

TEXT AND POLITICS: TRANSACTIONS OF POWER IN THE EARLY PROVINCIAL PHILIPPINES

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In Bikol, as in other regions of the Philippines, the work of evangelization, which began in the last decades of the 16th century and lasted till the 18th, was intimately tied up with colonialism and the appropriation of spiritual discourse for specific hegemonic ends. Though expressly concerned with transcendental ends, as it was primarily concerned with the task of winning the pagan Bikolanos to the Catholic faith, the missionaries recognized the import of secular obstacles posed by the prevailing social milieu. The Franciscans were aware that conversion could be facilitated only by radically transforming the existing elements in social clusters of society and reconstituting them according to a social paradigm consistent with their theological and cultural framework. Hence, conversion assumed the nature of a political transaction. Winning the natives to Catholicism implied their submission to the authority of the missionary-curate.

As colonial rule began to bear heavily on the Bicolanos, the friar, who in most cases was the only representative of the crown, felt the need to continually expound in most subtle ways the legitimacy of colonial authority. This took place through a religious discourse which essentially revolved around the articulation of the eschatological significance of the entire spectrum of Christianity. Thus, behind the symbolisms of Christian rituals and missionary discourses were encoded ideas which constituted the idiom of Spanish hegemony.

The 17th-18th centuries were a high point in the history of Franciscan missionary activity in Kabikolan. The chief intent of this study is not to trace the growth of Christianity but rather to map out the domain of politics in the hermeneutical terrain of religious rhetorics¹.

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The Metaphysical Assumptions of Religious Discourse

The project of conversion involves the process of universalizing a religious concept while at the same time articulating this idea in the context of the local milieu. Circumscribed by a standard discourse, the process of conversion involves a semiotic and hermeneutic transaction. Since it was the missionaries' belief that if the Catholic church had to take root among the heathen, its message had to be rendered in terms that were familiar and universally comprehensible to them. The result was the standard missionary practice of preaching the gospel in the native tongues of the subject people.² The use of the native tongue, however, was not without problems. Its limited vocabulary did not include the words needed for an adequate teaching of the principles of the faith. Such concepts and corresponding words for *Dios*, *gracia*, *salvacion*, *Espiritu Santo*, *cruz*, *santos*, and others were foreign to the natives and consequently not found in their language. Nevertheless, the untranslatability of these concepts into native terms gave the natives an impression of the intrinsic superiority of the Latin and Castilian languages over the local ones. This stemmed, so it seems, from the belief that these native languages were incapable not only of accurately signifying secular and transcendental realities but also of mobilizing and transforming them. In a similar vein, Benedict Anderson pointed out that the emergence of truth-language or ritual language was premised on the belief that ontological reality is apprehensible only through a single, privileged system of representation (Anderson 1983, 22). The use of Latin as a standard ritual language of the Catholic Church endowed this language with almost magical and supernatural characteristics. This explains why native healers appropriated this language into their pagan rituals in the form of mutilated Latin incantations³. On the other hand, the use of Spanish as the official language of imperial bureaucracy made Spanish the language of secular power. These impressions apparently rendered substantial aid to the missionaries' project of conversion⁴.

Translation, interpretation, and conversion, however, were premised on the assumption of an existing cultural gap between two peoples. Yet at the same time these were also hinged on the recognition of a pervasive ontological-generic unity between these different peoples allowing for the possibility of comprehension and intersubjective dialogue. Likewise, the whole enterprise of conversion was predicated on the belief that Christian ideology, though encoded in a particular symbol, expressed in another language and transported to another social reality could survive cultural, geographical, and historical shock. It appears that for the

missionaries Christianity possessed the divine privilege of preserving its original ideological substance and thereby maintaining the orthodoxy of the doctrine despite its universal applicability. For the missionaries, this was indeed a confirmation of the divine character of this religion. Its adaptability to various historical situations and cultural settings reflected its rootedness in the universal and transhistorical being, God. Such impression was most evident in the narrative of Fray Marcelo de Ribadeneira, a Franciscan missionary who wrote one of the lengthy chronicles of the early conversion of Kabikolan. Ribadeneira mentioned a Bikolano who, upon being told of the God of Christianity, exclaimed and said: "Oh, like you Spaniards, we have always known God since childhood because we have never offended Him."⁵ Ribadeneira quoted this remark to buttress his belief that the God of Christianity was virtually existing in the consciousness of every people even before they had formal epistemological access to its being.

Despite the multiplicity of culture and the fluidity of historical reality, missionaries were convinced of the existence of a distinct universal human reality transcending historical conditions and cross-cutting geographical horizons. This generic relationship of humanity was made possible because of its primordial divine origin. Fray Juan de Oliver, OFM,⁶ a missionary in Bikol region in the last decade of the 16th century, used the metaphor of the family to describe the basis of universal kinship:

Everyone of us is a creature and thus the evil man is also our brother. And the poor, those without gold, should we speak evil words to them? Should we oppress them? We should not enslave them but treat them like ourselves as they are not different from us since they are our brothers, sons of our Lord God, Father of all men (Oliver 1591, 5).

For Oliver, therefore, kinship was not merely a result of random genetic selection but an encompassing metaphysical and therefore universal reality, a result of divine action. Moreover, this proposition that God was maker of all and father to all demanded necessary adjustments in all natives' social relations. It was because this new social cosmology implied a new axiological framework which likewise necessitated a reconstitution of social structures. The basis of social merits should no longer be social and economic privileges but moral and spiritual excellence. This idea was greatly reflected in the semantic shift of death.

The natives' elaborate rituals and the extravagant funerary materials accompanying the pre-colonial chief's burial seemed to indicate the existence of belief in the transcendental continuity of birthright. The slaves' uncommon virtue of resigning their life to the pre-colonial Bikol ritual of *hogot*⁷ or slave-killing also points to the cultural hegemony of this elitist eschatology. Belief that one's place in the after-life is determined by his location in the social grid, made death less frightening and less uncertain. In speaking of death, Fray Pedro de Avila, a missionary-curate of the parish of Canaman⁸ in 1684, underscored his assault on this native belief, which in effect was directed to break the hegemony of the elite. The Spanish missionaries then offered an alternative eschatology which was premised on the economy of Christian morality. This implies that the human being's journey to the after-world is regulated not by fatalism but by pious compliance with the moral canons of Christianity.

This Christian eschatology which prescribed a new moral imperative issued forth from the belief that human beings, though creatures of God (which was the basis for postulating universal equality), alienated themselves from him and therefore corrupted their nature. This view set the starting point of human history as a state of negation. "When you bring your child to the church for the *Padre* to have it baptized," Fray Pedro de Avila declared, "the child is still a slave (*oripon*) of the devil" (Avila, 27). Then he proceeded to explain how the child was freed from the clutches of the devil: "the first thing that the *Padre* does at the door of the church is to expel the devil by blowing three times on the child" (Avila, 27).

For the missionaries, therefore, the imperative of conversion stemmed from the demand to transform the ontological possibilities of the natives from a state of negation to a state of spiritual perfection. Fray Pedro de Avila underscored the fundamental idiom of conversion:

Although you were all far from Christianity in ancient times,
God took pity on you and sent his missionaries to baptize
you and now to preach to you to avoid sin...(Avila, 349)

Hence, the whole mythic discourse of conversion revolved around the notion of human sinfulness and the tyranny of the devil, while highlighting the infinite mercy of God.⁹ It was along this perspective that the missionaries imagined the world as a locus of a cosmic battle between good and evil, between the forces of God and the devil. For the Spanish missionaries, unchristianized villages were, as one missionary in Bikol in

1685 put it, “living under the rule of the devil” (San Joseph 1685, 145) This image of the world imbued them with enormous apostolic zeal to consider themselves as soldiers of Christ waging with spiritual weapons a war to overthrow the devil’s tyranny over the pagan people.

The missionaries employed the metaphor of “darkness” to describe the conditions of life obtaining in pagan societies and contrasted it with Christianized societies which Fray de Avila referred to as “enlightened” In the words of the friar:

it may be proper to tell you of many kingdoms where many people lived without any knowledge of God because they are believers in *anito* and worshippers of the devil. These are the people who did not receive the mercy of God which could have enlightened (*napacaliuanagon*) their souls through the teachings of Christianity. For this reason they are bound to hell (Avila, 247).

For the missionaries, therefore, evangelization means bringing light to those living in darkness. Such tendentious categories were implicitly encoded in various forms and levels in the texts. They evinced a straddling of meaning from one pole of power to another and were apparently responsible for the multiplicity of semantic layers of various native terms. Religious rhetoric generated new semantics which defined the domain of hegemonic power. Friar discourse obviously encrypted substantial strains of political discourse. Christianization entailed drawing the natives from their narrow cultural shells into the mainstream of universal civilization. The necessary conclusion was that a thorough process of conversion was only possible under the colonial canopy of the Spanish empire. It was on this framework that the Franciscans set out to create Christian communities and transplant European civilization in the region.

The Secular Character of Spiritual Power

In a society where religion was a mainstay of political regime, it is not surprising that the friar was bound to assume wide non-spiritual powers. From the second decade of the 17th century, as soon as Christianity was implanted in lowland Bicol, the Franciscan missionary was often the only visible representative of the crown in the town. Thus, the laws of the civil regime and the church which should have governed the

doctrina or the parish appeared to have, in most instances, dissolved into arbitrary demands of the friar. Such wide powers joined with religious character of the position made the friar in the minds of common folk, a man of enormous prestige and power.

One of the most palpable expressions of the friar's enormous powers emerged when the thorny issue of episcopal jurisdiction erupted in the early 17th century. In 1634 the Franciscans vigorously contested the pretensions of the bishop of Caceres to deprive them of the parishes of Yguey, Paracale, Albay, Casiguran, and Bacon. This highly explosive issue of jurisdiction between the bishop and the Franciscans persisted way until the 18th century. In various instances, the defiant Franciscans did not merely adopt legal means but even resorted to less dignified aggressive actions such as barricading.¹⁰ However, despite their frequent clashes with various bishops, the Franciscans were never dislodged from Bicol region which remained an exclusive Franciscan territory for more than three hundred years.

Furthermore, in the last decade of the 17th century reports documenting the abuses of the Franciscans in Bicol surfaced. One report in 1698 stated that "the Franciscan doctrineros there compel the *dalagas* to pound rice for the consumption of the convents, likewise they oblige the *bagongtaos* and the said *dalagas* to bring their firewood and food for the pigs of the convent... all of which is so publicly known" (quoted in Abella 1954, 326). Such practice persisted beyond the 17th century since even in the beginning of the 18th century similar complaints were still heard. In 1702, an *oidor-visitador* sent to investigate another complaint made a report showing the enormous power of the friar and thus confirming other reports of abuses committed by the friars against the natives of the Camarines provinces. The report states:

Under the pretext of needlework and embroidery, the religious compelled the *dalagas* to be in continued attendance in the houses of the syndics and mistresses, where they not only sewed and embroidered the articles of the sacristy, but also the inner garments of the religious and the outer garments of their servants. Besides they must do whatever was commanded by the mistresses themselves, and their fiscals and syndics, and the fields of all these were sown with grain, without pay, by the wretched *dalagas* (Quoted from Corpuz 1989, 201).

In an effort to arrest these abuses, the *oidor* recommended that the friar be provided with a coterie of ceremonial and household personnel. Aside from the two sacristans, acolytes and *cantors* for the mass, the priest would have in his disposal a church porter, some *bagongtaos* or young men to carry the priest on a hammock or litter and should also serve as his rowers during trips; two laundresses, all the young women to sew and embroider the clothes and vestments; a *celador* or fiscal to report any violation or omissions of the church rules, and a collector of accounts due the friar. Such willingness of the colonial officials to readily please the friar by giving in to his whims reflected the colonial authorities' recognition of the enormous power of the friar and his important role in preserving Spanish hegemony.

As a colonial authority, the missionary made use of some process of mystification to justify the use of his powers. Some techniques which he employed rationalized the exercise of his powers and authority. In his perception of native opposition, Fray Avila invoked the prime source of authority, God, to buttress his claim to authority:

My brothers, you should reflect the meaning of what I said to you regarding the disciples of Christ, concerning any priest who comes to your parish because that priest is the true representative of God, chosen by God to come to you to free you from your sins by way of their preaching, which binds your souls...that's why Christ has said to the priests "I have taken you from the world so that you may become like my disciples to bring divine fruits which are the holy preachings that are beneficial to your souls (Avila, 415).

Then he likewise asserted the legitimacy of his authority by appealing to that divine mandate.

It is not only that Jesus has taken me from the Kingdom in Spain but now, God has also chosen me and He commanded me to come to you... in order to take care of your souls and bring you the sweet fruits that bring life to your souls (Avila, 414).

His attempt to articulate his sacred duty to God and the native converts was a forceful strategy not only in negotiating his authority but at the same time in concealing the actual power relations which constituted the basis of its force. By playing down his own power he, in reality, built it up.

The missionaries of the 17th and 18th century likewise emphasized the intrinsic transcendental and divine constitution of sacerdotal ministry, thereby elevating the priestly life to a higher plane of ontological existence. Fray Esteban de Gascuena,¹¹ a friar-curate of the parish of Milaor in the latter part of the 18th century, quoted in his sermon what St. Francis was supposed to have said, apparently to inspire in his audience reverence for the friars:

If I see a saint descend from heaven and I also see a priest who is beside the saint, I will ignore the saint and will come instead to the priest and kiss his hand because his hands are those that hold the Son of God in the consecrated host. Is there anyone far higher than him on earth? (Gascuena c.1770, 204)

His ability to shift from one source of authority to another facilitated the process of consolidation, a process carried out through a subtle exhortative discourse. In his discourse, he often made use of analogies and frequently referred to himself as the father of the community, thereby creating an image of a stern but benevolent authority (Pertierra 1995, 43). Avila stressed this role saying:

Although it is the prime obligation of the priest to preach to the town where he was assigned because he is the father of the people, God also empowered him to criticize and to forbid them from committing sins like a father would do to his children... The priest, because of his love for the people under him (*pinagbobootan*), must not only preach, but should criticize and punish them if they sin...(414).

Fray Avila implied that divine mandate provided a corresponding sacerdotal prerogative, a sort of unmediated hermeneutical access to transcendental and eschatological truths. This, for him, was the underlying basis for his authority to structure the field of action of native converts by defining the boundaries of social behavior. It appeared that social

relationship was a mere secularized version of an essentially spiritual transaction mediated by the friars' secular and spiritual authority. This, in part, explains the friar's claim to power both in the spiritual and in the physical realms.

The power to punish the natives through flogging has become an integral part of conversion strategy, probably started about the later part of the first half of the 17th century. By this time Christian villages had already attained some degree of stability and the friars had already secured a relatively firm grip of the people. This means that the natives by this time had already acquired a sense of the legitimacy and inevitability of their own subordination. The friar, on the other hand, began to feel that he had already acquired legitimate domination. The employment of flogging, as Foucault noted in one of his studies, was a strategy designed to reproduce the structures of legitimation by a concrete manifestation of his control of power through the employment of coercive force and violence (Foucault 1979, 119). Such view was apparently true in the case of the friars in Kabikolan.

In 1647, Fray Andres de San Agustin¹² used in his grammar book different examples of sentences referring to punishment of the natives by the friars. A clear example is this one: "The friar ordered you flogged because of your failure to attend mass" (San Agustin 1647, 5). Although used merely as an example to elaborate on a particular grammatical rule, one is immediately struck by San Agustin's ready employment of flogging. San Agustin's use of the term seemed to imply that flogging was a familiar and an integral element of native discipline.

Actual cases of public flogging had been documented in the 17th century. In 1694 Fray Alonso de Safra condemned an *indio* principal in the town of Nabua to be punished in public. This impressed the natives so much and seemingly proved to be an effective means for social control. His control of and access to various power bases made opposition difficult and dangerous. The structure of early colonial society was so designed that he assumed effective control of all the powers available in his locality. Add to all this the other sources of power and legitimation such as the Mass and confession, and the resulting picture was a theocratic society where the arbitrary rules of the friar held sway.

The Mass and confession also served as sources of implicit power for the friar, although he probably did not intend them as such. At Mass

the friar assumed the center stage of authority possessing both divine and secular powers. Since the celebration of the mass is the core of Catholic religious life, it constitutes as one of the most formal and solemn regular transactions between the parish priest and the congregation. Such regularity eventually infused the natives with a habitus of subservience. As the ritual was gradually assimilated into the organic and psychological constitution of the natives, it eventually created a relationship structured not only in terms of consent through domination but also most effectively by sheer force of repeated practice which became so much part of the mental and physical habits of the natives.

Moreover, the Catholic church prescribed that every convert should go to confession at least once a year. As evident in various sermons, missionaries heavily stressed the importance of confession in the individual's sacramental life. For a Catholic confession possesses a regulative function in the economy of divine grace. If sin alienates one from the source of spiritual life and from the community of the elect, it is by confession that alienation is overcome. Thus, Fray Avila expounded the theological significance of this sacrament:

If someone here has committed a very serious sin called *mortal*, the soul of that person is not only ill but is already dead (Avila, 23).

He pointed out that the way to restore life to the soul began with repentance. But repentance alone was not enough. Sinners must confess sins to the priest for it was "God's command that we should reveal to the priest all the sins that darken our souls, that we may know that Jesus Christ has entrusted to these priests the power to erase sins and to heal our souls" (Avila, 23). Therefore, confession as the profession of faith, the admission of fallenness and the assertion of desire to be reinserted into the network of divine transaction required objective manifestation of a subjective reality.

However, disclosure of personal sins in confession allowed the friar access into that shadowy private world of the natives often denied him. It provided the friar with an insight into the subjective moral disposition of the individual and the community in general.

The Church stressed that nothing should be held back in confession, for any attempt to withhold sins only confirmed the sinfulness and compounded the guilt of the sinner. In this manner, the priest was assured

a reliable cognitive apparatus not only in probing into the depths of the individual's latent moral world but also a functional device for infiltrating and subverting the individual's moral habitus.

With all these secular and spiritual powers wrapped up into one, the friar was assured a functional mechanism of power which enabled him to exploit the dynamics of local social relations in the transformation of the native society. Notwithstanding, the process of social transformation was not an easy task for the friar for the latent tension between the native elite continued beyond the 17th century. Nevertheless, for more than 300 years, the frailocratic hegemony in Bikol region was never contested with open violence. Except for the ripples created by the Sumoroy rebellion that swept the provinces of Sorsogon and Masbate, there was no homegrown violence that was directed to the friars until the end of colonial rule. If peace was an index of hegemony, then the friars were indeed successful.

The *Maguino* Class as Vanguard of Resistance

Spanish accounts distinguished, albeit in a sketchy manner, three estates in the pre-colonial Bikol social structure, namely: the rulers and their kin, called *maguino*; the freemen, or *timawa*, among the ruled; and the slaves or *oripon*,¹³ the disenfranchised members of society.

The head of a barangay or village was called the *datu*, and his kin constituted the elite group known as *maguino*. It would seem, however, that mere membership in the village elite did not necessarily qualify one to be a *datu*. But one who became a *datu* thereby became a *maguino*.

Maguino was an honorific title of society used to address a member of the village elite of either gender. In the early 17th century, Fray Marcos de Lisboa,¹⁴ a Franciscan missionary in Bikol who wrote the first Spanish-Bikol dictionary, defined both *datu* and *guino* as "rich and elite," and *maguino* or *hiyangta* as one of special prominence (Lisboa c. 1621, 143). They were addressed as *Cagorangnan*, the equivalent of Lord.

The clients or followers of the *maguino* were called *timawa*, also referred to in the Lisboa dictionary as *batac*. *Timawa* is defined as "an ordinary man of the village, neither a chief nor a slave" (*hombre ordinario del pueblo, que ni es principal, ni esclavo.*) In another entry Lisboa states that *matimawa* means *dar libertad al esclavo* or "to give freedom to slave.

(Lisboa, 376).” This suggests that a *timawa* at least in many instances, used to be a slave, thus reflecting the flexibility in social structure.

Slave status was acquired through birth, failure to pay debts, and captivity in war. Slaves were referred to in various terms as *pondoan*, *salpoc*, *pongca*, *sapod*, but commonly called *oripon*. A slave by birth was called *guintubo*.

Of these classes, it was the *maguino* which caught the interest of the missionaries. Because of their dominant role, the friars sought relentlessly to win the adherence of the *maguino* class, if not to reduce their traditional sources of hegemonic powers. However, even in the 17th century, the *maguino* continued to exercise not only enormous influence but also substantial control over the natives. To a large extent, colonial rule had merely destroyed the traditional formal structure itself. As late as 1792 the traditional power of the *datus* and the deferential treatment accorded them by the lower classes remained. Luis Nee, a Spanish traveler in Sorsogon in the 18th century, took notice of the following:

The *datus*, the title by which among themselves they distinguish the nobility, are almost the only ones who have lands, these are worked for them by the *timaguas*, or plebeians, who do not have lands themselves so that in spite of the fertility of the island, it does not always supply food to its inhabitants. The *timaguas* maintain a great respect for their principal nobles, never do they marry with them, they obey them and cultivate their lands, when they possess public office (Quoted from Owen 1992, 297).

The social structure and power relations among the members of the village in Bikol followed similar lines.

The social structure in the 17th century Kabikolan is reflected in a sermon of Fray Avila. Using a metaphor culled from the story of the molten statues ordered raised and worshipped by King Nebuchadnezzar, he wrote:

The idol of Nebuchadnezzar is likened to a town (*banuaan*). The golden head of the idol (*pararangpan*) are the leaders (*paraboot*). The silver breast are the *maguino* and the

cabeza and the iron stomach are the good men of the town.
While the clay feet are the poor *timaua* (372)

At the top of the typical 17th century village were the *paraboot* and the *cabezas*, the civil officials who generally came from the elite class, and below them were the two major groups, the *maguinoos* and the *timaua*. It was evident from the social division of classes in the 17th century that developments brought by colonial rule hardly altered the basis of social relations of the pre-colonial society. Although Fray de Avila made no mention in his metaphor of the existence of the *oripon* class in the 16th century, he hinted it by referring to "a person owned by another" (Lisboa, 263). It was clear that the Spaniards were able to restrict social exploitation but the missionaries failed to completely abolish slavery or the existence of the *oripon* as a social class. It would seem that throughout the rest of the 17th century, slavery was still part of the colonial social system (W.H. Scott 1991). In 1647 Fray Andres de San Agustin's *Arte de la Lengua Bicol* was replete with allusions to the purchase of *oripon* as social commodities. It was only perhaps in the 18th century that slaves ceased to be a distinct social class, having been integrated into the poor *timaua* class. Thus, throughout the 17th century the *oripon* class virtually retained its essential feature of debt peonage, and thus were hardly distinguishable in practical effects from the traditional pre-colonial *oripon*.

The *maguinoos* class apparently remained as the head of the social structure in the early colonial Bicol society. Such social status remained to be essentially reckoned by lineage, even in the latter part of the 17th century and until the 18th century (Martinez 1708, 49). When asked about his social status, a *maguinoos* replied to Fray Avila that he was a *maguinoos* because his ancestors were all *maguinoos*. However, it is also evident from Fray Avila that social prestige was actually measured by one's possession of wealth rather than by one's descent.

And there are so many of you here, *maguinoos*, who are like that man. Because you have already become poor and that your fellow *maguinoos* is beginning to lose their respect for you, you try to retain your wealth by stealing from the poor (Avila, 370).

The *maguinoos* enjoyed the respect not only of the poor but even of their duly elected authorities.

If there was any sinful (*paracasala*) *maguino* here, was there any single *capitan* who reprimanded and punished him? None. Was there anybody who jailed him? None. Why is this so? It is because he is a *maguino* that's why he is left unpunished by the *capitanes*. Had he been poor he would have been immediately thrown to jail and would have been punished and also sent to the town (253).

This only shows that colonial rule had marginal effect in the horizontal relationships within the Filipino elite. In pre-colonial times, the elite employed strategies in dealing with others of their class (Ribadeneira, 50). They formed alliances, by marriages, and ritual friendship, and competitive displays of prestige, such as expensive feasting and drinking, elaborate religious rituals, sumptuary exhibitionism, and even warfare (Owen, 2).

The downward power enjoyed by the elite, particularly the *datus*, was hardly affected except that there existed a nominal superordinate colonial institution concretized in the authority of the friar-curate. Most villages founded in the late 16th and early 17th centuries into colonial *pueblos* began their civil administration with one of the former *datus* of the gathered villages appointed as *paraboot* or *gobernadorcillo* (Huerta 1865, 272). In 1678, shortly before the *pueblo* of Nabua acquired its independent municipal status, this town was being administered by three old men apparently belonging to the acknowledged ruling elite (Bajandi 1937, 73). This shows that the traditional power of the elites in pre-Hispanic times survived the impact of the conquest. The elite continued to exercise their powers, this time under the auspices of colonial administration.

The missionaries vigorously attempted to mitigate, if not to completely abolish the monopolistic display of class prestige in the customary socio-religious ceremonies. Christian values were inculcated, and pagan rites were supplanted by various pious practices coordinated by the friars and centered on the church. These rituals highlighted the moral and religious obligations rather than the social and economic privileges of a favored class.

The local elites, however, appropriated this hegemonic apparatus of the friars for their own advantage. The native elite took active participation in socio-religious celebrations as ritual sponsors. *Maguinoos* were often chosen as marriage sponsors at the weddings of their fellow

maguinoos as well as those of the lower class. The parish church was generally the recipient of the elites' social benevolence. When a highly respected *indio* principal of the town of Buhi¹⁵ died in 1690, the friars honored him by providing him with a Franciscan habit for his burial shroud (San Antonio 1738, 341). The friars said that such privilege was given him as formal recognition of his generosity to the church and the people. Thus, it can be inferred from this particular instance, that the underlying strength of the native elite lay in their ability to make use of colonial mechanisms to reassert their own class domination.

Marriages were already formalized in the church but the *principales*, as the elite were also called in the 17th century, married others of their class and the resultant linking of prominent families further strengthened class identity and solidarity. Although polygamy, which was another privilege of the pre-colonial elite, was condemned and eventually abolished, the elite found ways to circumvent this prohibition.

While complying with the prescribed monogamous marriage, the elite maintained illicit sexual affairs outside marriage giving rise to the preponderance of *pagsambay* or adultery.¹⁶ Although documents suggest that cohabitation was not merely confined among the *maguinoos* it seemed clear that it was quite strong among them. In a strongly worded statement, Fray de Avila condemned the *maguinoos*' adulterous inclinations: "And most of all some who happen to be *maguinoos* behave like animals because even if they are already married still they commit adultery sometimes even with their cousins" (Avila, 109).

Since adultery or cohabitation entailed additional financial burden to support another household, it became an index of the *maguinoos*' economic power. Likewise, it not only extended kinship ties outside his legitimate family but at the same time provided him with potential pool of agricultural and political manpower in his concubine and illegitimate children. Economics was an important factor in this practice. Fray Pedro de Avila noted that the natives of his parish would not abandon their concubines because they reasoned out that their concubines were useful in farming and getting their money to pay their tributes. Thus, they concluded that if they abandoned them they would starve and would not even be able to pay their tributes (Avila, 197).

Furthermore, the official state monopoly of social control ended warfare as a means of contesting power directly. The elite could no longer

coerce the members of the lower class by resorting to violence. Nevertheless, they again found a powerful tool in debt peonage for securing submission through economic means.

The persistence of slavery or the *oripon* class in the form of debt peonage only reinforced the power of the *maguinoos* class. As social influence and political power remained based on wealth, the rich *maguinoos* continued to wield power over the poor *timauas* in the form of debt peonage. The elite continued to be regarded as the economic patron of the subordinate class. Avila indicated that the *timauas* often borrowed from the *maguinoos* commodities such as *palay* at a high rate:

Some persons who, when asked to lend *palay*, could give poor borrowers but the purpose is to gain several (*cabulao*) *gantas* in just a year (Avila, 187).

The inability of the poor *timaua* to pay their debts to the *maguinoos* eventually bound them personally to the *maguinoos*. The indebtedness of the *timaua* to the *maguinoos* hardly made his social position better than that of the 16th century *oripon*. On the other hand, it reaffirmed the socio-economic importance of the *maguinoos* and their power to appropriate the labor of another. In this manner it was an effective tool for perpetuating class domination. As the *maguinoos* continued to effectively structure the social system of the 17th century Bikol, the friars continually looked upon the *maguinoos-principales* as the backbone of local resistance.

Restructuring Social Order

For the missionaries, conversion did not simply imply an impersonal gratuitous transformation of the human being's transcendental spiritual possibility from the realm of actual negation to a state of potential perfection. It was their belief, however, that liberation of human beings from the tyranny of the devil implied their recognition of a new cosmic order, the advent of divine hegemony. Using a metaphor comprehensible to the natives, the missionaries pointed out that their redemption from the slavery of the devil necessarily made them slaves (*oripon*) of God. The condition of any human being was similar to that of any debtor who, for failure to pay, becomes beholden and in fact bound to the creditor as slave. The liberation of humankind from the diabolical tyranny constituted unpaid indebtedness to God. This framework of one's transaction with the

supernatural entity was comprehensible to the natives inasmuch as it reflected their actual cultural process of exchange and indebtedness which structured their social relationships. The missionaries apparently appropriated this indigenous social framework to secure political hegemony on the natives. The underlying logic was that the drama of spiritual redemption assumed two different historical moments and two distinct religious protagonists: first was Christ's crucifixion and second was the Franciscan's project of conversion. It is evident that this religious claim had encrypted substantial strains of political discourse.

However, this radical shift in the ontological status of the natives with its concomitant recognition of their indebtedness to God and the missionaries, necessitated a corresponding subjective commitment to a new universal moral mandate--God's mandate as articulated by the missionaries. Thus, the natives' debt of gratitude was not merely transcendental but historical. Indebtedness was not only to God but to Mother Spain. Hence, morality was grounded on the metaphysics of gratitude which structured colonial relationship.

This colonialist theology prescribed a corresponding restructuring of the existing social order based on a new moral axiom. As has been pointed out, one's individual worth was measured no longer in terms of birthright but in terms of the subjective moral power to respond to the divine mandate articulated in the moral canons codified by the missionaries. It was along this framework that the missionaries attempted to reconstitute a new social meaning for the natives, the *maguinoos* class in particular. Echoing Christ's dictum that good deeds are the measure of one's being, Fray Avila delivered a sharp scathing attack on the *maguinoos*. His words are worth quoting at length:

As to you, my brother *maguinoos*, how many of you could be made examples of what Jesus has said. How many? I don't know. But what we know is that the *maguinoos* have done nothing but get drunk, they are shameless and do not fear God. Are you a *maguinoos*? "Yes, Padre", you would say. But that is a lie because such behavior does not bespeak of a *maguinoos* but of a common man (*basang-basang na tao*). Are you a *maguinoos*? But your evil deeds are known throughout the town. Are you a *maguinoos*? Yes, Padre, because all my ancestors are

maguinoos. That is a lie, because your deeds are not that of a *maguino* but of an ordinary man (Avila, 207).

It is apparently clear that Fray Avila did not conceive of social classes as situated in different phenomenological moral spheres, governed by separate moral laws. Such differentiation would undermine the acclaimed catholicity of Christian morals. Thus, Fray Avila implied that human persons were not encrusted with particular moral codes appropriate to their social rank. Nevertheless, they were expected to discern higher moral consciousness as they moved up the social hierarchy. But this higher moral perception should be translated into their moral conduct and social decorum. Hence, the *maguinoos* were expected to be exemplars of social and moral virtues.

After giving a long moral peroration regarding the immoralities of the *maguino* men, Fray Avila directed his vitriolic attack on the *maguino* women:

Worst are the women who boast of themselves for their being *maguinoos*. But you know that the *maguino* woman is shameless, since everyone in the town knows that she is an adulteress. Is she a *maguino*? (Avila, 207)

For the natives, social merit and deferential treatment from subordinate classes were not earned but went with one's privileged social status. It was this indigenous social principle that the missionaries were trying to subvert. In the missionaries' view, personal merit, which was earned by submission to the rational demand of the divine will, should define social rank. Not the reverse; social rank did not determine personal merit. Thus the honorific term, *maguino*, began to evolve a new semantic consistent with the theoretical moral paradigm of the missionaries. What the missionaries were trying to do was to divorce the concept of *maguino* from its economic and social bases and introduce the notion as a code of moral behavior. Thus, it would seem, the missionaries laid the groundwork for the gradual cultural attrition of the old social order, which took place as the traditional socio-economic meaning of *maguino* withered away.

The elites, who possessed the necessary mechanism for appropriating social structures, even those that were essentially colonial, were attacked by the missionaries for exploiting these structures for their own advantage. Fray Avila took issue with the *maguino-principales*

whose power was now legitimized under the auspices of colonial administration:

But the *maguinoos*, even if they are full of offenses (*ponong casalan*), are never reprimanded. Why are the public officials (*paraboot*) such? They are such because God did not choose them. They are not even chosen by their fellowmen for that position but they bought their authority through their gold because their purpose is not to care and serve the community but to be served by its constituents. (Avila, 128)

Fray Avila was obviously trying to stress the notion that power and authority were subsidiary to social responsibility. Only one who has moral ascendancy should possess political authority.

The term *paraboot* comes from the Bikol words *para*, a prefix used to indicate work or profession roughly equivalent to the English suffix “er” as in “doer” and *boot* which Lisboa translated as will, heart or the inner being of man (Lisboa, 76). Therefore, a *paraboot* is a “will-er,” one who does the willing. His exercise of authority is in reality a process of translating his will to power. How his will mobilizes and secures control of the people should be indicative of his effective authority in the social matrix.

The notion of power was deeply embedded in the term authority, at least among the 17th century Bikolanos and perhaps among all Filipinos, before the hispanizing efforts of the missionaries took effect. The idea of benevolence as the standard of good leadership and legitimate authority, it seems, was alien to the pre-colonial and early colonial Bikolanos. It would seem therefore, that the contemporary idea of a service-oriented and benevolent leader was due to the semantic manipulation of the missionaries who gave a new meaning to indigenous institution of leadership resulting to the inflection of its meaning.

Fray Avila’s ignorance of the natives’ socio-political tradition explains his overwhelming abhorrence of their supposedly scandalous lifestyle. Thus, he complained that the *paraboot*, “are the ones who lead the community in drunkenness, adulterous acts, thievery, and other forms of evils” (Avila, 128).

Having exposed the evils of the *maguinoo-principales*, particularly those who had access to colonial privileges and power, Fray Avila described the character of an ideal local authority:

...a good *paraboot* is one who is appointed for that particular office. The one who asks the judge (*hokom*) for that position is not a good *paraboot* because his concern is not to serve the community but his own selfish interest (Avila, 128).

It appears therefore that the civilizing project of evangelization created a social order in which the *pueblo* was overwhelmed by the *doctrina*, and politics was an appendage of sacerdotal indoctrination. Despite the semblance of civic order, the people's lives were, in reality, consumed in religion. They were allowed to partake in the colonial structure through their native officials (*paraboot*) in the person of their *cabezas* and *gobernadorcillos*, which enjoyed the perquisites of colonial authority, but they did not have civic life and politics in any meaningful sense. The missionaries had exerted enormous effort to inculcate the values of submission to authority, obedience, humility which inculcated among the Filipinos such culturally and politically debilitating attitudes of servility, passivity and indifference. Life in the *pueblo* did not generate the civil experience and the political institutions that should promote the values and skills for responsible self-government. The development of the Christian Filipinos as civic persons during the Spanish regime was therefore significantly arrested.

Culture as Everyday Form of Resistance

The friars introduced codified norms of behavior designed to facilitate the natives' integration into the western culture and Christian religion. Deprecating colonial imposition, the natives attempted to parry the violent impact of cultural domination. Their experience of the Spanish colonial power's strategic superiority taught them to avoid the disastrous consequences of direct confrontation with the Spanish authorities. But at the same time, the natives consistently avoided absorption into the mainstream of colonial life. In this ambiguity the natives developed their unique form of resistance.

The Bikolanos' pattern of resistance to colonial imposition assumed two prominent forms. One was their direct and conscious effort to elude the missionaries by fleeing to the hills, a standard pattern of native resistance in the early period of colonization. Many of them were eventually persuaded to go back to their lowland settlements and lived under the effective control of the Church and the crown.¹⁷ The other was by living within the bounds of the Christian settlements under the friars' immediate authority, yet expressing their protest in a less conspicuous manner in their everyday encounter with the friar. Such mode of resistance approximated what James Scott refers to as everyday forms of peasant resistance (Scott 1986, 6). Such resistance was an insidious articulation by the marginalized of their struggle to affirm what they regarded as just or unjust, fair or unfair without coming into a more direct and violent confrontation. One specific form of this resistance was the return to their pre-colonial past to which they were stubbornly attached. Christianized Bikolanos would resurrect the shadowy realm of their pre-colonial world completely inaccessible to the probing eye of the missionaries. In other words, while the Bikolanos made a show of obedience to the formal prescriptions of the regime, they preserved or recreated their pre-colonial world. Here was a world that really mattered to them where they behaved in accordance with their customs and inclinations. This private world provided them temporary refuge from the authoritarian social system and release of their repressed cultural impulses. It was in this familiar world of the past that the natives engendered their collective discourse of resistance.

The preponderance of this shadowy world of the pre-colonial society is clearly seen in their social gatherings or *abatayo*. Centered around their surviving pre-colonial rituals, these gatherings reconstituted and reinforced the collective consciousness of their distinct cultural identity. In so far as they did not brazenly conflict with the standard Christian rituals and did not threaten Catholic orthodoxy, the friars tolerated the continuance of their practice. Typical among which was social drinking.

Ritual drinking was apparently endemic in pre-colonial Philippines. It highlighted religious pagan observances of bethrotals, weddings, and funerals. As drinking was identified exclusively with pagan festivals, the missionaries vigorously attempted to wipe out this custom (Phelan 1959, 77). Their efforts, however, merely resulted in the abolition of ceremonial drinking. But this was simply replaced with social drinking which was virtually the same except for the absence of its ritual element.

For a 17th century Bikolano, in particular, drinking was essentially a social event. The works of noted Franciscan lexicographer of the 17th century, Fray Marcos de Lisboa and his confrere, the well-known grammarian of the middle part of the 17th century, Fray Andres de San Agustin, revealed substantial linguistic evidence of the social nature of drinking. According to Fray San Agustin *caarac* meant companion in drinking. The social function of drinking was seen in its unusual power to mediate discussions, cement friendships and enliven celebrations in less formal atmosphere. Hence, it loosened up the rigid class divisions and the rules of social convention. Social drinking, therefore, created a temporary social condition characterized by conjunction of classes.

For the natives, the prevailing reality of socio-cultural structures was conceived in the womb of the past. Hence it was this past that defined the mode of social behavior and the concomitant rules and structures of social relationships. Such view, of course, posed an obstacle to conversion. The friar attacked habitual drinking not as evil in itself but because of its adverse social and moral effects. The natives however, defended their custom by invoking its cultural rootedness. To which Avila directed this remark: "the worst sin is your belief that because it is a part of your culture it is no longer sinful" (Avila, 280). This view of a native Bikolano, which Fray Avila was condemning, revealed an implicit anti-colonialist polemic. The native seemed to indicate that morality was culturally determined and therefore relative. What the friar called sins were actually the people's ways of manifesting their indifference to the alien values of their colonial masters.

Social drinking in the pre-colonial Bikolano culture cross-cut the boundaries of gender and social status. To the friar's dismay, the native women were almost as inveterate drunkards as men, particularly those belonging to the *maguinoos* class:

Some women are worse than men in their drunkenness and are not even ashamed (*mayon supog*) to be seen by many people. Is she a *maguinoos*? Yes, you would say. But it is not true because a woman who has no shame (*dain supog*) is not a *maguinoos* (Avila, 207).

In a society where morality was sustained by self-regulating cultural mechanisms (such as their pre-colonial customary laws) rather than by externally-imposed theoretical moral canons, the notion of what was

shameful was defined in the context of practices or behaviors prescribed by their custom. Since drinking was apparently systematic it would be doubtful whether a rigid gender rule governed social drinking. Thus, for the early Bikolano converts, drinking did not conjure up any image of impropriety even for women.

Nevertheless, in so far as drinking was constitutive of pre-colonial life, it provided them temporary relief from the highly formal and regimented society of the parish, at the same time strengthening their cultural and social bond. It also was a social vehicle for renewing their ties, forging new friendships, and updating themselves on the developments in the village. Most important of all, it afforded them an occasion to release repressed impulses in a social group sharing the same cultural consciousness and historical predicament.

Another custom that forged greater cultural solidarity among the 17th century natives was the pre-colonial custom of ritual crying which Lisboa referred to as *arang*. Expressing his disapproval of this customary mourning ritual, Fray de Avila remarked: "Your crying and shouting during the wake of someone in the house do not come from your sympathy for the dead. You perform this because according to you, it is your culture" (Avila, 273). This ritual was carried out by a group of professional weepers known in pre-colonial Bikol as *paraarang* (Lisboa, 31). Their task, for which they were hired, was not merely to weep but to sing a dirge exulting the great deeds and virtues of the deceased during his lifetime.

This ritual was apparently widespread in pre-colonial Philippines as a similar custom which was also noted by the Jesuit missionary-historian Fr. Francisco Ignacio Alzina in the Visayas in the middle of the 17th century. Fr. Alzina called this ritual *canogon*, a word with similar meaning both in the Visayan and in the Bikol languages. This term, according to Alzina, meant "something regrettable, unenjoyable or a loss" (Alzina 1668, P.1 Bk.3 Ch. 15, p.36). This ritual was performed by women called *parahaya*. "The task of these women was to sing dirges in a mournful tune, weaving in threads of praise for the deceased or their ancestors and to which the relatives, the husbands or wife of the deceased reply with some weird outburst, shouts or screams," Alzina wrote. However, he added that these women wept without really shedding a single tear.¹⁸

Such rituals were among the privileges of the elite. In the ritual of the *arang*, the people gathered for the occasion solidified their group consciousness, and at the same time, by extolling the deeds of the dead, actually memorialized pre-colonial values which were inconsistent with those being inculcated by the friars. The friars, who apparently regarded this custom well-entrenched in the native culture but was counter-productive to their missionary endeavor, eventually appropriated this pagan ritual and transformed it into one of the most useful vehicles for conversion. It was probably from this that the most popular piece of Christian literature in the entire colonial period evolved and came to be called as the *Pasyon ni Kristo*.

The Bikolanos also manifested discontent by maintaining distance from the domain of the friars, both physically and emotionally. Avila often read their behavior as manifestations of irreverence:

It is indeed a source of great sadness for any Christian to see what takes place here. First is your consistent dislike to come to the house of God. There is nothing that you detest more than to come to the church...when you come here during Sundays and fiestas it is because you are forced...you have no respect for God, the Lord of the house, who is aware of your conversations, your laughs, and all other forms of irreverence (Avila, 6).

But when caught and questioned, the natives often found ingenious ways to avoid punishment by fabricating various excuses. The most common excuse to justify the non-performance of their religious obligations was to tell the friar that they were looking for food.

The Spanish friars commanded the anomalous outward compliance of prescribed rituals, but could not penetrate the dense core of the native world. To complicate the matter further, the native converts developed and perfected techniques for keeping the friars at bay. A common behavior was to ridicule the friar by telling jokes and making fun of him behind his back. Fray Avila was apparently aware of this native sneer against them and thus complained:

When a priest is just new here you pretend to love him very much and welcome him with your goodwill. But after he

has stayed here for sometime, some of you begin to hate him, you make fun of him, you ridicule him (Avila, 101).

One of the most common topics for gossips was the friars' occasional infractions of religious vows, particularly with chastity and poverty.

It appeared that the natives adeptly employed flattery as another way of slyly manifesting their contempt for the friar:

As to your parish priests who are the fathers of your souls, whenever you are in front of them you showed so much reverence even saying: "*Padre*, you are the most charitable person who deserve to be loved by the town, your commandments are upright, your teachings and your criticisms are something that we rejoice about. We pray that you would not leave us anymore." But when the priests reprimand you at least once, what do you do to him? You mock him, you ridicule him (Avila, 364).

By fawning on the friar, the Bikolanos were able to project an objective image of social subservience. And the same device enabled them to bear colonial domination with little rancor. However, in the 18th century when Bikolanos began to feel the increasing presence of Spanish institutions in the region, taking their cue from some Spanish civil authorities, Bikolanos started to appropriate colonial machineries such as the Spanish civil officials and the legal apparatus to denounce the abuses of some friars. It seems that it was only in the 18th century when Bikolanos began to bring their complaints against the friars to court as reflected in the sermon of Fray Gascuena: "In many instances, out of sheer anger at your ministers, you hastily present complaints to the *hocom* (provincial governor), to the *Juez de Residencia* (an agent of the crown) and to the *Provincial* (religious superior) without considering whether such complaint is just or unjust, whether these authorities have jurisdiction over the case...you simply lodge such complaints because of your desire to get even with your poor ministers (Gascuena c. 1770, 204)." In fact, a friar even complained that some of these natives had learned to lay their hands on them.¹⁹ Despite these emboldened sporadic assaults to sacerdotal authority in the 18th century and the deteriorating rapport between the friars and the Bikolanos, it appears that the friars were able to maintain their grip on the Bikolanos:

This superficial social rapport sustained the fragile colonial unity which held together the 17th century Bikol parishes. Thus, except for a brief period of acute tension, Spanish authority remained unchallenged in this region for almost 300 years. Although colonial control was perpetuated, the ethnic identity of the Bikolano culture was preserved and protected against the modernizing impact of Spanish conversion.

Conclusion

This brief study of the late 17th century conversion of the Bikol region has attempted to bring to the surface the political aspect of conversion through a perceptive hermeneutical analysis of literary and religious discourses. The focus is on the transaction of power between the Spanish missionaries and the native Bikolanos, particularly the *maguinoo-principales*.

The impact of colonial order fell heavily on the native elite, expectedly in view of the enormous power and privileges this class previously enjoyed. The friars, apparently, looked at the elites with suspicion and regarded them as obstacles to conversion, a suspicion which was not without any basis.

However, the elites were able to deflect their colonial predicament by appropriating the structures imposed by the colonial system, while clinging on to their pre-colonial sources of traditional privileges. The *maguinoo-principales*, therefore, evinced a capacity to submit to Spanish colonial demands at the same time preserved for themselves a privileged position within the native community. The native elites' response to colonial rule, which appeared to be a strategy of resistance, evolved into a matter of sheer opportunism. This was because they never made conscious attempts to dissolve this dichotomous poles of power but profited in keeping them separated. Keeping them apart meant submitting to Spanish regime while continuing to invest in the Bikolano culture. These elites saw the possibility of exploiting one pole of power to profit from another. Their capacity to appropriate and benefit from the colonial system only widened the gap between themselves and those belonging to lower class and therefore heightened their class prestige. Their hold on traditional power necessitated the preservation of colonial culture. For it was through the traditional power that their mechanism for colonial adjustment was premised.

On the other hand, colonial power was vested in the hands of the missionary-curate. The friar being the only Spanish representative of the crown in the 17th century towns wielded substantial power. This enormous power emanated from the fact that unlike the other Spanish bureaucrats the Spanish missionary was seen to owe his position to something beyond royal patronage and secular legislation.

It was through him that spiritual and secular powers converged and were synthesized. He was a representative not merely of the royal will but of the divine will as well. As such he could appeal to actual bureaucratic imperial authority and at the same time could claim the power to decipher the designs of human will in terms of God's laws. It was because of this gigantic power that the natives maintained their reluctance to submit themselves completely to Christianity and resisted the friars.

If the Bikolanos (and the Filipinos in general) had difficulties with and even resisted the new religion, it was not because they abhorred Christianity. Nor was it due to their inability to transcend the narrow confines of ethnic religion and appreciate the transcendental and universal domain of their new faith. The whole gamut of their resistance was centered in the belief that transcendental realities overshadowed the legitimate demands of secular realities.

They resisted the friars not because he was a man of faith. What they were opposing was not the core idea of this faith, but the way the seed of this faith was being implanted among them. The whole discourse of resistance revolved around the secular basis of religion and its concomitant secularized spiritual powers. It was not in essence a question of faith, but rather, it was a question of power. This phenomenon underlies most religious conflicts in the colonial Philippines.

Endnotes

¹For seminal historiographical and hermeneutical insights for this paper see, Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (U.S.A.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Colin Gordon (ed.) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Hugh Silverman (ed.), *Gadamer and Hermeneutics* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

²It appears that the earliest attempt to preach in Spanish came only in the last decades of the 18th century, see *Informe del obispo de Camarines, Fray Antonio de Luna, sobre la R(eal) C(edula) que mande se predique y enseñe a los indios el castellano*. Camarines, 1972. MSS Sign. 92/28 Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental henceforth to be cited as AFIO. I wish to express my gratitude to Fr. Jesus Martinez, OFM, its present archivist, and likewise to Fr. Cayetano Sanchez, OFM, its former archivist and now head of the Archivo Ibero-Americano (AIA) for the valuable assistance extended to me during my research in this archive

³For an in-depth study of the Filipinos' use of Latin for *anting-anting* see Alfred McCoy, "Baylan: Animist Religion and Philippine Peasant Ideology." *"Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 10 (1983), pp.141-185

⁴Although it is not very clear how exactly Latin was valorized by the natives, it appears however, that Latin evoked a certain quality of "inaccessibility." Barthes' idea of myth, ideology and connotation offers some insight into this problem. See Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 27-32.

⁵Fray Marcelo de Ribadeneira sailed for the Philippines in 1594 and after a brief stay left for Japan where he was held prisoner and then was exiled to China. In 1598 he left for the Philippines where he toured the various parishes under the Franciscans. Shortly after, he went back to Spain where he died in 1606. He was a prolific writer and left numerous historical and theological works. For a detailed biography of Ribadeneira, see Huerta, *Estado*, pp. 424-426.

⁶Fray Juan Oliver, OFM arrived in Manila in 1581 and was assigned to various missions in the southern Luzon area, particularly in Bikol and Batangas. He possessed perfect command of both the Bikol and Tagalog languages. He wrote some 21 pieces of religious literature in either of these languages. His famous work, the *Doctrina Christiana*, although written in Tagalog, contained words which were distinctly Bikol. One possibility is that Oliver also wrote the *Doctrina* in the Bikol language which probably antedated his Tagalog *Doctrina*. He died in Bikol in 1599 while visiting the region. For details of his biography, see Fray Felix Huerta, *Estado Geografico*, etc. p.492. For the English translation of his original Tagalog text, see Fray Juan de Oliver, *Declaracion de la doctrina cristiana en idioma Tagalog*. 1593. Ed. Jose M. Cruz, SJ. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995). Likewise, for his Bikol text see *Declaracion. Sobre todo lá doctrina cristiana de Nuevo corregido, enmendada por nuestro hermano Fr. Juan de Oliver, Predicador de esta Prov. de San Gregorio de Filipinas* in Francisco Gainza, *Coleccion de Sermones en Bicol Publicada por el Excmo. Ilmo. y Rmo. Sr. D. Fr. Francisco Gainza, del Sagrado Arden de Predicadores, Obispo de Nueva Caceres Para Uso de Su Clero* (Manila: Establicimiento Tipografico de Santo Tomas, 1866). These collections of Bikol sermons are in four volumes: the first two contain the sermons of Fray Pedro de Avila written in 1684, the third those of Fray Esteban Gascuena written about the middle of the 18th century, and the fourth those of Fray Juan de Oliver. The Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid only has three volumes but the complete collection is to be found in Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental (AFIO).

⁷*Hogot* is an ancient ritual-killing of a slave upon the death of a *maguino* master, see Lisboa, p.251

⁸The town of Canaman is located at the southern portion of the city of Caceres. It was a *visita* of Naga, a village in the city of Ceceres, until it attained an independent status as a parish around 1595. It was in this town where Fray Pedro de Avila wrote the sermon entitled *Platica para todos evangelios de los dominicos del ano 1684* while he was its parish priest. Fray Avila arrived in the Philippines in 1665 and was assigned to various villages of Camarines Sur and Albay from 1667 until his death in 1701. For his biographical sketch, see Huerta, *Estado*, p.521. Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of all Spanish and Bikol texts are mine.

⁹For a fuller treatment of this theological myth see Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Repr.ed. n.d.), pp. 3-7.

¹⁰The details of this conflict are contained in a collection of various documents entitled *Diversos papeles referentes al litigio entre el Obispo de Camarines y la Prov. de S. Gregorio sobre que el Obispo pretendia que pasaron a la administracion de la mitra los pueblos de Yguey, Paracale, Albay, Casiguran y Bacon*. Camarines, 1634-1637. MSS. Sign. 92/2 AFIO.

¹¹Fray Esteban de Casguena was assigned in the region around 1752 and worked in the missions and parishes of Himoragat, Lupi, Libmanan, Milaor, Libon, Canaman, Calabanga, and again in Milaor. He died in Manila in 1789. See Huerta, *Estado*, p.546. Fray Esteban Gascuena left a collection of sermons entitled *Platicas Sobre la Doctrina Christiana y la Pasion en idioma Bicol*. These sermons constitute the third volume in Gainza's *Coleccion*.

¹²Fray Andres de San Agustin was a prolific writer and expert in the Bikol language and had written a grammar book in 1647 called *Arte de la Lengua Bicol*. He worked in Bikol from 1626 until about the middle of the 17th century. He died in Manila in 1649. See de Huerta, *Estado* p.507. A copy of San Agustin's *Arte* which was published in 1795 is still available in the Rare Book Collection of the Filipiniana Section of the Philippine National Library.

¹³For an interesting work on the pre-hispanic Bikolano society see Fray Jose Castano, *Breve noticia acerca del origen, cultura, religion, creencias, y supersticiones de los antiquos indios del Bikol* in Wenceslao Retana (ed.) *Archivo del Bibliofilo Filipino* (Madrid: 1895) Tomo 11, pp.335-454.

¹⁴Marcos de Lisboa, OFM, worked in various missions in Bikol from 1602 until 1616. He was the author of the first Bikol-Spanish dictionary and supposedly wrote the first grammar in the same language. He died in 1628 in Spain. See Eusebio Gomez Platero, OFM, *Catalogo*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁵Buhi is a town located on the slope of Mount Iriga in Camarines Sur. The dialect of this town has caught the interest of many linguists because of

its uniqueness among the various Bikol dialects. It is hardly similar to the other dialects and thus incomprehensible to many Bikolanos.

¹⁶The extant 1716 baptismal records of Milaor parish notes illegitimate births which were most likely due to *pagsambay*. In these baptismal records, the identity of the biological father is concealed, “su padre no conocido,” that is, the father is unknown.

¹⁷For Franciscan reports regarding massive depopulation of lowland Christian settlements in the 17th century, see the Documentary Index in Leandro Tormo Sanz’ *Lucban: A Town the Franciscans Built* (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1971), pp. 138-149.

¹⁸A more critical treatment of this pre-Hispanic ritual in the Visayas is found in William Henry Scott’s *Looking for the Prehispanic Filipino* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), p.109.

¹⁹The conflict between the Franciscans and Sr. Gueruela shows that a more violent form of native resistance to the friars was in some way encouraged by some Spanish officials. See *Retractacion del Odior, Sr. Gueruela de los maldades ordenandos por el en Camarines contra los Franciscanos. Carta para que los religiosos vuelvan a sus ministerios. Diversas papeles, diversas fechas*. Camarines, 1703. MSS. Sign, 92/11 AFIO; *Informe del Provl de S. Gregorio al Gob. sobre los cargos hechos por el Oidor Gueruela contra los franciscanos de Camarines*. Santa Ana, 10 Junio 1704. MSS. Sign. 92/14 AFIO.

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Primary Sources:

The Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental in Madrid possesses one of the largest collections of manuscripts and contemporary printed materials on the 17th and 18th century Philippines. Since the Bikol region was virtually an exclusive Franciscan territory for more than three hundred years, these archives therefore, constitute one of the most excellent sources of documentary material dealing with the history of the christianization of Kabikolan. A substantial portion of manuscripts used in this study is from these archives.

Other manuscript materials, specifically the few 18th century parish records, are also available in the Archdiocesan Archive of Caceres (AAC).

The majority of the published materials used in this paper are to be found in the biggest private collection of rare Filipiniana materials known as the Graino Collection in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. Many of these, however, are also available in the Philippines, particularly in the Filipiniana sections of both the Philippine National Library and of the Ateneo de Manila University Library.

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