the same time communities perform entangled activities. The *pista* has two features supporting this cosmopolitan argument. First, the *pista* celebration engages with the “stranger.” While cosmopolitanism has become a catchphrase in discussions of contemporary social scenarios such as migration, transnational politics, and global security, many scholars of cosmopolitanism such as Appiah (2006), Nava (2007), and Papastergiadis (2012) maintain that central to the discourse of cosmopolitanism is the issue of the “other” or the “foreign” or the “stranger” in pursuit of sameness, intimacy, and hospitality without sacrificing differences.

The popular narrative of the *pista* begins with templates of sameness, intimacy, and hospitality or a sense of opening up of the self to “others.” The *pista* calls for a recognition of shared intimacy among community members and between the hosting community members and guests. This is especially manifested in Pineda’s (2005) coffee-table book, in which she advises to “accept an invitation from a stranger to join the banquet. If a local person finds out you have not eaten lunch or have no place to go for lunch, you will surely be invited inside their house for a meal, even if you are a stranger” (p. 76). *Pista* may literally denote a celebration or a party, but, as observed in various celebrations of Filipino Catholic communities, it is more than a conventional party in that “the whole community joins together to celebrate the feast day of the town’s patron saint. A fiesta showcases the best the town has to offer: warm hospitality, talented and friendly people, the best fruits and vegetables of the season, the famous sweets, biscuits, crafts, and the most delicious cuisine” (p. 76).

Second, the cosmopolitan character in the *pista* is also based on a particular disposition of the community to open up itself to various cultural influences. For example, in the *ati-atihan* festival during the *pista* in Kalibo, Aklan, the community narrative about the *ati* (dark-skinned indigenous peoples) may be invoked as personal histories, mixed with the divinity of the Holy Child as a reference to the colonial history under Spain and finally attached to the colorful pageantry of street performances of contemporary choreographies and other innovative dance movements like Brazilian and French showgirls and hip-hop, to name a few, as indicators of the American colonial impact (Peterson, 2011). Some American influences are clearly observable also in the celebration of the *pista*. For instance, the celebrations usually have a *perya* (fair), beauty pageants, singing competitions, musical concerts, performance skits, variety shows like cabaret, and vaudeville,

popularly known as jamboree. In some areas, the fiesta committees of the municipal governments organize what locals call *paliga* or inter-*barangay* (village) basketball tournaments. These forms of entertainment and performances are said to have been imported or influenced by the Americans during the “benevolent program” of the U.S. government beginning in 1898. Cannell (1999) notes that “local entertainments and celebrations have also been touched by a deference to ‘American’ standards and values thus understood” (p. 204).

Cosmopolitanism in the pista also surfaces in the food preparation of community members. Hannerz (1990) explains that the cosmopolitan experience is in “the intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrast rather than uniformity” (p. 239). Many households celebrating the pista engage in intellectual and creative activities as they prepare and cook meals for visitors and guests. Often, the preparations involve opening up to various cultural influences: from local flavors to Chinese, American, and Hispanic influences in cooking. In this sense, it is common among celebrating communities to have a mixture of dishes inspired by these foreign influences but highly localized.

On the other hand, our proposal of entanglement comes from a belief that the pista is a complex cultural phenomenon projected to be solemn yet secular, a festivity that neither the State nor the Church is in an ultimate position of authority, a parade of divinity and a procession of spectacle. Cultural openness is also a modality of entanglement. The pista entangles religious doctrine with the secular vision of the State. Often, the “holy” image of the town’s patron is juxtaposed with a spectacular personification in the procession. During fiestas, dogma and folk interpretations of Catholicism often closely work together. Given this initial exploration, entanglement refers to conditions of overlaps and conditions of blending or mixing together. Chow (2012) explains that the conventional usage of entanglement in theory is “fuzzing up of conventional classificatory categories due to the collapse of neatly maintained epistemic borders” (p. 10). Also, entanglements are “the linkages and enmeshments that keep things apart; the voidings and uncoverings that hold things together” (p. 12). For example, Tiatco (2014a) observed the following about the pista in Angeles City, Pampanga:

While the Church maintains that the festivity is solemn, it is interesting to note that the solemnity of the celebration is shared with other activities, which by the Church’s usual standards may not be considered solemn, sacred or holy. [...] During the occasion of this fiesta, I have observed how in many instances Church officials participate actively in the secular activities, to the apparent approval of members of the congregations. For instance, the celebration of the *Fiesta Culiat* is not complete without the yearly *Mutya ning Angeles* (Miss

Angeles) beauty pageant and the *parada royale* (grand parade), where the candidates, local muses from the 33 *barangays*, and other individuals considered icons or important figures of the city, are introduced (Tiatco, 2014a, pp. 53-54).

In arguing for cosmopolitan entanglement in the *pista*, we use our field encounter during the 2007 *Agawan* festivity in Sariaya, Quezon, some 120 km south of Manila, as a case study. The *Agawan*, celebrated every 14 May, is Sariaya's version of the *pahiyas* in Lucban. In the *Agawan*, a Catholic household prepares a *bagakay* (a bamboo bedecked with food, candies, and other edible items). The local Catholics in Sariaya use *bagakay* as both a decoration and an instrument to hold objects that participants seize as soon as the image of San Isidro passes by during the procession sponsored by the Catholic Church. In Lucban, participants of the procession get the *kiping* (brightly colored, leaf-shaped wafer made of rice) from the decorated façade of participating households. In Sariaya, the *kiping* remain as ornaments on the walls of houses until the end of the day. In the evening, households in Sariaya distribute the *kiping* to guests and visitors.

Much of our narrative comes from our participation and observation of three Sariaya households during the town's *pista* celebration: the Belenas, the Albudins, and the Bicos. We have divided this essay into three parts. First, we provide a conceptual and analytical tool entangling cosmopolitanism and the *pista* using the Catholic dogma as lens. The analysis of Catholic dogma is necessary because in the Philippines the *pista* has its origin in Catholicism, its celebrations often coinciding with the feast day of a Catholic saint, named patron of the local government to the community. Second, we conceptualize how the *pista* becomes a performance of entanglement. Finally, we describe our experience in Sariaya as evidence of cosmopolitan entanglement. Our narration focuses on the three households' food preparation.

### **PISTA AND COSMOPOLITANISM: A FRAMEWORK INSPIRED BY CATHOLICISM?**

The *pista* in most Catholic communities in the Philippines is an experience of excess, mostly in food preparation. Popular narratives about the *pista* explicate that celebrating the festivity is a season when community members put aside economic difficulties and focus on preparing the best dishes for the occasion (Pineda, 2005; Tiatco, 2010). Pineda (2005) narrates, "when the fiesta comes, everything has a sparkle to it. It is the right time to meet Filipinos at their best" (p. 74). Community members often perform this notion of the "best" in food preparation. Pineda advises potential tourists: "do be prepared to eat, eat and eat. Filipinos serve

their finest food during fiesta. [...] There seems to be an endless supply of food. The hosts make sure they never run out, as it is embarrassing to do so [...]” (pp. 75-76).

The primary reason for preparing a lot of food is to avoid *kurilyo* (loosely translated in English as the experience of running short of food), which is connected to *hiya* (embarrassment) (Pineda, 2005). Moreover, many Filipino Catholics believe that it is not a good sign if all the food is already finished but some guests have not yet arrived. The *pista* is a season when households showcase their culinary expertise. The tradition is that the table should not be allowed to become empty until the *pista* is over. For this reason, many community members begin preparations a week before the *pista* to make sure that the banquet table does not run out of food until all visitors (familiar or not) have gone. Such has been part of the narrative of our informants in Sariaya, especially the Belena household.

The second reason for the extravagant food preparation is related to the concept of *bongga* (extravagance), which commonly refers to all things spectacular. Since the *pista* is a time when many Catholics prepare the best they can offer, to be complimented with “*bongga*” by visitors and guests indicates their great appreciation of the efforts exerted in preparing the dishes. In the case of Sariaya, the performance of *bongga* via spectacle is entangled with some other performance genres. Literally, some Catholic folk in this village perform cultural spectacles, such as the *rondalla* (ensemble of stringed instruments) in the Belenas and a dance *extravaganza* in front of the Albudin house.

In the sense discussed above, both concepts of *kurilyo* and *bongga* are attached to the narrative of the *pista*. The former comes from a sense of obligation toward others, while the latter refers to a reward coming from others. The *fiesta* then becomes an occasion where hospitality invites a sort of cosmopolitan idea of communion. This performative communion in the *pista* gives a glimpse of a cosmopolitan disposition that most Catholics in the archipelago perform during a *pista* celebration. It is the clue of cosmopolitanism that we adhere to in the context of the *pista* in the Philippines. In our reading, it is located in the colonial history of the country.

Borrowing from Epili Hau’Ofa, Robinson (2007) asserts that the cosmopolitan image of the Asia-Pacific comes from the ancestors of the Pacific region:

... (T)heir universe comprised not only land surfaces, but surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people

could count on to guide their ways across the seas . . . There is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as a 'sea of islands' (Robinson, 2007, p. 5).

The allegory of the ocean is useful in locating a local cosmopolitan argument since the Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands – an assemblage of waters, lands, and other natural features belonging to these natural environments. An archipelago not only links and separates the natural environments of lands and waters but also integrates and separates people. An archipelago can be viewed as a dynamic engagement of integration and separation, in that each island in it is distinct but does not live in isolation.

There are several ways to identify the distinctions of every island in an archipelago. These are often based on the island's available resources. Many of the islands in the Philippine archipelago are inhabited. The physical surroundings of these islands contribute to their markers of distinctiveness. The flora and fauna found in an island can make it significantly different from other islands. Cultural expressions developed by inhabitants are also markers that serve to distinguish one island from another. In this vein, food and cuisine are markers of distinctiveness among the islands. The different cultural expressions of the islands in the Philippines indicate that neighboring islands influence each other. As such, there is a sense of communion bounded by an intellectual and an aesthetic stance of opening up oneself to other cultural affiliations. Hence, despite their differences, islanders are bounded by a sense of sameness. This is also one way of looking at how cosmopolitanism develops in the psyche of the Filipino people (Agoncillo & Alfonso, 1960; Jocano, 1975, 1998; Patanñe, 1996; Scott, 1994).

It is likewise important to look at the country's precolonial times to illustrate that even before the arrival of colonizers, Filipinos had been engaging in cultural openness to other islanders from as far as Formosa (now Taiwan), Java, Bali (now part of the Indonesian archipelago), and the subcontinent of India. Annotators of the Spanish monarchy wrote that there were signs of Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, and Formosan influences in the cultural traditions of the different islands in the archipelago (Agoncillo & Alfonso, 1960; Jocano, 1975, 1998; Patanñe, 1996; Scott, 1994).

A good example of this cultural openness leading to sameness-plus-difference thesis of cosmopolitanism is the way *bibingka* (rice cake) is cooked in various parts of the Philippines. Many cookbooks attribute bibingka's origin to the Luzon Island. One popular belief is that the inhabitants of Luzon learned to cook this rice cake

from Chinese traders during the precolonial times. Bibingka is cooked in a similar manner everywhere else in the archipelago: a clay container is lined with a single large section of a banana leaf, which is placed over preheated *uling* (coal). The rice flour and water mixture is poured into the container, which is then covered with another piece of banana leaf. More preheated *uling* is then added on top of the leaf. Filipinos in Luzon (northern Philippines) add salted egg and *kesong puti* (white cheese) to their bibingka. Those in Mindanao (southern Philippines) add caramel custard; in some islands, caramelized shredded coconut meat locally known as *macapuno* is added. In Mandaue City in Cebu Island (central Philippines), bibingka is cooked with *tuba* (alcoholic beverage made from palm sap).

In relation to cultural openness, our cosmopolitan argument is heavily situated in the welcoming disposition of Filipinos during the *pista* celebration. This, in our view, is not only performed during the *pista* celebration but is part of the Filipino psyche and rooted in a precolonial past. According to Jocano (1998), it was not unusual for the precontact locals to be visited by “strangers” because they were engaged with other islanders within the archipelago and those from outside the archipelago. As such, the Philippines has a long history of engagement with “strangers” – one of hospitality and engagement. In our mind, this is also the reason why among Southeast Asians (or even the entire Asian region), Filipinos are stereotypically perceived as hospitable. Therefore, the hospitality in the *pista* is not unusual because performing such gesture is a common performative disposition of Filipinos, even when there is no *pista* celebration.

The introduction of Catholicism is instrumental in our discussion of cosmopolitanism. Catholicism, a foreign religion during the colonial times, reverberated the precontact animistic religion of the islanders so evangelization was not difficult (Agoncillo & Alfonso, 1960; Fernandez, 1996; Jocano, 1975, 1998). It echoed the sense of integration and differentiation with which the precontact people were used to engaging (Tiatco, 2010). Some reports indicate that many islanders, such as in Bohol, easily embraced Catholicism even without the threat of violence (Fernandez, 1996). Fernandez notes that soon after a performance about the martyrdom of St. Barbara, the natives converted to the new religion due to the play’s visual representations of hell. This new religion had some elements similar to the precontact religion, which probably attracted the locals to the new faith. Some missionaries also pitched a version of Catholicism that welcomed pre-Hispanic elements into the Catholic service. This means some missionaries accommodated existing traditions they found in the islands (Agoncillo & Alfonso, 1960). But in our view, the all-embracing, welcoming gesture found in the Catholic doctrine is the reason for the new religion’s attraction to the islanders.

One doctrine promulgated in Catholic catechism is the concept of the kingdom of God. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines explains the concept in terms of the here and now and as a welcoming one (CBCP, 1997). Many religions talk about a kingdom with a Divine, which is beyond this world. Other religions profess that life on earth is a preparation for entry to a kingdom with the "Ultimate One." The Catholic doctrine, on the other hand, says that every individual is already participating and living in the kingdom of God. While this is still very abstract and very ambiguous, it gives a sense of comfort and security, even if the Kingdom still refers to the beyond as against the earthly plane.

A welcoming gesture is a prerequisite in this Kingdom. The doctrine cites the Pauline epistle where Paul asserts that, in the Kingdom, everyone is welcome. In an interview with Miller (2005), Alain Badiou is convinced that:

[t]he Pauline conception of the church is not at all the realization of a closed separation. Instead, it proposes something that is open to everybody, a collective determination, the realization of a separation in a universal field (...) Paul, of course knows perfectly well that there are people who are Jews and people who are Greeks. But the new truth exceeds the evident difference between the Jew and the Greek. We can only completely receive a new truth by going beyond such difference. But this does not mean for Paul that they need to change their customs and practices. Instead, there is a becoming indifferent to this difference (Miller, 2005, p. 39).

Here is a sense of integration and differentiation in a grand narrative. Here is a sense of utopia. In this way, the idea of the Kingdom provides an ideal sense of living together within a community, where difference paradoxically matters and, at the same time, is not really important. This was precisely the way of life during the precontact time. This, in our mind, is the making of a cosmopolitan space. Such space was created during the *pista* celebration in the Hispanic colonial era. This was particularly manifested in the performances of the *komedya*, a Philippine traditional theater form introduced by the Spaniards during colonization. Tiatco (2014b) explains:

During the early days of *komedya* performances in the Philippines, particularly in the colonial capital of Manila, the geography of the city was transformed into a cosmopolis. Tiongson and Fred Sevilla explain that *komedya* performances, even though performed during Catholic celebrations (*fiesta*), drew large crowds of people, coming not only from within the territories of the city or the town that was celebrating the *fiesta* but also from nearby towns, neighbouring cities, and even the highlands. Friar Zuñiga, in his *Estadismo*



*de las Islas Filipinas*, attested to this massive audience attendance. In his account, he related the swarming of people of different statuses [...]. The loa conventions of the early komedyas would also attest to this creation of a cosmopolis: the loa or the declaimer would greet the multitude. The strangers during these performances were not actually perceived as strangers or outsiders. Allowing them (together with the local townsfolk) to contribute to how the performance would go on actually engaged them in discussion (Tiatco, 2014b, p. 104).

Tiatco narrates that during a pista celebration in the Hispanic colonial era in the archipelago, an ideal community is created while a komedya is performed. This community is almost utopic. But even if there is a sense of an idealized world in the performance, the constructed community implicates a sense of hospitality for the “other” – a welcoming gesture for *taga-dayo* (non-residents), including foreigners from the Galleon trade, to participate as audience members and to participate in the discussion about how the performance would go on. This participatory engagement, a performed intimacy based on the welcoming gestures of communities celebrating the pista, is an important character in our conceptualization of cosmopolitanism.

On the other hand, the Catholic doctrine possesses a strong sense of concern toward the “other” or the “stranger.” Of the Catholic texts, the story of the Good Samaritan is a primary example.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic dogma has a strong concern for “others”: “love your neighbor as yourself,” “love your enemies,” “throw a piece of bread instead of stone to those who offended you,” “everyone is a sinner but God always forgives.” Arendt (1994) characterizes Christian morality as inherently coming from a disposition of concern for the “others” rather than a morality starting from a sense of self. Based on the above maxims, Catholicism seems to have this character of inclusivity, where the concern for others is a guiding principle. From the Pauline epistle to these pronouncements and provocations, Catholicism seemingly invites a sense of harmony and peaceful coexistence not only with fellow Catholics but also with those who are not Catholics. The “neighbor” that is referred to here should not be literally conceived as someone living nearby. In Catholicism, the teachings of Jesus Christ in the scriptures refer to “neighbor” as non-Catholics, like in the case of the Good Samaritan. While many conceive of this as an introduction to tolerance, we conceive this as one of openness, care, and respect. As such, the kind of cosmopolitanism that the context of the Philippines may contribute to the dynamic engagement of both the Western and the Asian contexts is twofold: the unquestioned hospitality to strangers, which is arguably rooted in its precolonial past, and the conception of integration and differentiation found in the character of the archipelago, which was later upheld by the grand utopia of the Catholic doctrine.

Having these as contexts of cosmopolitanism, the narrative of the *pista* thus begins with this template of hospitality or opening up of the self to others. As discussed earlier, the *pista* begins with the template of performing for the “others.” For instance, the preparation of meals for visitors calls for a recognition of shared intimacy among community members and between the hosting community members and guests. Therefore, a *pista* becomes a contrapuntal venue of narratives, where the link is neither completely traditional nor secular, neither native nor foreign. It is this complexity that makes the *pista* cosmopolitan and, at the same time, entangled. In the next section, we conceptualize how entanglement is related to this cosmopolitan dictum.

### **PERFORMING ENTANGLEMENT IN THE PISTA**

A *pista* is a quintessential performance of Filipino Catholics who dominate the archipelago. The Philippine government even projects the country as a “Fiesta Island” (Cagoco, 2006; Hornedo, 2000). Cagoco (2006) notes that to be a Filipino is to be immersed in this “fiesta culture” (p. s3/3). Jocano explains that a *pista* is “used to mark sacred times such as the feast days of saints in the Roman Catholic calendar. But the religious activities, such as processions and fluvial parades, are only part of the entire practice because in the Filipino setting, variety shows, talent competitions, beauty pageants and sports tournament are staple” (in Cagoco, 2006, p. s3/3).

With regard to the origin of the *pista*, two positions are currently being debated. According to Jocano, the *pista* is Hispanic in origin but indigenized over time: “after 400 years, what was originally Hispanic has become more Filipino than anything else” (in Cagoco, 2006, p. s3/3). Hornedo (2000), on the other hand, submits that “fiestas are not only a product of Hispanic Catholicism but rooted in the Filipinos’ love of festivities prior to the Christianization of the island” (p. 2). Citing Fray Joaquin de Coria’s annotation in 1872 of the islanders’ celebration of the victory of a tribal chief over a battle against another tribe, Hornedo argues that even before the archipelago was Christianized, Spaniards witnessed the love for festivities of the islanders. De Coria observed the islanders’ excessive drinking. Thus, Hornedo argues that the *pista* is an indigenous tradition that “survived colonial encounters” (p. 19); it is a “durable venue for Filipino culture and its expressions” (p. 20).

The difference in position, notwithstanding, both commentators view the Philippine *pista* as a complex phenomenon in that it is expected to be solemn yet at the same time secular, a festivity where neither the State nor the Church is in an ultimate position of authority, a parade of holiness as well as a procession of spectacle. With this, the performativity of *pista* is arguably an entangled phenomenon, since the

solemnity observed by the Church intermingles with the secular activities. The sacred image of the town's patron combines with a spectacular personification in the procession. During the pista, orthodox Catholicism is negotiated with everyday Catholicism.

The pista in the Philippines is celebrated as a community gathering, with the municipal or local government taking the lead, and more importantly as a commemoration of the birthday, martyrdom, or simply the Roman Catholic mandated feast day of a community's patron saint. In this regard, two important presentations and representations are working in constant negotiation: the secular (often profane) and the sacred. By virtue of stereotypical perceptions, the secular belongs to the municipal government and the sacred to the Roman Catholic institution. Both institutions provide avenues of presentation for the festivity. During the pista, these institutions do not necessarily see each other as opposing forces, despite contentious encounters between the two (especially at the national level) at other times of the year.<sup>2</sup>

At times, the local government consults with the Church, as in the case of the Kalibo pista in the Visayan province of Aklan, whose celebration culminates with the *ati-atihan*. At issue is the flow of the street-dance performance (Alcedo, 2007; Peterson, 2011). Aside from this issue, Peterson describes the performance as a juxtaposition of the "sacred and the profane as devotees of the Santo Niño (Holy Child) mingle in the streets with drunken merrymakers and spectacularly attired dancers day and night for seven days" (p. 508). Organized by both the local Roman Catholic Church and the municipal government of Kalibo, the festivity has interesting spaces where representations of the divine (Holy Child) are performed in colorful spectacles. The representations become more complex when locals begin to strip off the divine attributes of the image such as configuring him as a "mischievous boy, who surreptitiously leaves his altar night after night" (Alcedo, 2007, p. 110) or as a "naughty boy, who secretly steps down at night to gallivant around Kalibo's deserted streets to tease and play harmless tricks on the residents" (Alcedo, 2007, p. 111). In this representation of the Holy Child, there is a mixing and matching of the mandated Roman Catholic dogma (the attribution of the Santo Niño as a divine figure) and the narratives of folk Catholicism. As Peterson (2011) explains, "this combination of the Santo Niño's playful spirit with his spiritual potency constitutes a powerful grafting of the spiritual onto the celebratory" (p. 509).

On the other hand, there is entanglement of shared histories in celebrating the pista. Looking closely at the different performances or activities during fiestas, we see the celebration becoming an intervening space of shared histories between the

community and the colonizers. This reading of entanglement is based on the observation of Cannell (1999) in her ethnographic work in the Bicol region. She explains: “if the legacy of Spanish Catholicism continues to dominate popular religiosity, it is the legacy of the American colonial period and its schooling system which has made the most obvious impression of public secular life” (p. 203). The logic that Cannell explores is a reference to how various histories of colonialism (beginning with Spain who colonized the islands from 1521 to 1898 and followed by the United States who bought the Philippines from Spain for USD 20,000 at the Treaty of Paris in 1898) are performed and implicated in fiesta celebrations. As in the example of the *ati-atihan* earlier, Tiatco (2014a) observed during his visit in 2005 that “a group of young devotees clad in the usual straw garments and black make-up were dancing to the music of American hip-hop group Black-Eyed-Peas while carrying with them images of the Holy Child. According to one devotee, his participation was a form of gratitude for having passed the Certified Public Accountant board examination, which he took in October 2004” (p. 63).

If we follow the logic of Jocano, the *pista* itself is a colonial concept. Phelan (1959) explains that Spaniards introduced fiestas as a means of providing “a splendid opportunity to indoctrinate the Filipinos by performances of religious rituals” (p. 73). Phelan demonstrates that the fiesta was one way of encouraging the converts during the Hispanic colonial era to actively engage with the Catholic Church:

It is apparent that one of Catholicism’s strongest appeals was its splendid ritual and its colorful pageantry. In this respect the Filipino attitude was not substantially different from most other indigenous peoples of the Spanish empire. But there are special features to the Filipino response. Singing played a prominent role in the pre-Hispanic culture, hence the Filipinos proved eager and talented pupils of liturgical music. They soon acquired proficiency in singing Gregorian chants. They learned to play European instruments like the flute, the violin, and the flageolet with remarkable skill (Phelan, 1959, p. 75).

Cannell illustrates a better way of exemplifying this entanglement of shared histories: “the middle classes [sic] of each small town organise themselves into prayer groups for the devotion of the Sacred Heart, but also into groups of Rotarians and Lions. Seminarians training for holy orders play basketball in their spare time. Small primary schools in the barangay field teams of drummers and majorettes in all the major town celebrations” (p. 204). To complete Cannell’s analogy, many *pista* today also include *palaro* (folk games) such as *palosebo* (a popular children’s game where participants aim to climb an oiled bamboo pole and take a small flag

from the top), and *habulan ng baboy* (catching a piglet in a muddy lawn). In some barrio fiestas, cockfighting (*sabong* in many Filipino languages) is permitted.

Another example of this entanglement of histories can be seen in the Agawan festivity in Sariaya in Quezon. The festivity is the feast day of San Isidro Labrador (St. Isidore, the laborer), often viewed as the patron saint of the entire Quezon province. In the Catholic tradition, San Isidro is the patron saint of farmers. Farming is one of the staple economic activities of the province, especially in Sariaya. The fiesta is both a veneration by the community of this Catholic saint and a celebration of the bountiful harvests of farmers. Held every May 14 and 15, this pista has every household sporting the elaborate decorations of kiping. Through these decorations,

farmers show their bountiful produce (...). There are miniatures locally known as *anok*, fruits, vegetables and *longganisa* (local sausage) strung together in the most original fashion. Residents engaging in other forms of livelihood display their products, too, in thanksgiving. The handicraft manufacturer has his house decked with colorful *huri/buntal* hats, bags, placemats and others while the butcher has a head of roasted suckling pig (*lechon*) peeking from the window. The most traditional and certainly the most attractive décor comes, of course, in the form of *kiping* which is adorned and strung together to form all sorts of shapes, from chandelier called *arangya* to huge flowers (pahiyasfestival.com 2012).

The significance of this festivity is Catholic – a celebration of thanksgiving venerating the patron of the farmers, San Isidro Labrador. The mosaic-like decorations of kiping are suggestive of the art deco designs introduced by the Americans during their “benevolent assimilation” campaign. The decorations in every house reflect personal histories – the personal narratives of their bountiful years. But more than this, we have also observed an aspect of the bagakay, where shared histories are juxtaposed in a performative encounter.

While attending the fiesta in Sariaya, one particular house struck our attention: the Albudins. On the veranda of the house was a figure of San Isidro Labrador. In the background were the draped kiping, clustered to form ornamental flowers. Placed over the entire façade of the house, these decorative kiping were tangled with *nipa sombrero* (hats made of palm leaves). The house caught our attention not because of the elaborate décor, but because in front was a makeshift performance space where a group of children would come out every hour to perform various modern dances. The first dance we witnessed was a foxtrot routine by two children; after an hour, a group of children performed American hip-hop (Figure 1). We were told that an hour later, the group danced *pandanggo sa ilaw*, a local folk dance inspired

by the *fandango* of Spain but with the additional innovation in the Southern Tagalog region of women dancers with two lit candles in their hands and another one on top of their heads.



Figure 1. A performance in front of the Albudins (Photo: Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco)

While this house was decorated with huge kiping clustered to form elaborate flowers, the household was also filled with various edibles (mostly sweets such as cupcakes, candies, sponge cakes), which would be distributed to visitors, be they familiar or unfamiliar (or foreign) ones. As the mistress of the house invited us (as strangers) inside this “peculiar” house, our experience became more interesting, especially as we observed how the household prepared and regulated food, displayed it outside, and served it in a huge banquet. Some of the cakes offered to visitors were baked in the *pugon* (local oven). In a while, these were covered with fondant. The baking mixture included *gata* (coconut milk), egg, baking flour (most of which were imported), cocoa, coffee, and surprisingly *lambanog* (local wine from fermented coconut). Our host mentioned that her son attended a culinary school abroad from where he learned baking techniques. However, he learned baking in a *pugon* from his maternal great-grandmother.

In this narrative, the juxtaposed incorporation of “stories” from the colonial past into the present is performed in a distinctive way. This side-by-side-by-side

embodiment complicates the relationship of historical narratives, in which no story becomes apparent except by being synoptically shared in the same space via negotiated occurrences. Here, the fiesta becomes an intervening space where historical and personal narratives do not antagonize each other but engage in a contrapuntal conversation. In the final analysis, the pista calls for a sharing of power among the stakeholders. It, therefore, becomes a contrapuntal venue of narratives, where the link is neither completely religious nor secular, neither native nor foreign. This complexity makes the pista a performance of entanglement. Combining the opening of intimacy to “strangers” makes the complexity of the pista one of cosmopolitan entanglement. In the final section of the paper, we describe and narrate our encounters with the three households in Sariaya, highlighting how these households prepared meals for visitors to illustrate our proposal of reading the pista in a cosmopolitan entanglement framework.

### **PISTA IN SARIAYA: A CASE STUDY OF COSMOPOLITAN ENTANGLEMENT**

#### **The Albudin Family**

The caretaker of the Albudin house, Mang Kiko, shared that members of Mr. Angelito and Morena Albudin’s family had left Sariaya for Metro Manila and the United States several years ago to find better opportunities. For sentimental reasons, the family decided to keep the house, it being one of the oldest structures in Sariaya. Mang Kiko, a family relative, has been taking care of the “old house” ever since the family had left the town. Some family members make sure to return to their home at least once a year, particularly during the May festival, the feast day of San Isidro Labrador.

At the time of fieldwork, the Albudin children came back to Sariaya from the U.S. after six years of being away. Mrs. Albudin said the family was complete. It was the *bisperas* (the night before the feast day) when the family welcomed us. That night, the Albudins, along with two hired helpers, were busy preparing their bagakay and the decorations in front of their house (Figure 2). In fact, the Albudins were busier preparing the ornaments than the food. Mr. Albudin boasted that yearly, “newspapers are impressed with the kind of ornaments that we use.” Inside the old house, clippings from national broadsheets featuring the creativity and ingenuity of the Albudins are framed and displayed. Mr. Albudin added that they have been preparing the decors since May 1, two weeks before the fiesta. Mrs. Albudin explained that doing the decorations is “*panata, kasi handog kay San Isidro Labrador, at minsan lang*

*naman kami umuuwi kaya dapat paghandaan talaga*" (religious pledge, our offering to St. Isidore, and we come home once a year only, that is why we really have to prepare).



Figure 2. Preparing ornaments at the Albudin house (Photo: Sir Anril Tiatco)

Food also played an important role in the house decorations. A helper arranged fruits like *suha* (pomelo), *saging* (banana), and lanzones side-by-side the other farm products such as rice stalk, string beans, to name a few, to depict what may be imagined as the traditional emblem of the town. Brooms also lined the Albudin's front fence. One decoration particularly caught our attention: the kiping, which is considered as the local wafer or rice wafer. The kiping is a thin and crispy product, common made of ground rice, water, salt, and food coloring. Commonly, the townsfolk use a waxy type of leaf (*kabal* leaf) as a mold for kiping. The Albudins, on the other hand, use any long leaf. Mrs. Albudin said the banana leaf is a staple mold because of its long and waxy features. Kiping is prepared by first soaking the rice for at least two hours. The wet rice is then ground with the water until it is paste-like in consistency. Food color and salt are mixed into the paste and then the mixture is placed on the leaves, which serve as molds. The molds are then placed inside a steamer and cooked for about 30 minutes. The leaves are hung to dry, then peeled off from the kiping.



The Albudins prepared two types of kiping: the first type was used for decorations, and the second, for the *bagakay*, a bamboo designed with food, candies, and other edible items to be used for the *Agawan* (Figure 3). The Albudins usually give the second type to the revelers because of its special blend of sugar and other flavorings such as cinnamon powder and cocoa powder. Mr. Albudin shared that he made this special concoction because his *apo* (grandchildren) found the kiping bland. The locals usually dip the kiping in caramelized brown sugar before eating it. Others deep fry the kiping before dipping it in vinegar. The Albudins, however, like theirs sweeter – especially since their version of the kiping is meant for children. Mr. Albudin recalled that his *apo* compared the kiping with sweet wafers commonly available in supermarkets.



Figure 3. A typical *bagakay* in Sariaya (Photo: Sir Anril Tiatco)

The Albudins also prepared food for their visitors. As Mrs. Albudin explained, “of course, *importante din ang handa, hindi kumpleto ang pista kung walang handaan. Lalo na ang mga bisita naming galing pa sa States*” (food is also important; the celebration is not complete without it. We have to prepare, especially since most of our visitors are coming from the U.S.). This explains why, during our visit, we heard Mrs. Albudin talking to the caterer over the phone, carefully making a menu selection to ensure that the food served will suit the palate of her *balikbayan* friends (Filipinos returning home), relatives, and other guests.

While Mrs. Albulin was preoccupied with the menu, a group of kids caught our attention. They were huddled in one corner of the house, artistically crafting fresh produce into ornamental objects. Surprisingly, the main activity in the house centered on preparing the ornaments and not the food. This departs from the stereotypical notion of family members, especially women (mothers), preoccupied with food preparation during the eve of the fiesta.

On the use of the kiping to decorate homes, Mr. Albulin considered this as an important act of sacrifice. He said that it is a *panata*, a sacrificial vow for their petitions and intentions – “*para kay San Isidro Labrador, para mas maganda ang ani, para makita niya*” (for St. Isidore Labrador, hoping that he will see these offerings and give us a bountiful harvest). Mr. Albulin believed that the whole *pagpapapagod* (sacrifice) is a *pagpupugay* (homage) to San Isidro Labrador, the patron of the whole province of Quezon, the patron of the farmers and agriculturists, comprising most of the folks in Quezon.

### **The Belena Family**

Somewhere along Sariaya’s Rizal Street is the house of the family of Mrs. Editha Belena. Comparable to a mansion in wealthy villages in the metropolis (Figure 4), the house is of contemporary architecture: a three-story rectangular concrete structure (compared to the art nouveau designs of the Hispanic houses along the street). It stands as the biggest among houses with non-Hispanic designs. In the Belenas’ decorations, an inscription reads:

*Salamat, San Isidro, patron ng magsasaka  
Bayan naming Sariaya, sa ani sagana  
Biyaya ng tagumpay aming natatamasa  
Ikaw ay inspirasyon gabay sa tuwina.*

(Thank you, St. Isidore, patron of the farmers  
Sariaya, our town, has abundant harvests  
Blessings of success we always receive  
You, our inspiration and guide forever.)

The above passage illustrates the locals’ veneration and thanksgiving to San Isidro Labrador. The Sariyahins pay homage to him in various ways such as by singing “Dalit kay San Isidro” (Psalm for St. Isidore) which chronicles his nurturance of the soil.



Figure 4. Displaying nature's bounty at the Belena's mansion (Photo: Sir Anril Tiatco)

The Belenas also used farm produce to decorate their house: rice stalks formed into chandeliers and used as liners of overhangs together with string beans, *buntal* fans formed into big flowers, brooms hung on fence grills, and several *bayong* (local bags) placed on the porch ledge. They said they make use of these vegetables because San Isidro himself was a farmer. "Showing the elegance of the crops harvested is a way of paying homage to the greatness of the patron," Henry, son of the Belena couple, explained. He added that presenting these offerings in the street is like proclaiming their great acknowledgment of the Lord. As he pointed out jokingly, "*Aba siyempre, kailangang ipagmalaki ang mga ani para makita naman ni Lord ang pinaghirapan!*" (Of course, we should showcase the harvest for the Lord to see them!) He proudly claimed that the rice stalks and the vegetables used as decor are their farm's harvests. To them, these crops are the handiwork of a Supreme Being; they are a manifestation of His presence. By displaying these crops, the members of the household illustrated the "invisible" with the "visible." Like the local folks' undying faith to the Supreme Being, cosmopolitanism is an abstract ethos, which is portrayed in their performances, practices, and even sensorial experiences through food. The elaborate decors and sumptuous food on the family's banquet table exemplify this.

Like the Aldubins, some of the Belenas have migrated and settled elsewhere. The Belenas' eldest son and his family, for example, have settled in California.

Interestingly, it is his son's first May fiesta after 10 years of staying in the U.S. He brought with him his wife and two kids so they could witness this so-called "fabulous festivity." Unlike the Aldubins, the Belenas did not commission a caterer to serve their meals. Instead, Mrs. Belena, the matriarch, sought the help of relatives and friends from other towns to facilitate the preparation and serving of the food. Mrs. Belena hired two brothers, Andres and Joel Velasco, as head cook and assistant cook, respectively. Two co-teachers, including Arlene and two relatives, helped in the kitchen, while four more helpers/house helps served food in the living room.

The period of food preparation, according to Joel, took almost as long as the time spent to decorate the huge house and make the bagakay, which was about a week, as attested by Arlene, a co-teacher of Mrs. Belena whom she hired as decorator. At the time of the study, Mrs. Belena was the principal of the elementary school where Arlene was teaching. Food preparation began with menu planning, listing and purchasing of ingredients, and cooking of the dishes on the day of the fiesta. On May 7, a week before the fiesta, Joel recalled that he and Mrs. Belena went to Farmer's Market in Cubao, Quezon City (Metro Manila) to buy the necessary ingredients for the dishes to be served. Joel added, Mrs. Belena did not have any concrete plan on what to serve, "*nagtiwala lang siya sa akin. Ako na raw ang magdesisyon basta sabihin ko lang daw.*" (She trusted me to make the decisions on what to serve. All I had to do was to tell her what were needed.) Andres, on the other hand, said that Mrs. Belena, requested him to cook his specialty – *pochero*.

Andres recalled that one time during that week-long preparation, Mrs. Belena met with him to finalize the types of food to be served during the whole day of festivities. They planned a systematic way of categorizing the food and service for each type of guest. For example, food to be served to the members of the rondalla (orchestra) who performed during the morning would be different from those served to guests like us (Figure 5). They served the rondalla players *apas* (thin biscuits) and orange juice while they offered our group early lunch. We, however, settled for the Red Ribbon *mamon* that were neatly arranged in one corner of the tiled kitchen ledge, alongside with several packs of *ensaymada*, local pastries like *apa* and *broas* (ladyfinger cookies), native cakes like *sumang malagkit* (glutinous rice wrapped in banana leaves) and *puto* (rice cake), and fruits like ripe mangoes and *latundan* banana.

The disparity in the type of food served could also be due to the fact that the rondalla members were there as performers and not as guests. The rondalla serenaded the Belenas' guests who consisted of friends, relatives, and Ms. Belena's co-teachers. While the performance was ongoing, Mrs. Belena and her helpers served orange juice, *sumang malagkit*, and *broas* (Figures 6).



Figure 5. The *rondalla* at the Belenas (Photo: Sir Anril Tiatco)



Figure 6. *Sumang malagkit* and *broas* served by the Belenas (Photo: Sir Anril Tiatco)

### The Bico Family

A block away from the Belenas is the Bico family. The two families reside in an area that local folk consider the domain of Sariaya's middle class (Figure 7). The Bicos themselves proclaimed that they belong to the middle class. However, the Bicos,

save the lady of the house, Mrs. Lilia Bico, are not locals of Sariaya but of another town, Silangan. The Bicos were more concerned with food performativity than with decorating the bagakay. Food performativity refers to the various food preparations assigned to each member of the family. All the Bicos joined forces to prepare the food during the *bisperas* – from the youngsters to the old folk. The matriarch of the house assigned the preparation of the desserts and the main dishes or the *handaang-ulam* (food for the guests). Sheila, a daughter of Mrs. Bico, boasted that yearly she takes charge of baking *maja blanca* (a type of native rice cake made of corn). Mrs. Bico believed that “*mas marunong magtantsya ng tamis ang mga babae. ‘Pag ang kuya niya ang gumawa ng maja blanca, sigurado akong matamis na matamis. Sa kanya kasi, katamtaman ba!*” (Women are more able to cook with the right degree of sweetness. When her older brother cooks *maja blanca*, it is very, very sweet. With her, the sweetness is just right!) Kuya Jun Perfecto and Tatang Luis Perfecto, were tasked to prepare *kaldaretang kambing*. Jun explained that “*kailangang mailuto ang kaldareta ngayon pa lang kasi habang tumatagal, lalong sumasarap ito.*” (The *kaldareta* must be cooked as early as now because the longer it is allowed to stand, the better it tastes.) Tatang Luis Perfecto added, “*Matagal lang kasing gawin ang kaldareta – lalo na ang kambing, kung bukas pa iluluto iyan, wala nang ibang mailuluto, mang-uubos ng oras iyan!*” (Cooking *kaldareta* takes time, especially if we use goat meat. If we cook it tomorrow, we will have no more time to cook the other dishes!) Completing the menu were grilled *talakitok* fish, barbecue, and fried chicken. Desserts included fruit-salad, cake roll from a popular commercial bakeshop, and different types of rice cake such as *suman sa ibos*, *puto*, and *sapin-sapin*.



Figure 7. *Bagakay* at the Bico's house (Photo: Sir Anril Tiatco)

The Bicos had already bought all the necessary ingredients for cooking the day before the festivity. During the *bisperas*, the male members and Mrs. Bico sorted out the ingredients needed for the day's cooking (which would be done early in the morning, about 4:00). By this time, the Bicos had already decked their front fence with *walis tingting* (broom made from coconut leaf stalks), which were interspersed with string beans and eggplants. However, the kids and some of the fathers and mothers were still preparing the *bagakay*.

### **The Three Families on the Day of the Pista**

At early morning of May 14, the streets where the statue of San Isidro Labrador would pass were filled with *bagakay* and other decorative ornaments. The Albudins were finishing their decorations. The chandelier was waiting for the last row of tomatoes. Mr. Albudin was busy setting up the sound system. Accordingly, the highlights for the Albudins were performances of traditional, ballroom (social), and modern dances in front of their house. The family invited local dancers and troupes from Manila. Mr. Albudin boasted that yearly theirs was the most spectacular and the town's most anticipated event in the whole festivity.

Mrs. Albudin was on the phone talking with the caterer as the food was already an hour late. She expected relatives from the U.S. to arrive at 8:00 a.m. It was already 7:30 in the morning and the caterer had not delivered the food yet. After the discussion in the telephone, Mrs. Albudin checked the drinks mostly, soft drinks. After a while, she ordered the *alalay* (assistants) to bring the ice, which she had previously requested from them.

While tension was slowly building in the Albudins, in the Belenas' house, the hired cooks just arrived. The helpers were relatives of the Belenas and their friends from other towns of Quezon. They chopped the vegetables and mixed the ingredients. Only Andres and Joel handled the *kawali* (frying pan) and the *kalan* or *lutuan* (stove). It was 7:00 a.m. when the group started cooking.

Andres began preparing his *pochero*. He boasted his ingenuity in cooking this dish, using *balat ng baboy* (pig skin), which many people do not consume due to its tough texture and fat layers. Joel explained that "usually, *baboy o manok o isda ang hinahalo sa tomato sauce, pero si manong, ang ginagamit niya, balat ng baboy. Binabalatan niya 'yung baboy na ginamit sa ibang lutuin. Tapos 'yun na, hindi tinatapon 'yung balat.*" (Usually, pork, chicken, or fish are mixed with the tomato sauce. Andres uses pig skin instead, which he gets from the pork parts used for the other dishes. This way, nothing is wasted.) Andres had the ingenuity to use what people normally considered a useless part of the pork into an expensive dish. By producing a high-

end product out of a lowly ingredient, Andres has successfully challenged the conventional and the structure. His ingenuity is reminiscent of Giddens's (1976) discussion of structure-agency; in this case, Andres is an agent acting through the structures and constraints of his immediate milieu. This argument was also illustrated with the way Andres cooked rice in a big *kawa* (big wok made of cast iron) – he covered the almost cooked rice with a big printed cloth. This technique is believed to trap the steam and to fully complete the cooking process. Andres said he brings this cloth with him like an *anting-anting* (amulet) to any *handaan* (feast) each time his service as a cook is needed. He proudly claimed that the cloth is his magic weapon, which has never failed him in producing well-cooked rice. Andres also placed banana leaves on top of the cloth to ensure that no steam escaped. The use of banana leaves is a traditional way of trapping steam when cooking rice.

At 10:00 a.m., we left the Belenas for the Bicos, who had already lined up several aluminum casseroles containing different dishes: *adobo*, *menudo*, and *mechado* (which the Sariayahins refer to as do-do-do dishes), *pastel de pollo* (chicken), *afritada*, *dinuguan*, *lechon carajay*, *morcon*, *relleno*, *chop suey*, and *lengua estofada*. The cook at that time was still preparing *pochero* and rice.

The Bico family members were all busy preparing food under the close guidance of Mrs. Bico. She extended the kitchen to the garden and even to the family's garage. Each family member was assigned a specific food to prepare and working area. The younger members of the family were mixing some sauce inside the dirty kitchen. Teenagers and young adults were preparing the dessert at the dining table – *crema de pruta* (fruit cake in cream). The male members, both young and old, managed the so-called "dirty" and "heavy" food preparation: deep frying the fish (*talakitok*, *pulahan*, and *kanuping*) for the sweet and sour menu in the garage; grilling the pork barbeque in the garden, among others. The younger male members were skewering the chopped and marinated pork and chicken meat using bamboo sticks. Mrs. Bico's sister and her daughter were chopping the meats and the vegetables, which they turned over to the male members in the garage. Mrs. Bico, like a professional executive chef, walked in and out of the kitchen and the other preparation areas to check and remind her 'staff' on how they should cook the dishes.

At 11:00 a.m., we hurried to the Albudins after receiving a phone call from Mrs. Albudin telling us that the caterer had already set up the food. When we arrived, the Albudins' relatives from the U.S. were already there – eating. The caterer served chicken *galantina*, mixed vegetables with quail eggs in cream sauce, Bolognese, crème brulee, *buko pandan*, and tropical fruits. While the female guests and their



children milled around the dining table and the living room, the male guests converged in the veranda enjoying beer. Drinking is a common part of a fiesta celebration (Lopez, 2006).

We returned to the Belenas at lunch time and saw that Andres and company already resting. The helpers had lined up the dishes in the main dining area. Surprisingly, the Belenas had only a handful of visitors compared with the Bicos and the Albudins. The son of the Belenas explained that they are expecting their guests later in the afternoon during the Agawan festivity itself.

### **CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

In this essay, we reflected the pista as a performance of cosmopolitan entanglement. The most important marker of such reflection is the performance of entangled activities (i.e., food preparations and other cultural spectacles) vis-à-vis guests or visitors who are both familiar and unfamiliar or “strangers” to the community celebrating the pista. We started by illustrating the cosmopolitan character of the pista using a framework derived from the Catholic doctrine. We used the Catholic doctrine as a starting point for a very simple reason: the pista originated from and continues to be a celebration of a Catholic saint venerated by the Catholic community. In our conceptualization of cosmopolitanism, we assert that during the pista there is a performance of cultural openness, where creativity pushes the openness to a call for sameness without sacrificing differences. This is specifically manifested in the preparation of the bagakay in Sariaya, which is used in the Agawan festivity. All the households we visited prepared and decorated their bagakay using ornaments such as the kiping. Nonetheless, the households maintained their specific ways of preparing such ornamental design and arranging them, contributing to the beautification of the festive atmosphere. This cultural openness leading to sameness plus difference was manifested also in the way the households cooked their dishes. Oftentimes, community members celebrating the pista cook similar dishes, but the kinds of preparation and regulation performed are different. On the other hand, a very important idiom that centers our cosmopolitan discussion is hospitality, which is a reference to a welcoming gesture of the stranger (or foreigner). Both idioms of cultural openness and hospitality do not only speak of cosmopolitanism but also of entanglement. At the outset, cultural openness in the pista is the mixing and matching of different performance activities, the entanglement of the secular and the sacred, and a welcoming gesture of both the familiar and the stranger as guests. As we have illustrated in our case study, the pista becomes an “organization of diversity, an increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures” (Hannerz, 1996, p. 102).

The Philippine *pista*, in general, and food preparation, in particular, cultivate a sense of intimacy among community members. Jocano (1990) calls this familism. We noted that the more personal the involvement of each family member, the stronger is the communal action. This concurs with Lopez's (2006) argument that food concretizes social ties, as can be gleaned from the camaraderie that characterized the gastronomic performances of family members, especially in the Bico household. These communal activities make family ties stronger. We saw and felt the solidarity of the family members, their relatives, and friends in all the three households as they shared fiesta food together. Truly, food is a microcosm that holds most Christian communities during fiestas as observed in Sariaya during the Agawan Festival. More importantly, through the various entanglements of the Belenas, Albudins, and the Bicos in celebrating the Agawan Festival, they were able to reify their faith to the Supreme Being who, through the intercession of San Isidro Labrador, has continuously nurtured the lands of Sariaya.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Good Samaritan narrative as told in the Gospel of Luke: "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. By chance a certain priest was going down that way. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he travelled, came where he was. When he saw him, he was moved with compassion, came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, and gave them to the host, and said to him, 'Take care of him. Whatever you spend beyond that, I will repay you when I return.' Now which of these three do you think seemed to be a neighbour to him who fell among the robbers?" (Lk 10: 30 – 37, World English Bible).

<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines is popularly known for its active interference in governmental issues. The most popular of these is the ousting of then dictator Ferdinand Marcos in February 1986. That time, then Cardinal of Manila, Cardinal Sin, called on everyone via Radio Veritas to assemble at the Epifanio de Los Santos Avenue (EDSA) to protest the 20-plus years of the Marcos administration and to make a stand against various human rights abuses and the economic meltdown the country was experiencing. At the end of the three-day protest at EDSA, the dictator fled to the United States and Corazon Aquino was proclaimed president of the Philippines. Way back in the 1950s, the Roman Catholic Church also meddled with state policy when the House of Congress approved Republic Act No. 1421 or the "act to include in the curricula of all public and private schools, colleges and universities courses on the life, works and writings of Jose Rizal" (Jose Rizal University, 2004). The Catholic Church opposed this policy because it believed that Rizal was against the Church and teaching his works could jeopardize and confuse Philippine culture and society. The most recent interference of the Church has to do with the controversial Reproductive Health Bill or Responsible

Parenthood Bill (simply RH Bill) of 2011 (for details of the Reproductive Health Bill, see [www.rhbill.org](http://www.rhbill.org)). The Church opposes the RH Bill primarily because it is against abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. Alcedo (2007) explains that the Catholic Church strongly opposes homosexuality, which it regards as an abomination. For details on this ongoing Church hegemony, see the PhD thesis of Enrique Niño Leviste (2011) titled *Catholic Church Hegemony amidst Contestation: Politics and Population Policy in the Philippines*. Leviste provides background information on the socio-political and historical narrative on the Church's hegemony over national politics, including the constitution.

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