

FILIPINO CATHOLICISM: A CASE STUDY IN RELIGIOUS CHANGE *

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Introduction

IN THIS PAPER I SHALL DESCRIBE AND ANALYZE CERTAIN aspects of what has been labeled in the literature as Filipino "folk religion." I say "certain aspects" in that it is impossible within the limits of a single essay to deal with all facets of Filipino folk religious practices. In fact, the discussion will center mainly on Roman Catholicism. Even if the scope of this study is limited, it is nevertheless worthwhile undertaking if only to start something upon which other future and more detailed works may be based.

It must be said, in this connection, that this essay is written from an anthropological point of view, not from any religious denomination. The materials used for this purpose have been gathered from different parts of the Philippines, either through fieldwork done by myself since 1955 or culled from what other fieldworkers have written during the last decade. The description of urban religious practices is based largely on a preliminary six months work in Manila's major churches and suburban centers. During this period, I have interviewed churchgoers, priests, pastors, religious devotees, and lay leaders. I have likewise participated in many of the rituals going on in or about these religious centers.

In order to appreciate the implications of many of these religious practices for the present discussion, let us first examine a number of central and interrelated theoretical points before proceeding with the descriptive analysis.

(1) Religion, viewed as an embodiment of profound human experiences, is committed to the expression and explanation of what Paul Tillich calls the "ultimate concern"¹ of society — that is, the fulfillment of the "restlessness of the heart" within the flux of daily activities.

(2) Central to this commitment is the stimulation and organization of feelings of people toward life so that they may find importance and inspiration in what they do.²

* An outline version of this essay appeared in the *Philippine Educational Forum* (Manila, 1966).

¹ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 2-13.

² Purnell Handy Benson, *Religion in Contemporary Culture: A Study of Religion Through Social Science* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 124-128.

(3) To achieve this, there should be an awareness of the social and cultural values involved in the process.

(4) These social and cultural values however are learned and acquired by individuals as they grow up and participate in the affairs of their society.

(5) This learning process involves incorporation into an individual's "self" the perceptual and the ceremonial aspects of religion.

(6) On the perceptual side, religion is often viewed as an affair of emotions, feelings, aims, and beliefs.

(7) On the ceremonial side, religion involves behavior ranging from church-centered rites to secular (and semi-secular) rituals performed to the details of daily activities as influenced by the culture in which the individual lives.

(8) Because of this cultural orientation, whatever is introduced from the outside is not readily incorporated into one's religious system but these elements are first modified to suit one's cultural ways of believing and doing things before acceptance is made.

(9) In the event that these elements do not fit into the individual's existing pattern of cultural and religious values, they are rejected or if they are not rejected, they are retained as alternatives but their significance is not emphasized.

(10) If, on the other hand, these new and modified religious values are found to be more feasible for social and cultural adjustments, the original belief system is either given up or restructured to accommodate the nuances of the new pattern.

(11) The configuration which results from these shaping and reshaping of religious ideas and practices is what constitutes the framework of contemporary Filipino belief system. For lack of precise and better frame of reference I accept the term "folk religion" to describe this belief system.

Having thus briefly stated the thesis of this paper, let us now examine in some details its major bearing on Filipino social and cultural behavior.

Historical Background

Catholicism was brought to the Philippines by the Spaniards who came to colonize the islands during the 16th century. The initial contact was made in 1521 when Magellan and his crew accidentally hit the island of Homonhon, held the first mass in Limasawa, and converted Humabon and his followers in Cebu. However, the new religion did not take roots until Legaspi arrived in 1565 and took possession of the islands for the Spanish Crown. In order to facilitate the process of conversion and to effect administrative control over the people, a policy of regrouping scattered settlements

into compact villages, known as *cabeceras*, was adopted. A church was built at the center of each *cabecera*.

The *cabecera* system was opposed by many Filipinos even if they conformably built houses in the new villages and flocked to the churches to attend the colorful religious ceremonies associated with the fiesta in honor of the local patron saint, observance of *Flores de Mayo*, feast of *Corpus Christi* and so forth. One reason for this resistance was economic: the people were subsistence farmers whose fields were located far from the *cabeceras* and therefore would rather much live near their farms than stay in a far-off village where they could not earn a living.

The missionaries realized this difficulty and introduced the *cabecera-visita* complex as an alternative scheme. Instead of forcing the issue with the people, they visited the small settlements and in each built a chapel for religious worship. This was indeed a compromise but apparently an effective one in spreading the doctrine of Catholicism. Perhaps this is one reason why the new religion was readily accepted by the people. In later years, the *cabecera* became the poblacion, with the church as the focal point of socio-religious activities and one *visita* in the barrio with the *ermita* (chapel) as the center of annual socio-religious ceremonies.

Side by side with these developments also emerged two variant forms of Catholicism—the *cabecera* and the *visita*. Each of these forms interpreted and emphasized the doctrines and rites of the new faith quite differently. In the *cabecera*, for example, the pomp and pageantry of Spanish Catholicism was one way of indoctrinating the Filipinos about the new religion. Other pious practices include gathering of parishioners

every day at the foot of the wooden cross erected in the main plaza of each village to chant the Rosary, and in many parishes the children walked through the streets at sunset chanting the Rosary. (Phelan 1959:73)

In the *visitas*, on the other other hand, such elaborate liturgical symbolisms were seldom emphasized and the people, due mainly to infrequency of contact with missionaries, were less informed about the doctrines of the new religion. This lack of doctrinal knowledge gave rise to a different interpretation of Catholic concepts, symbols and rites. Even

The link between veneration of the saints and idolatry was often crossed, and belief in miracles sometimes provoked a relapse into magic and superstition (p. 78).

Contemporary Catholicism

As it exists today, the *cabecera-visita* orientations of Catholicism in the country has not substantially changed. Much of the practices and concepts have survived. For purposes of encompassing wider scope in our analysis we shall use such terms as *urban* and *rural* when referring to these variant

forms. Rural Catholicism is one in which Catholic beliefs are attenuated in locally sanctioned practices, while urban Catholicism is one in which indigenous beliefs are attenuated in Church-allowed, though not sanctioned, rites.

Contemporary Orientation of Functional Catholicism

These two forms need to be recognized if we are to understand the dynamics of contemporary Filipino Catholic values and behavior pattern. Much of the difficulty which students of Filipino religious behavior results from a confusion of these two aspects of Catholicism. This is understandable because both variant forms are anchored on the framework of the same core principles of Catholicism found elsewhere in the western world that even the people themselves hardly realize that their religion has identifiable differences resulting from local interpretations of Christian rites and concepts.

Rural Catholicism

Raymond Firth, in his book *Elements of Social Organization*, has argued that the "conceptual content and emotional quality of religious beliefs vary accordingly to its function—that is, according to its relation to other elements in the total system."³ This is what I have in mind when I said that the best way of understanding Catholicism in the Philippines is to view it in terms of its rural or urban orientations. Catholic concepts in the rural areas are often articulated with the people's way of life; in urban areas with ritual-performance. By this I mean that often the farmers integrate their religious precepts with their economic, social, and cultural activities; the urban dwellers often separate their religious beliefs from their occupational and social commitments. It is the form of worship that matters so much for the latter, it is the content which counts for the former.

Thus when a Catholic in the barrio is asked what his religion is, he replies that he is a Roman Catholic. What he means by this is that he was born in a Roman Catholic church, and given a Christian name. His parents were married in the Church and so shall he when he gets married. He goes to church occasionally on Sundays, if the poblacion is far, and takes Holy Communion once a year during the barrio fiesta. In other words, when an individual says that he is a Roman Catholic in religion he simply means that he grew up with this orientation. Whether he understands the institutional and normative organization of the Church is another problem. But this is not important insofar as he is concerned. For what little he knows of the teachings of the Catholic church normally consists of a body of vague, disconnected ideas and pictures, half-remembered memories of grandmother tales, snatches of conversations overheard in the poblacion, few memorized

³ Raymond Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (London: Watts & Co., 1951), p. 228.

prayers, and gestures observed during the Mass. To him this is what Roman Catholicism is all about. From this standpoint, therefore, many of what an average rural Filipino say about his Catholicism are belied by his concrete religious activities. He is more a product of his local culture than by his Christian religion. His behavior pattern is pegged to the observance of traditional beliefs and practices sanctioned by his community and not necessarily by his Church.

It must be pointed out, in this connection, that uninstructed in Catholic doctrines as he may be, the rural Filipino is not a mere passive recipient of religious ideas. He is also a creative innovator as attested by the way he selects, modifies, and elaborates those elements he draws from the Catholic church to reinforce the structure of his culturally defined way of doing things. Thus in agriculture, for example, we find the use of Christian prayers and ritual objects incorporated with local practices very striking. In Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, for instance, the farmer prays the Apostle's Creed when he starts planting. Upon reaching the portion of the prayer which states ". . . Resurrection of the Body . . ." he plants his field rapidly so that the crops will grow immediately. In Alimoan, a barrio in Claveria, Cagayan, the farmer goes to the field with a clean attire believing that this will influence nature into preventing weeds from growing fast and the prayer is aimed at obtaining God's grace for abundant yield. In Samar and Leyte, Fr. Richard Arens reports that in the town of La Paz (Central Leyte) the planter "squats in one of the squares of the lot (he is planting) and prays to God to give him a good and fruitful harvest."⁴ In Iloilo the farmers use the cross and dried palm-leaves (locally known as *ramus*) which had been blessed by the priest during Lent as part of the pre-planting ritual paraphernalia. Here is a case how pre-planting ritual is formed.

Before the farmer brings his basket of seeds to the field, he eats a full breakfast. Eating breakfast is not ordinarily done because two meals a day is the standard way of living. However, the farmer has to eat otherwise his crops will not yield abundantly. After eating he ties a piece of cloth around his head, carries the basket on his right shoulder, and proceeds to the field. On reaching there the farmer places the basket at the right hand corner of the paddy and plants his knotted (*talabib*) stalks in the ground. Then he leaves the field and takes a bath in a nearby well or brook.

Naked from the waist up, he returns to the field and waits until the sun is about right for the high tide. As soon as this time comes he goes to the place where the ritual paraphernalia are placed and, holding the rim of the basket with both hands, murmurs his prayers which consist of one *Our Father* and two *Hail Marys*. He picks up the cross, puts it aside, and takes a handful of grains from

⁴ Richard Arens, S.V.D., "Animism in the Rice Ritual of Leyte and Samar," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. IV (January 1956), pp. 2-6.

the basket and broadcasts it in three throwings. He repeats this process seven times before he allows any helper to assist him in doing the job.⁵

During harvest, the same religious paraphernalia are used. However, the order of ritual-performance and prayer procedure differs considerably. Here is a case I have noted during a fieldwork in Panay in 1958.

Harvesting begins when the heads of rice are uniformly ripe. However, before this is done another ritual is performed. The farmer returns to his field very early in the morning and secures *talabib* stalks along the way. He knots these into one bundle and plants it in the middle of the rice field. On top of this knot, he ties a knotted piece of red cloth containing seven slices of ginger and seven slices of *kalawag*, a kind of herbaceous plant with yellow tubers. Then facing the east, he shouts:

"Haw—I am placing this marker here as a sign that if anyone trespasses this taboo and dies, I have no responsibility."

Having done this the farmer goes home in silence, retracing his steps and avoiding people. Reaching the house, he picks up his bamboo basket and returns. In the field he cuts seven stalks of the ripening rice, places them beside the basket, bites his harvesting knife, picks up the rice stalks again, and ties them into one bundle.

As he does this he prays *Our Father* in the reverse order, that is, from the end to the beginning of the prayer. This places magic over the entire crop and prevents evil spirits from stealing the rice grain. As soon as the ritual basket is full the farmer leaves the field. It is now safe to begin harvesting the crop.

The ability to establish a relationship with God acquires added and favorable dimensions if prayers are first addressed to intermediaries than directly to the Almighty. This implies a belief that God is too removed from worldly affairs to take any specific interest in men but saints are "almost human," they are close to the world. To God "only saints" can speak better. A person may pray to the Almighty directly but his chances of getting what he wants are slim. Thus saints are called upon or asked to intercede for the people with the Higher Divinity for the recovery of lost things, good health, safe voyage, good harvest, long life, and so on. There are images of different saints in almost all Catholic houses in the rural areas. Most of these images are made of wood. This preference for wood is borne by the belief that, according to old folks in Panay, Central Philippines, wooden saints can hear better than those made of stone, marble, or plaster of Paris. The images, it must be remembered, can only have power to intercede for the people with God after these have been blessed with Holy Water by the parish priest.

⁵ In order to avoid cumbersome footnoting, all unacknowledged case studies have been derived from my fieldnotes.

Saints, in many rural areas, are conceived by the farmers not as Church personalities who have been canonized because of their good work and virtuous living but as supernatural beings with powers similar to those of environmental spirits or the *engkantu*. As supernatural beings, they can be manipulated for personal and group ends. Coercion of saints into giving the devotees what they want are expressed in long novenas, said in church or at home, for a specified number of days, and in elaborate festivals. One such festival with agricultural overtones is the celebration of San Isidro de Labrador in Nueva Ecija; Pulilan, Bulacan; Angono, Rizal; Naic, Cavite; Biñan, Laguna; and in other towns. This event takes place on May 15, the traditional date for the beginning of the rainy season. The main feature of the celebration consists of praying and parade of garland-studded carabaos of farmers. Here is a case recorded in Pulilan, Bulacan, in 1957.

The colorful event officially started at five o'clock in the afternoon. The parade known as "paseo ng kalabaw" started from Lumbak, a barrio in the outskirts of Pulilan. About a thousand carabaos, which came from all over the province, participated in the parade. The carabaos covered a total of six kilometers—a march which ended at the church plaza before the shrine of the farmers' saint. This is in order that they may be blessed by the parish priest in the belief that this will save them from illness and that they will grow stronger. This tradition in Pulilan, according to the old folks was started in 1910 by the town mayor in honor of San Isidro Labrador. Regarding San Isidro, there are many legends about him. He was a farmer who worked in a hacienda in Spain during the 14th century. He used to wake up early in the morning to attend mass before beginning his work. It is said that San Isidro performed several miracles during his lifetime.

Not only in agriculture are Catholic concepts used but these are also utilized by fishermen for similar economic gains. The river festivals in Luzon are good examples for situations in which Catholic beliefs are attenuated in terms of local practices. In Bacoor, Cavite, the "Caracol" festival is celebrated during the month of May. This is in honor of the town's patron saint, San Miguel. The image of the saint is taken on a festival procession, followed by singing and dancing men and women who ask the saint to give them abundant catch. Bacoor is a fishing community. In Angono, Rizal, San Vicente is believed to be the most powerful patron saint for fishermen. In December each year the people celebrate a feast in honor of this saint. The following event was noted by a journalist in 1956.

The feast day was ushered by the local band which aroused the people up. Before the sun had risen high over the foothills nearby, the people were already massed on the shore where the empty temple (known locally as *pagoda*) waited. As the images of San Vicente and the Virgin were placed under its canopy, a shout heaved from the crowd and the *pagoda* was launched. Now, from all directions, motor boats and bancas headed for the massive structure and clustered

around it like ducklings as it wended its way through fields of water lily to the open sea.

From the *pagoda* itself, a band played continuously. Women prayed and fishermen scrambled up to its platform only to be tossed playfully back to the water. Almost all of the men had their faces painted with rice paste and lipstick. To them, the women in the bancas extended bread and wine. The *pagoda* had a fixed course which would have taken but an hour to negotiate but with the merry-making and the spiritual levity hampering its speed, it took more than three hours for the craft to cover its route.

By noon, the fluvial parade was ended; the *pagoda* was hauled with long ropes to the shallow, water-lily decked shore and, from there, the images were transferred to their ornately decorated carriage. All the time, rockets swished up and exploded in the blue burning sky, fishermen group themselves raucously and three bands tried to outblare each other. From the shore the milling crowd finally ordered itself into a parade which marched back to the town, through the narrow streets lined with devotees and spectators.

Another patron saint worthwhile mentioning in this connection because fluvial rites associated with him are among the elaborate ones is San Pedro, the fisherman Apostle of Jesus Christ. In June each year in the municipality of Apalit, Pampanga, the image of this saint is taken down from its town's old church and set on a *pagoda* for a "voyage" up and down the river. Following its wake, circling about it happily, are bancas manned by the town's fish-folks. According to informants the watery travel, from one end of the town to another, dates back during the Spanish time. The theory is that it would do the saint good to reexperience his old life upon the water, that he will help bring the fish to the corrals and the rivernets.

Let us pause for a while and consider this question: Why do farmers and fishermen perform all these rituals and celebrate all those fluvial rites? If someone tells us that these people perform all these rites in order to have good harvest and abundant catch, we will perhaps answer: "that does not make any sense at all." Indeed, to an outsider, these practices do not make sense for there is not much that the farmers and fishermen can do to influence Nature, to make their rice grow well or their nets to catch more. But to the rural folks there is more to these practices than merely following all the steps in the process of planting and fishing; these rites are ways of dealing with the supernatural beings and of coping with events. They are aware that Nature has her own laws which govern the destiny of man. These laws are executed by supernatural beings, in the persons of saints and environmental spirits, who prescribe the rigid performance of rites and the observance of natural phenomena through which they make manifest their desires. Unless the farmers have the goodwill or favor of the saints and other spirits on their side, they will not have good harvests; unless the fishermen perform these yearly festivals, they will not have

abundant catch. In other words, these religious rites are performed in order to prevent the destruction of crops and the occurrence of bad luck in fishing. The introduction of saints, prayers, and other Christian religious paraphernalia such as the cross, palm leaves, holy water, etc., is one way of elaborating and making the rituals more pleasing to the supernatural powers, of acquiring more spiritual partners in the pursuit of life goals. To a certain extent the environmental spirits have been replaced by saints and the indigenous prayers by the Christian prayers—but the underlying concepts remain intact in that the imperatives of local beliefs and practices still provide the people with proper ritual contexture of economic propositions in seeking the goodwill and assistance of the supernatural.

The close functional association between rituals and personal needs in Philippine society becomes more apparent if we consider the fact that saints are appealed to not only for economic reasons but also for good health and cure of illness. In Naga City, for example, the feast of Our Lady of Peñafrancia is celebrated with a fluvial parade for good health. It is believed that whosoever participates in the festivity, provided the individual is deeply remorseful of his sins, will be healed. This miraculous power of the Virgin draws devotees from different parts of the country. Nine days before the celebration, the image of the Virgin is taken from the Church of Peñafrancia and is transferred to Naga City cathedral where novenas are said. After the novena, the Virgin is returned to her permanent shrine near the bank of the river through the stream in the procession of gaily-decked bancas. Our Lady of Peñafrancia festival takes place in September.

Another popular saint for all occasions is the Sto. Niño. The "historical legend" surrounding the discovery of this Infant saint in Cebu is so popular that it is unnecessary to recount it here. The Sto. Niño, nevertheless, is regarded as a rain-god, war protector, sailor's mate, fisherman's guardian, healer, and rice-god. His role as a rain-god however is rather the most popular. In Cebu, this story is told on how the Sto. Niño brings rain.

When there was a desperate need for water, and the fields were dry, the people asked for rain and were instantly given it, so the accounts went. Some other times when the rain was not prompt in arriving, the natives brought the image in a procession to the sea and dipped it, often telling the image that if it did not give them rain immediately, they would leave it there.

Normally, the Sto. Niño responded by giving the people rain. Because of this belief, the Sto. Niño in Panay, Capiz is always bathed in the river every year, amidst feasting and celebrating. The legend on how the Sto. Niño brought rain to the drought-stricken town and how the people threatened the image with drowning if it did not bring rain is often recounted by the old folks. As it happened, one informant said, "rain came when water reached the Sto. Niño's neckline."

In Indang, Cavite, the Sto. Niño is not bathed by dipping or submerging it in the river as is done in Cebu and Capiz. The bathing normally takes place in private homes, that is, in the homes of the owner of the image. The following entry is from the 1964 field notes of two National Museum researchers.⁶

Before the ritual began, leaves of *Salay* (*Cymbopogon cyratus*), *Kalubo* (*citrus bystrix*), and *Lukban* (*citrus brandis*) were gathered and boiled. The concoction which resulted was left to cool. Then it was mixed with perfume, and placed in a large basin near the Sto. Niño.

Undressing of the Sto. Niño is done according to the following procedure. The first of the ordinary garments to be removed were the abizarene crimson velvet boots. The exposed feet were wiped with a large piece of cotton, dipped in the bathing concoction, while at the same time the face of the image was wiped by one of the ritual participants. In this particular case four women were observed helping each other bathe the Sto. Niño.

Then the tunic was removed and the wiping of the neck, arms, hands, and back of the image was done. An old piece of cloth was placed over the neck of the image as soon as this was wiped, because, according to an informant, the Sto. Niño catches cold. Then the undergarments were removed. One woman took the image's wig. Every portion of the exposed body of the image was wiped and immediately covered.

While one of the women was wiping the lower limbs of the image, the others were putting on the new white satin tunic. The gold colored vest was placed next, then the gold-colored shoes. The back parts of the vest were sewn together. The sleeves were also sewn to the shoulder-portion of the dress.

Then the gold-colored trousers of the Sto. Niño were put on by carefully sewing these tight to the belt, wound around the waist. The last garment to be placed was the golden cape. As this was being fixed by one of the participants, the others prepared the pedestal, the globe, and the scepter. A new wig was placed on the head of the image and then his gold crown. Having thus dressed it, the participants placed it on top of the pedestal and gave it its scepter and globe.

Two unlighted candles were placed in front of the Sto. Niño. The bathing concoction was removed from the basin and was placed in bottles. When only about a finger deep was left in the basin, the two candles were lighted. Then the oldest member of the family who owns the image led the people in prayer. It is interesting to note that only 1/3 of the Holy Rosary sequence is said—the rest being reserved for the evening novena which followed.

After the prayer, the bottles containing the bathing concoction were given to the guests as medicine. It is believed by the people that the water has curative powers.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, the image was taken to the Church for blessing. It was not taken from the Church, except during processions, until January 6 when it was returned to the owner's house.

⁶ Jesus Peralta and Avelino Legaspi. Unpublished Notes on Sto. Niño in Cavite (National Museum, Manila).

In Kalibo, Aklan, the festival connected with Sto. Niño has become very elaborate as to attract the attention of tourists. In fact, it has more social than religious overtones. The legend behind the *ati-atihan* recounts the prowess of the Sto. Niño as the protector of the people. According to the legend, the Muslim pirates landed at the mouth of Aklan River one day. While they were heading for the village of Kalibo (then a small coastal settlement), the men of the village came out to fight the invading enemy. However they were overpowered. Although bloody and full of mud, they fought savagely. Just about the time when the enemy was to make a deadly assault on the remaining exhausted fighters, a small boy appeared in the battle scene and drove the pirates away. Then he disappeared. Overjoyed, the people went back to the village, dancing and making noise. Many attested that the boy was the Sto. Niño who came to help the people. Since then the mud-painted dancers celebrate the *ati-atihan* festival in honor of the Sto. Niño.

What has the Catholic church to say about the *ati-atihan*? According to the parish priest, "the Church tolerates the ritual since no one can prevent the people from celebrating the *ati-atihan*. But this does not mean that the Church has sanctioned the practice." In spite of this statement however the Church participates in the festivity. The images which are taken along with the procession are brought first to the Church on the "bispera" and remained there till the day of the feast of the Sto. Niño which is traditionally set on the 2nd Sunday of January every year. Apart from accommodating all these images in the church, the authorities also allow the performance of the "patapak" ritual inside the church.

The "patapak" is a traditional feature of the *ati-atihan*. The participants always make it a point to drop in the church as a group several times in-between their rounds in the streets.

The whole group of celebrants kneel at the communion rail. The "sacristan" (never the priest) performs the ritual on each one in the group. He holds a miniature image of the Sto. Niño, lets the celebrant kiss the image and then puts the image on the devotee's head (making the image literally step on the devotee). Sometimes if the celebrant so desires, the "sacristan" also rubs the image on the back, arms, body or legs of the devotee who believes in the curative effect of the ritual. It is a common belief that the "patapak" relieves emotional stresses and physical pains. In some cases the celebrant lies prostrate at the foot of the altar. The same kissing and stepping patterns are executed.

The treatment the Sto. Niño receives from the performers of the rituals I have just described reminds one of the role the child has in Filipino society. In many rural areas, the child is conceived as the gift of God (*biyaya ng Diyos*). It is always the center of attention. It is bathed, fondled, caressed, and so on, for not to take care of the infant is to commit a grievous sin. Its socialization includes, however, threats with physical harm,

frightening with the *aswang*, and other forms of coercion—all involving pressures designed to make the child obey. Unconsciously, this inner feeling of care and attitude towards children is projected to anthropomorphized objects or personalities with the status of the child. The Sto. Niño is conceived as a child and therefore has to be treated as a child. Thus it is threatened with drowning if it does not obey the worshippers' demand for rain; it is bathed and dressed properly before it is brought out of the owner's house to join the religious procession. In other words, here are examples of overt expressions in action pattern of internalized value-notions acquired from the local culture; cases in which Catholic beliefs are evaluated and enacted in terms of local concepts and practices, and not in terms of what are officially Church-sanctioned behavior.

As I have remarked, children are always wanted in Filipino society. In fact, some scholars⁷ have argued that marriage in the Philippines is rather weak until the birth of the child. In case where childlessness is eminent, many women make a pilgrimage to Obando, Bulacan and dance before Sta. Clara, San Pascual Baylon, and the Virgin of the Salambao. In the past, the Obando shrine, which Jose Rizal vividly characterized in one of his novels, was sought primarily for fertility miracle. Today, however, people go there for a number of miraculous graces. Petitions for assistance is done during the three-day socio-religious fiesta. The first day is devoted to San Pascual Baylon, to whom suitors pray for a wife. The second day is in honor of the Virgin of the Salambao, mediatrix of childless couples. The third day is for Sta. Clara, to whom the luckless girls turn for a fiance.

A procession for the three saints is held, during which devotees pray, dance, and kiss the images' carriages. The prayers, sung while the pilgrims swing and sway, run like this:

Mabal na Po'ng San Pascual, bigyan po ninyo ako ng asawa. (Free translation: "Beloved St. Pascual, please give me a spouse.")

Sta. Clara Pinong-pino, bigyan po ninyo ako ng nobyo. (Free translation: "O Sta. Clara so fine give me a fiance.")

Mabal naming Nuestra Señora, anak po ako'y bigyan mo na. (Free translation: "Our beloved Lady, please bless me with a child.")

The dance itself follows no definite pattern. It is not really dancing in the strict sense of the word. Devotees simply sway sideways, skip or hop in the church, on the plaza in front of the church, or on the street during the procession. This custom of dancing, according to the people, constitutes the individual devotee's tribute to the saints. It is believed to have origin-

⁷ Robert B. Fox, "Social Organization," *Area Handbook on the Philippines*, Vol. I, Chicago, 1956, pp. 413-70; and Frank X. Lynch, "The Conjugal Bond where the Philippines Changes," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. VIII, 3-4 (July-October 1960), pp. 48-51.

ated with San Pascual Baylon, who belonged to the order of the Franciscans called Soccolans. It is said that he used to commune with Holy spirits and danced with joy while doing so. When and how the customs of dancing before the saints of Obando started, nobody in the town knows. The Church frowns on the practice but the religious zeal of the devotees has kept the authorities from outrightly prohibiting the custom.⁸

In Kalibo, fertility dance is associated with the *ati-atihan*. As an informant said:

Women desiring to have children join in the dancing and singing in the streets, repeating these lines:

Tawi man, taw-i man	Please give, please give
Taw-i man ako't unga	Please give me a child.

To reinforce the power of this prayerful supplication for the fulfillment of a wish, the devotees proceed to the church and participate in the "patapak" ceremony. They believe that this ritual has power to cure whatever illness or whatever prevents them from having babies.

The performance of these curative rituals brings us to another aspect of Filipino religious concepts behavior pattern. And this is the belief that any object derived from the Church or which has been blessed by the priest with Holy Water is endowed with supernatural power. Possessing any of these objects will enable the possessor to perform extra-ordinary feats. Thus, even criminals use the crucifix, the rosary, and prayer-books as charms (locally known as *anting-anting*). In many rural areas, Holy Water is used to cure a high fever or any disease declared by the medical doctors as hopeless cases. Palm leaves (known in Panay Bisayan as *ramus*) blessed by the priest during Palm Sunday are believed to be good for stomach aches and abnormal menstrual cycles. Local healers normally will burn these leaves, mix it with other medicinal roots, and Holy Water, and give the concoction to the patient to be taken internally. If the illness is caused by the *aswang*, the victim's family can capture the *aswang* by the use of a special method the ritual paraphernalia of which consist of a Christian prayer, the cross and local magic formulae. As one informant narrated to Fr. Frank Lynch:

In order to catch the *aswang*, one has to prepare three big stones and three big nails. The moment you hear the familiar "tik-tik" or "wak-wak" sounds during the night; start reciting the *Apostle's Creed*. When you reach the part which says "*ilinansog sa cruz*" (crucified in the cross or nailed at the cross) pick up one of the stones and drive one of the nails into the ground. Repeat the process twice. This will cast a spell on the *aswang* and it flies back to where you are sitting. Don't be afraid because by this time it will be as docile as your pet dog. It will alight on one of the stones and wait for whatever you want to do with it.

⁸ Cf. *Meralco Magazine*, Vol. XII (October 1960).

The reason for this is that you have nailed (*linansag*) him in the prayer. You have more power than the *aswang*.⁹

The best way of warding off ghosts and evil spirits from one's house is to call for the priest, and have the house blessed with Holy Water. In order to break the spell of an *engkantu*, the cross, any saint, blessed candles (the *perdun* in Panay Bisayan) are to be used. Here is a story frequently recounted by the people in the coastal area of southern Iloilo.

A and her family were living near the seashore. Her husband died and the burden of feeding their five children fell on the poor woman's shoulders. A gathered shells and seaweeds which she sold in the market. From this work she derived a meager income with which she supported her family.

One rainy evening, A found out that she did not have any match at all. It was raining and she could not go to town to buy some. Looking out of the window, she saw a ball of fire in the middle of the furious sea. Thinking that it was the fishermen's lamp, she commented: "I wish these fishermen were near so I could ask for fire and cook supper for my children."

No sooner had she closed the window when she heard a soft knock. "Who is there?" she inquired.

"I heard you were looking for fire," said the voice.

Thinking that it might be one of the fishermen, A answered: "Yes—but I could not leave the children."

"Well, here's an ember," the voice said.

A opened the window and reached out for the ember which the strange voice was offering to her. She was dismayed when what she thought was a firebrand turned out to be a human knee-bone.

The following morning A brought this incident to the attention of the parish priest. The priest, on seeing the knee-bone, told A that the *engkantu* had cast a spell on her. This charm had to be removed. He gave A two big *perdun* (blessed) candles, two crucifixes and one San Vicente. He instructed A thus: "Put the San Vicente between these two crucifixes. Then place the two candles on the two ends of the table which you will use as an altar. When the angelus rings, light the candles and pray one *Our Father* and nine *Hail Marys*. Then wait. The *engkantu* will come back as he promised. When it asks for its fire, hand the San Vicente back instead of the knee-bone."

A went home and prepared the paraphernalia. When the angelus rang, she lighted the candles. She put the San Vicente between the two crucifixes, in front of which she layed the knee-bone. Soon she heard a knock on her window pane. A voice was heard: "I have come back for my firebrand."

"Yes," A said, "Thank you very much. Here it is." Then she handled to the unseen person the San Vicente. There was a sudden explosion, as though a bomb was detonated. A and her children ran down the house. The house was on fire. They ran to the poblacion and called for the priest. The priest came

⁹ See Frank Lynch, "An Mga Aswang: A Bicol Belief," *Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review*, Vol. XIV: 4 (1949), pp. 401-27.

and with Holy Water and prayer, put out the fire. Strange enough not a nipa shingle was burnt. The priest said that the fire was the *engkantu's* spell. If A did not bring the case to his attention, A would have surely gone to hell, in that she would have inherited the sin of the dead man.

Urban Catholicism

Having thus described some aspects of rural Filipino religious behavior, let us now move to the urban end of the continuum and witness the urban people perform their religious rituals. Like his rural brother, the urban Filipino is vocal about his being a Roman Catholic. In fact, he can argue intelligently about the doctrine, ritual, and religious behavior. How much of what he does are officially sanctioned rites? Let us begin with Thursday. This is the day for the novena of St. Jude. St. Jude is the patron saint of the impossible. Most devotees are people with pressing needs and serious problems; most of those I knew who take St. Jude as their patron saint are teen-agers. It is believed that the observance of a vow, normally consisting of nine Thursday pilgrimage to St. Jude's Church, brings about the fulfilment of the wish. Here is a case.

A was a new graduate from a secretarial school. In spite of her skill she remained unemployed. A year passed and she was still out of job. She was so discouraged and several times thought of committing suicide. A friend, one day, suggested that she make a devotion to St. Jude and ask the saint to help her find a job. She followed her friend's suggestion. And after a month of pilgrimage to the saint, during which she prayed hard, she did get a job.

Another informant tells of the sorrows she underwent when her fiance broke their engagement. In her distress she made a promise to St. Jude that if the saint would bring her fiance back, she would make a yearly nine-day pilgrimage to the Church. True enough, her fiance returned without her asking him and they got married. Up to this day she comes to Manila when the month of her vow comes.

Most devotees of St. Jude attest that the saint had been helping them find solutions to their problems—those problems which one thinks are beyond resolution; an impossibility. One informant, a student from a local university, tells that me that the life of her boy-friend's father who was suffering from a liver-cancer was prolonged for two years, even after the doctors have said the man would live only for a few weeks, because she and her boy-friend prayed to St. Jude.

On the other hand, not all who pray to St. Jude obtain what they wanted. An elderly lady, a former devotee, whom I chanced to talk with in a bus one day when I went to church, said she does not believe in St. Jude at all.

"All these devotions and pilgrimages are a form of modern superstition," she said bitterly.

"Why?" I asked.

"A friend of mine advised me to pray to St. Jude when my husband deserted me and my children. Up to this time, that good-for-nothing man is still somewhere. I have given him up. I know he is living with another woman. And even if he comes back I do not want him anymore."

"Perhaps you did not pray hard," I said.

"Oh, I did. I was so frustrated then that I even cried inside the Church. But I think this is my fate and there is no saint who can help me."

I did not push the conversation further.

On the other hand, most students I have talked to, during the six months I was gathering data for this paper, agreed that fervent prayers to St. Jude bring results. (Incidentally, most of my informants are girls; the male-devotees are less articulate.) The case which follows illustrates this.

B is a student at a downtown university and an employee in a government office. Because she was not a civil service eligible, she was constantly beset by insecurity. She was one of the major breadwinners of the family, aside from her father. Her mother was sickly and had to stay at home.

When the Civil Service Commission announced that it will give a general clerical examination, B filed her application. However, because of the pressure of her combined school and office work, she was not able to review extensively for the examination. Three weeks before the event, she panicked. A friend suggested that she make a novena to St. Jude so that she could pass the examination. She did; and true enough, she got a high rating.

Whether one can attribute this performance in the examination to St. Jude or to the psychological effect of the fact that she knew she would pass if she prays to St. Jude, I cannot judge. At any rate, she said: "I really did not review for that exam. But during the test, I felt that there was someone telling me all the answers."

In other words, individual skill and know-how constitute but a fraction in passing an examination or finding a job; it is the saint's grace, this unseen help which holds the key to success. Anthropologist Ward Hunt Goodenough, in a book, has this to say on how beliefs actualize one's expectations: "Whenever men have the power to create or modify the conditions in which they live, they tend to do so in such ways that their expectations, stemming from their beliefs, are actually realized. Beliefs are molded by experience, to be sure, but experience is at the same time molded by belief, each action on the other to create a closed world of empirically validated truth."¹⁰ This is what has taken place in the experiences of the

¹⁰ *Cooperation in Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), 1964.

individuals whose accounts we have just cited. B and A's success was attributed to St. Jude and not to their skill and preparation. The distraught woman's failure to obtain what she wanted—the return of her husband—is likewise attributed to St. Jude, not to her personal shortcomings. Which-ever side we look, in other words, it is clear that the belief system in these typical examples is attenuated in Church-permitted, though not sanctioned ritual-performance—the novena to St. Jude.

Let us now focus our attention to downtown Manila and penetrate into the religious behavior of the “natives” there—see them pray and listen to their prayers. If one stands on the right side of Quiapo Church, facing the altar, one easily notices a wooden railing which leads the devotees to the southern end of this side wing, towards Plaza Miranda where the Image of the Black Nazarene lies inside a glass-covered case. Here, most of the devotees are elderly men and women. There are children and teenagers too. Most of these worshippers are not dressed in their church attire, i.e. Sunday best. Some of them come with groceries tucked under the arm, others with unbathed babies, with unwashed garments; students with their books; teenage girls with very short skirts—the hemline of which are about three inches above the knees; spinsterish women with bluish eyeshadows, wearing tight-fitting dresses with very low necklines; sweepstakes vendors with paper-bags and stubs of tickets; beggars carrying their canes, hats, and bundles wrapped with dirty kerchiefs and others. There are clean, neat, well-dressed devotees too—perhaps professionals or employees in a downtown establishment. At any rate, they all follow the line leading to the glass-covered case, inside of which the Santo Entierro (Black Nazarene) lies in state. One end of the case is open and out of it protrudes the feet of the image. The devotees on reaching near the image cross themselves, wipe the glass with their handkerchiefs or any object which they wipe on any part of their bodies in turn, and murmur a prayer. Some are fingering their rosaries—but their eyes are watching what is going on inside the church. Then they move on. Reaching the end of the case where the feet of the image protrudes, they cross themselves again, genuflect, and wipe the feet of the Black Nazarene with their handkerchief, hem of the veil, or simply with their hands. As before, they wipe these handkerchiefs, veil or hands against any part of their bodies—the neck, the forehead, the arms and so on. Then they kiss the feet of the image. One devotee poured perfume (from the bottle I could see it was Chanel No. 5) before kissing the Black Nazarene. Genuflecting, they cross themselves and move out. An elderly lady, dressed in chocolate-colored attire with cotton-twined belt of the same color, keeps order in this area. She stands at the exit of this railing and keeps possible gate-crashers, who do not want to fall in line by the side-door, from making a shortcut.

One interesting behavior pattern associated with wiping of the image with handkerchief is wiping same handkerchief on someone else who did not come near the Black Nazarene. Here is a case I have observed.

A young woman walked in. She was accompanied by a young man. From the looks of it, they were sweethearts. The girl, breasting her books, took a handkerchief and put it on her head.

"Halika na. . ." (Come now) she said to the boy.

"Ayaw ko. . . ." (I don't like to) the boy answered.

"Halika na. . . nakakahiya ka. Ano mag-aaway pa tayo rito?" (Come now. It is shameful if we make a scene here) insisted the girl.

"Ayaw ko sabi. Ikaw na" (I said no. You go ahead), the boy said.

"Kung ayaw mo di ako!" (If you won't then I will go) said the girl disgustedly. The young man reached out to take her books but she refused to give them.

When she came out of the visitation area, she quietly wiped her handkerchief on the forehead of the boy who, incidentally, did not protest, saying "Kaa-waan ka sana ng Diyos." (May God bless you.)

This incident took place beside where I was kneeling. I have seen the same pattern occurring everyday. Apparently, this act is suggestive of an attempt to extend to someone else the power obtained from the touch of that which is Holy. This constitutes what theologian Paul Tillich calls "the content of faith"; the manifest construct arising from the inner feeling an individual experiences when he had done something appropriate, something right, satisfying to the psychic need.

But there are occasions, as in many rural areas, where the ritual is done out of having been used to it rather than for its religious content. Here is a case.

I was standing near the Holy Water stand attached to one of those big interior ports of Quiapo Church, close to the side facing Quezon Boulevard. Three middle-aged men came, following two beautiful-looking girls, dressed in tight-fitting turquoise-blue. As one of the men reached out for the basin to dip his fingers, he nudged his companions. And crossing himself afterwards, he said: "Naku, napakaganda!" (Gee, how beautiful!)

From this side of the Church, an observer may move towards the center. Here, he can see a group of devotees walking on their knees from near the main door facing Plaza Miranda to the altar. Some murmur their prayers loudly that it can be heard clearly; others silently that what an observer can notice are movements of the lips. From this section of the church towards the main entrance, the eyes are attracted by another queue. Another group of devotees toe the line in order to get to the Black Nazarene, in Crucifix form, and pay their homage. One devotee brought a hand-

ful of flowers, wipe these on the feet of the crucifix and buried her face in the petals as she walked out.

Whether or not these rituals I have just described are part of the official Catholic practices, I shall not pass judgment. The priests I have talked to are agreed that these are not. As one priest puts it: "These are harmless forms of expressing an individual's religious convictions, of doing his penance, and are therefore permitted."

This observation brings us back to our original proposition—that in urban setting, folk beliefs are attenuated in Church permitted, though not sanctioned, rites. This is perhaps due to the fact that the people in Manila are well-informed about the teachings of the Church. But often, it is one thing to be well-informed; it is another to have faith. Faith constitutes the content of what one knows as the accepted form. The process by which form is crystallized is therefore irrelevant. In the rituals I have just described, the form may not be accepted but the faith underlying the form is. This is what matters. If we consider the ritual-content of the rural folks' practices as magic, and call those of the urban folks "faith"—we still have not changed the basic principles underlying the ritual-drama. The touch of magic which is the recurrent theme of provincial rites has not been replaced in the urban area; except its name. It is believed by many devotees whom I interviewed that the handkerchief wiped against the image of the Black Nazarene or of the Mother of Perpetual Help, as I have observed done in Sta. Cruz Church, when applied on any afflicted part of the body has power to heal.

Let us linger for awhile in Sta. Cruz Church and note this particular case I have jotted down in my fieldnotes.

The time was late morning, about 10 o'clock. An elderly lady came in followed by a young girl. From what I can gather from this observation, the girl was her maid. The latter was carrying with her a plastic bag. When they reached the altar rail, in front of the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, this lady made a signal to the maid. Taking this cue, the latter pulled out from the bag a bundle of printed novena pamphlets. Fingering her rosary, the woman started to read. The girl took a beautiful Spanish fan from the plastic bag and fanned the praying matron.

Much as I prefer to label this case as "personal idiosyncrasy" on the part of that lady during that day, I am constrained to say that it is a recurrent pattern in that moving out of Manila and visiting Baclaran Church I witnessed similar cases. Here is one.

A pious-looking lady came in followed by her maid. The latter was young and was not dressed well. She was carrying a kneeling pad and a buri fan. This matronly woman was praying the Stations of the Cross. But everytime she

changed station, the maid picked up her kneeling pad and carried it to the other station. And meanwhile that her mistress was praying she fanned her.

I am sure these cases do not represent the general behavior pattern of urban Catholics. Nevertheless, they illustrate a behavior which is not accepted by the Church and this is what I mean when I speak of folk religion. The feeling of religiosity in these acts may be deep and sincere. That I do not question or doubt, but the manner in which these religiosity is expressed is certainly not officially sanctioned even by Church authorities.

Elsewhere I have described the fertility dance in Obando and Kalibo. In Paco, the *tadtarin* festival is one such rite which the urban folks still observe. Here is a description of the festival recorded by a journalist five years ago.

On the morning of December 28th, the devotees of the Tadtarin Lady gather in front of Paco Church where everybody, young and old, men and women alike, fling their arms and gaily trip it up in an enigmatic sort of unchoreographed dance to the lilting tune of native airs played by a band hired for the occasion.

During the festival, the streets of Paco resemble a mardi gras scene. The devotees don gypsy clothing nostalgic of sunny Spain and Mexico. It is said that the custom originated from these countries. For most part, the people don shepherd costumes with blooming hats bedecked with flowers and hold staffs likewise decorated with vines and flowers.

The flower-hat band, they say, symbolizes the crown of thorns which Jesus wore. The staff stands for that which St. Joseph planted before the door of the Virgin Mary following the annunciation. According to the Hebrew legend, the staff of Joseph bloomed with flowers as sign that he was to be the foster father of the new Christ. Still others complement this by saying the staff symbolizes Joseph's devotion to the Holy Family.

Day before the affair, an improvised chapel (*visita*) is built on Merced Extension street. The picture of the Lady is provided with a cape of either flossy velvet or brocade and brought to the chapel for veneration.

During each morning of the three-day festivities, a novena with a rosario cantada is held at the Paco Church. The picture is then set on a portable carriage (*andas*) and borne on the shoulders of the men who take part in the dance-procession which immediately follows. Led by a colorful figure called the *banderada* (flag bearer), a parish priest and his two assistants, the cross bearer and the incensers, the procession of gaily dancing devotees wends its way along the streets of Paco stopping now and then at the homes of the *hermanas mayores* (sponsors). Throughout the day, the picture is deposited at the chapel for veneration. And on the afternoon of the last day, a mass called "misa pastoral" (shepherd's mass), is celebrated in the Paco Church. Rustic castanets, tambourines and clanging bamboo bars accompany the hearing of the mass.¹¹

¹¹ Fortunato Gerardo, "Mass Dancing at Paco's Tadtarin Festival," *Sunday Chronicle Magazine* (1957), pp. 19-21.

Formally the Tadtarin festival is an invocation to the Holy Mother for blessings of many children. Ardent devotees believe that if one promised to always dance during her feast, she would be blessed by many children during her married life. A well-known story of a sexagenarian couple, once childless, now, with nine children since they prayed to the Tadtarin lady is considered a testimony to the promise of the picture.

The name *Tadtarin* is derived from the Tagalog word "tadtad" which means chopping and used in allusion to the plight of those children who were ordered to be massacred by the jealous King Herod in his furious desire to have the new-born Christ murdered. Hence, the celebration falls on December 28th, the feast of the Holy Innocents. Nowadays, however, the celebration is cut down to two days and strangely on December 28th and 30th. The reason for this is a waning interest manifested in the need for funds and sponsors for the celebration.

The festival was a church affair during the time of the friars. But today, perhaps because of its traditional trappings of excessive dancing, the Church has prudently frowned on the devotion as one not having ecclesiastical sanction, although the priest of Paco acquiesces to it as a religious tradition in the parish.

Pan-Regional Religious Observance

Apart from these practices which are observed only in either the rural or urban areas, there are practices which are non-geographic, like Christmas holiday celebration, Season of Lent, and the Santacruzán (Flores de Mayo). For details of practices clustering around the *Simbang Gabi* and the Lenten Season, I wish to refer the reader to Fr. Frank Lynch's discussion of organized religion in *Philippine Handbook* published by the Human Area Relations File. One elaborate, non-church sanctioned ritual associated with Lenten season is worth mentioning in this discussion. And this is the *penitencia*. According to anthropologist Alfredo E. Evangelista, the *penitencia* is motivated by (1) serious illness, (2) combination of illness and dreams, and (3) dreams hinting a vow. The *penitencia* is characterized by inflicting pain on the body—either by the performer himself or by an assistant. This practice appears to be a reinterpretation of "a religious penance, one of the several Catholic sacraments consisting of repentance or contrition for sin, confession to a priest, satisfaction as imposed by one's confessor, and absolution."¹²

There are different ways of performing the *penitencia*. In Masukol, Evangelista reports three distinct forms: (1) self-flagellating or self-whip-

¹² "Penitencia: The Ritual and Motivation in Flagellation," *Sunday Times Magazine*, Vol. XVII, No. 36 (April 15, 1962), pp. 10-11.

ping, (2) the tumbling-and-rolling with scourging administered by an assistant (*suned*), and (3) the cross-bearing ritual, whose performers have several assistants playing the role of Roman soldiers. Of the three types, self-flagellation is the most popular. As Evangelista describes it:

The most common type is exemplified by one who scourges himself. Traditionally, his paraphernalia consist of a hood (*kapirosa*) of white cotton cloth which covers the face down to the chest, a crown or wreath (*korona*) of woven twigs of shrub or vines, rarely thorns; a pair of white pants tied at intervals on the thighs and down to the upper part of the ankle; and a flagellum (*bulyus*) of cylindrical bamboo sticks, the end of which are bundled into a cord of braided cotton or abaca strings. The cord enables the flagellant to reach the macerated portion of his back.

He submits himself to an "executioner" known as *verdugo* or *mananatak* for incision or maceration. The latter uses a ladle-shaped instrument (*resiton*) which consists of broken pieces of glass embedded on one face in rows.

Four spats or hits with the *resiton* normally produce the desired incision from which blood oozes. The *verdugo* receives ten centavos from each flagellant, using the money to purchase candles to be lighted at the chapel (*bisita*) for the performers.

Having received his incisions, a flagellant begins his ritual, swinging his flagellum left and right, always hitting the incisions. As he passes a house or chapel where the *pasion* is being chanted, he makes a sign of the cross on the ground and drops heavily upon it and lies down prostrate and arms stretched while his fingers imitate the common gesture of Christ.

It is interesting to note that not a single vow of the 30 case studies recorded by Evangelista was a result of repentance for sin or sins. None of the flagellants approached his parish priest for the purpose of securing advice involving the vow of a flagellant.

Instead, this local religious practice appears mostly to be nothing but a fulfillment of a personal promise made during a life crisis in return for a divine favor; a recognition of a debt and its promised payment. This interpretation reflects an aspect of a wider, more complicated Filipino concept of *utang na loob* which broadly means "debt of gratitude" or "debt of obligation"—a system of reciprocal obligations accompanied by an ideal behavior. Strictly speaking, fulfilling the requirements of a vow is a form of repayment, incomplete it may be, from a subordinate (flagellant) to a superordinate (God). As long as the former carries out his expected duties which he himself voluntarily promised, he is free from wrath in the form of sickness, accidents, and so forth.

The fiesta is another pan-regional Filipino celebration with religious overtones. Because this complex is so popular and familiar to everyone, I shall not discuss it here, except to point out that the fiesta is dedicated to

the patron saint of any town, barrio, or a particular street as this is done in Manila. The activities clustering around the fiesta are more social than religious.

Comments

From our description of the various rural and urban rituals associated with the Catholic faith, we have noted that central to the lifeways of the people is the belief that any man (a farmer or employee) to be successful he must square accounts with the spirits or saints by performing the necessary rites and ceremonies. This in effect reflects the concept underlying the people's world-view: that the individual being is but a small part of a wider natural-social universe inhabited largely by spirits and saints, and the social prescription for individual human action is felt to come from metaphysical demands. The pattern of social life is fixed because it is part of the general order of the universe, and even if this is hardly understood and viewed as mysterious, it is nevertheless accepted as invariant and regular. To be human is, in the final analysis, to act, talk, and think the way the people in the barrio do; to follow the precise system of social and linguistic behavior which emphasizes the man-and-spirit cooperative relationship: that is, the observance of moral obligations, respect for elders and superiors, emotional resting the order of things: one supernatural and the other human. These two poles of conceptual reference to doing things are merged in the faith the people have in their rituals. As long as one performs the rites in their primary form and as prescribed for the chosen activity, he is sure of achieving his desired goal.

Looking at the religious rituals in the Philippines from within their cultural context, they may be described as a psychological construct which underlie the emotional behavior of the people. They make possible the psychical capacity of an individual imaginatively to take situations external to himself into his private experience in such a way that self-assurance is achieved. Without these religious rites, unsanctioned by the church as they may be, the capacity of the people to have an awareness of their limitation and an understanding of the "whys" of society would scarcely develop. For the rural folks, the rituals and the basic beliefs surrounding them not only draw together all the separate strands of traditional practices and lore, but they also provide the outline upon which the people themselves may acquire a clear picture of the way their activities blend with local concepts, and an example of the manner in which the practice rites strengthen the central values of their lives.