

The Bicol Dotoc: Performance, Postcoloniality, and Pilgrimage

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Most Filipinos know at least one proverb which they try to live their lives by and I believe it is this: '*Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan, hindi makararating sa paroroonan*' (one who does not look back to where s/he has come from will not reach her/his desired destination). The underlying idea is the very same one present in concepts of relatedness or reciprocal relations that I discuss in this thesis. And how fitting for my purposes here, since the image is that of a journey. One must look back, however hard or painful it becomes sometimes. But the wisdom of the saying is its reversal of a particular looking back that turned the looker into stone (the story of Lot's wife in the Bible). Here one looks back so that he/she might realize the goal of the journey (it is empowering and not petrifying!). One looks back with gratitude.

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Summary:

The *dotoc* is a religious devotion to the Holy Cross in Bicol, Philippines. Women cantors take the role of pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land to visit the Holy Cross or performers reenact as *komedya* St. Helene's search and finding of the cross. The practice was introduced by the Spanish colonizers, but I argue that the *dotoc* appropriates the colonial project of conversion, translating it into strategies of survival, individual agency, communal renewal, and the construction of identity, through the performance of pilgrimage. I grapple with issues of ethnographic authority and representation. The project is a journey back to childhood and to a place called home, to sights, sounds, smells, tastes recollected in the many stories of informants, or experienced on recent visits as a participant in the performances, but it is also already a journey of a stranger. I am an insider studying my own culture from the outside.

Using a Badiourian framework combined with de Certeau's practice of everyday life and Conquergood's methodology, the thesis explores how fidelity to the enduring event of the *dotoc* becomes an ethnographic co-performance with active subjects. There is a vernacular belief and practice that cuts off the seeming infinity of the colonial experience in the imagination of the present. The centrality of the actors and their performance is a practice of freedom, but also of hope. The performances are always done for present quotidian ends, offered in an act of faith within a reciprocal economy of exchange.

Chapter 1 poses the major questions and my initial answers and thus provides an overview of the journey ahead. Chapter 2 locates the *dotoc* in the field of cultural performance, problematizes my 'gaze' as traveller, as insider-researcher, as 'indigenous ethnographer', and sets down my own path of ethnographic co-performance inspired by Dwight Conquergood. Chapter 3 gets down to the details of the ethnography. Chapter 4 is a probing of the postcolonial predicament, which ends with Badiou and a decision to keep to the politics of the situation. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 take up the *dotoc* as a practice of fidelity that is integrally woven into the performers' everyday life and informed by autochthonous concepts of power, gender, and exchange.

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Preface

I never thought of the *dotoc* as theatre or performance, or as anything at all. It was just itself, a big event that dominated my growing up summers in Santa Cruz, Baa, Camarines Sur—until I started looking at it as a researcher. But, then, I never thought of the *dotoc* at all, as one who is alive does not think of breathing, because it was a part of my life. I remember snatches of childhood experiences of the *dotoc*: myself as a young girl of five or six, looking down from the massive windows of my grandparents' house right into the *dotoc* of our street, or joining in the singing and the offering of flowers, excited at being still awake at ten or eleven at night; or myself at age ten being invited to the *dotoc* in the next street and feeling all grown up, mixing with the young girls of that neighbourhood; or at fourteen, now being conferred the honour of singing the celebrated solo part.

As a researcher, I was compelled to look at it closely, to think about it, to explain it. Before this project started, my Filipino mentors had warned against using foreign categories in making sense of field data, saying that the academic usually comes from a tradition totally alien to that of the community being researched, speaks a foreign language, and has a foreign world-view learned from the university (Mirano 1997). Subsequent readings opened up further questions on the ethical choice of subject matter and methodology. Confronting these questions has been difficult and now I am down to just the bare essential answers, such as the fact that no one before me has ever worked *specifically* on the *dotoc* tradition or written about it with any breadth or depth. I have tried to understand the questions as pertaining both to the danger of not being 'distanced' enough to have a clear

(‘objective’?) view of the data and to the need for rigour in methodology, which might be compromised because the researcher might take things for granted, many aspects tending to become invisible due to her familiarity with them.

I started writing on the *dotoc* performance tradition from the perspective of an insider, but later fieldwork yielded new data that I did not know about before, and the emotional distancing allowed an outsider perspective to exist side by side with the insider’s. It is this insider-outsider view that has in fact allowed critical reflection on the tradition. With this dual position I have sought to analyze the tradition using the theoretical tools of the academy, but also resisted engagement with these tools, considering, ethnographically, that the *paradotoc* perform without so much fuss in the head and just go into the doing of it because it is the season for the tradition, it is fiesta time, or because it is a call of duty, an act of faith and devotion.

I embark on a journey with this project, a journey back to childhood and family, to a place called home, to sights, sounds, smells, tastes recollected in the many stories of informants but also experienced on recent visits as a *paradotoc*. It is however already the journey of a stranger, of someone who left and is returning as a different person. It is a researcher’s journey marked by stops and starts, as I strive first to locate myself on the map of the researcher’s ‘field’—the site of things already said, ‘routes’ already taken, ‘roots’ accounted for or explained in discrepant ways. I then organize the images into coherent pictures, compose statements about them or ask questions. In so doing I chart a different kind of journey.

Chapter 1 poses the major questions and my initial answers and thus provides an overview of the journey ahead. Chapter 2 locates the *dotoc* as cultural

performance and problematizes my ‘gaze’ as traveller, as insider-researcher, as ‘indigenous ethnographer,’ and sets down my own path of ethnographic co-performance inspired by Dwight Conquergood. Chapter 3 gets down to the details of the ethnography: What is the *dotoc* and how is it performed? Who does it and why? When and where? The subsequent chapters make inroads into the many pathways and trails of looking at the *dotoc*, stops in the journey intended to apprehend its complex layers, and find answers to directional questions. Chapter 4 is a probing of the postcolonial predicament, which ends with Badiou and a decision to keep to the politics of the situation—a way station that serves as a pivot in the journey. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 use a Badiourian framework to look at the *dotoc* as a performance of fidelity that is integrally woven into the performers’ everyday life and informed by autochthonous concepts of power, gender, and exchange. (A glossary is provided to aid the reading and photographs from the field work make up the appendices. Photos in digital format and video clips are in a separate attachment and may be viewed on a PC. However, these are intended as supplementary materials only and are not an integral part of the thesis.)

Perhaps the objective is really to return to the beginning, as in a procession, or a pilgrimage, but to return already marked by the travelling, in ways that may not lend themselves to easy explanations. The journey is a pilgrimage or performs one. To what site will however become clear only in the course of this thesis.

Chapter One

Introduction: Liminality, Performance, and the *Dotoc* Song of Triumph

The *dotoc* is a religious devotion to the Holy Cross. Every year in April and May, communities in the Bicol region of the Philippines perform the *dotoc* for nine days. Women cantors take the role of pilgrims who journey to the Holy Land to visit the Holy Cross or re-enact the finding of the Cross by St. Helena. A variant of the *santacruzán* described by Tiongson (1975), the *dotoc* differs from the more popular May processions that feature local beauties as queens in the *santacruzán* entourage.

‘*Dotoc*’ in *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol* is a verb, ‘*nagdotoc*’ being defined as ‘*llegar, o acercarse a alguna parte*’ (Lisboa 1865, 128). Mintz and Britanico (1985, 279) provide a translation: *dotoc*, spelled ‘*dutok*’, is ‘advent, coming’ and ‘*magdutok*’ means ‘to come for something or for a specific purpose.’ The term ‘*dotoc*’ then is an archaic Bicol word for pilgrimage, the narrative contained in the *dotoc* as cultural performance.

BICOL, PHILIPPINES

The Bicolans are described by Fenella Cannell as a people ‘who for a long period have been described in academic literature—and even at times describe themselves—as having no culture worth the name, and as being in many senses a vexing puzzle for social and political theory’ (Cannell 1999, 1). They are also ‘...comparatively uninterested in constructing and promoting a closed notion of their own “culture”’ (3).

Figure 1. Map of the Philippines



Source: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/lgcolor/phcolor.htm>

The land of the Bicol in the Philippines is located on the southeastern tip of Luzon, the largest of the three major islands in the Philippines. Famous in the tourism circle for the Mayon Volcano in Albay that has an almost perfect cone shape, or for the whale shark (*butanding*), the largest fish in the world, sighted in the waters of Donsol in Sorsogon, among others, the region is also infamously known by Bicolanos and other Filipinos as one of the poorest regions in the country. Its population of 5.1 million (2007 figure) can be found in six provinces:

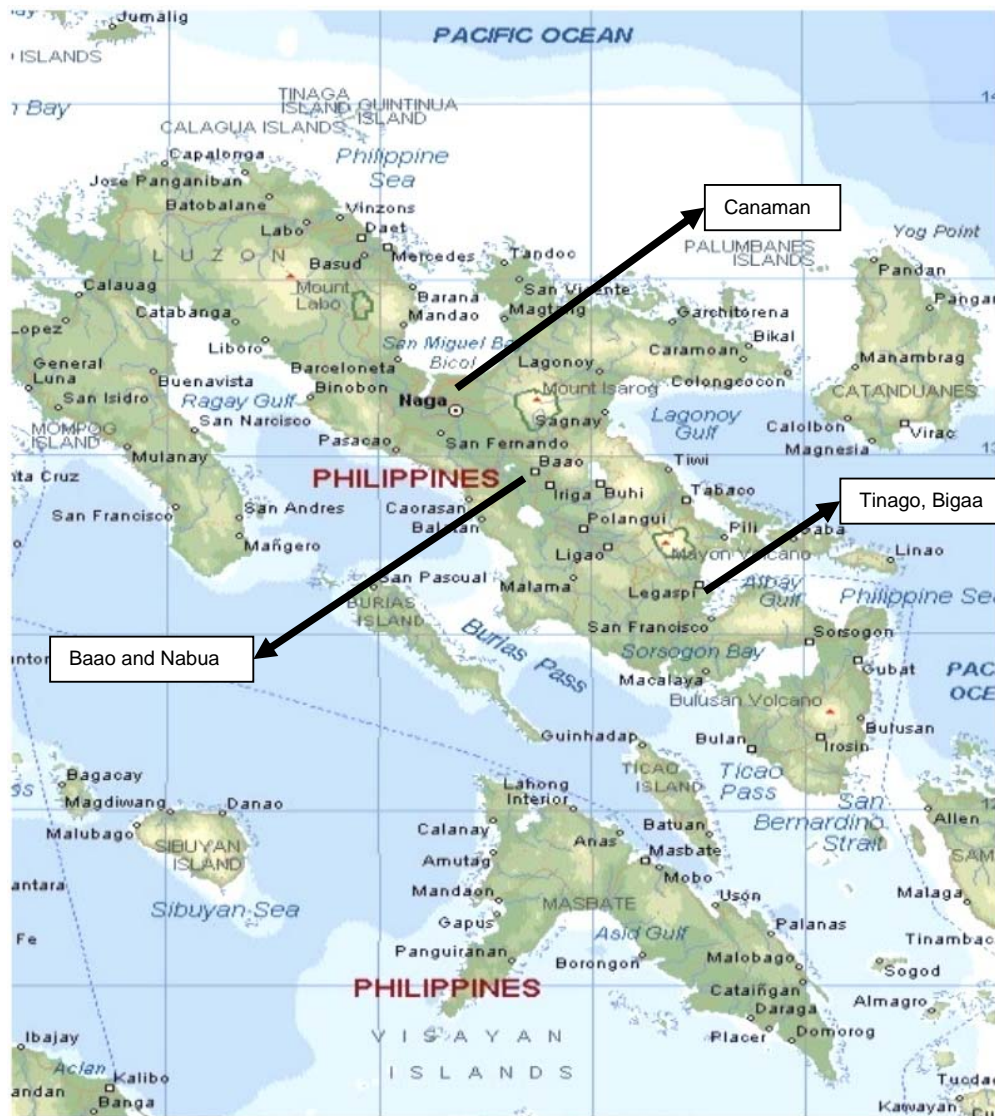
Figure 2. Map of the Bicol Region



Source: 2008 Regional Social and Economic Trends: Bicol Region

Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Masbate, and Catanduanes, with the last two being island provinces. The biggest in land area and population is Camarines Sur where Baao, Nabua and Canaman (my field sites) are three of 35 municipalities. The major cities are Naga in Camarines Sur and Legazpi City in Albay. Tinago, Bigaa, my fourth field site is in Legazpi City.

Figure 3. Detailed Map of Bicol



Source: <http://www.ati.da.gov.ph/bicol/sites/default/files/image/Bicol%20Map2.jpg>

The major language spoken is Bicol, a lingua franca that has two variants spoken in the two major commercial and political centres: Naga and Legazpi. Many dialects are spoken in various areas, such as in the fourth district of Camarines Sur (the Rinconada area where Baao and Nabua are located), in almost all towns of Albay, in Sorsogon, Masbate and Catanduanes. The folk of Camarines Norte in the North that borders the Tagalog provinces speak a Bicol variant that is

already heavily infused with Tagalog, while Masbate has areas that speak Bisaya, being closest to the Visayas provinces. Filipino, the Philippine national language that is largely derived from Tagalog, is spoken in the region and is taught in the schools, but English is the medium of instruction, and the language used by government and business. The Catholic Church uses Naga-Bicol for preaching and many of the prayer books and novenas to the patron saints that date back to the Spanish colonial period are in Naga-Bicol, now better known as Standard Bicol.

My primary field site, Baao, is where I was born and raised, while Albay is now my current residence and place of work. Apart from the purely practical reason of a limited timetable for my project, I wanted to continue researching on the dotoc tradition as I have known it in Baao and then to expand my geographical reach and look at other active practices of the dotoc in the region. The decision has guided my choice of field sites other than Baao, and has yielded a richer experience of the dotoc performance practice.

THE DOTOC OF BAAO

One day in early April of each year, barrio Santa Cruz in Baao starts to gear up for its annual fiesta and dotoc. As dusk falls, the usual end-of-day sounds—hens squawking, children being hustled into houses by parents, cooking pans clanging, doors being shut—are muffled by the loud banging of a wooden stick on an aluminum basin or a metal plate and the shrill call of a crier, '*Miting kan magna gurang!*' (Meeting of the elders.) The crier, sent on his job by the *teniente del barrio*, the village head, would usually be a boy of twelve or thirteen, sometimes younger, and accompanied by some of his peers. The crier would go around the barrio, entering all the streets and interior household clusters, continuously calling

out the message and thumping the basin or plate. The elders understand that they are being called upon to attend the meeting after dinnertime and they know without being told that it is to discuss the dotoc and fiesta.

The meeting is not very formal, though the attendees observe some form of procedure or conduct of the meeting. They proceed to discuss business immediately and soon the matter of who will be *cabo mayor* (chief sponsor) is settled. Ideas and suggestions for the celebration are entertained and discussed but all understand that the final arrangements will be at the discretion of the assigned sponsors. The chief sponsor is in charge of the fiesta, the ninth night of the nine-day tradition, while minor *cabos* (sponsors; also called *kagab-iyán*, from *gab-i*, night) take charge of each of the first eight nights. It is a simple matter of confirming arrangements made the previous year, because sponsorship of the nightly events is rotated and decisions on who will be the next sponsors are made at least a year earlier so that families can save up money for the sponsorship. The rotation is not observed rigidly for volunteers are always welcome to take on the task and the expenses of being *cabo* (sponsor), especially if these volunteers are fulfilling a solemn vow called *panata* (or the older Bicol word *panuga*) or if they are more economically able than the rest.

After the general meeting, the various *cabos* hold their respective meetings with the families assigned under each of them. The youth would hold their separate meetings to plan for the dance on the night of the fiesta and for various activities of the celebration that are traditionally assigned to them, such as parlour games and the *santacruzán* procession. The entire barrio becomes alive with preparations as each household raises the needed monetary share and participates in the collection of fees, in the making of paper flowers, in the writing out of new *orihinals* (scripts)

for the *dotoc*, in choosing the various *reinas* (queens) for the santacruzian procession, or in preparing *ibos*, *suman*, *latik*, *atsara*, and other native delicacies.

Soon the first night comes. The barrio folk are roused from sleep as early as three in the morning, by a *diana*, a band of *musikeros* (musicians) going around the village at four or five in the morning, announcing to everyone with their music the beginning of the festivities. In the morning the sponsors decorate the chapel and build the *cobacho*.¹ They set up the wires for lighting the street. Both the chapel and the *cobacho* are bedecked with flowers and festoons, and sometimes with plants and shrubs of different kinds. The decorations are different each night. In the glorious days of the *dotoc*, no amount or effort was spared by the barrio folk to make each performance grander than the one of the previous night.

At three or four o'clock in the afternoon, the hired sound system is already blaring out music from the chapel. The street is filled with children playing, excitedly awaiting the start of the activities while munching on goodies bought from enterprising vendors of peanuts and candies. At six o'clock, the novena begins. The novena is the nine-day prayer to the patron saint, composed of special daily prayers, the recitation of the Holy Rosary as well as the final hymn called *gozo*.² The novena is always done *cantada* or with many parts sung. A *parapanganam* (prayer leader) leads the novena and trained singers or those who have learned the songs *oido* (by ear) sing the solo parts. After the novena, the young kiss the hands of their elders.

¹ A *caseta* [Sp.] or shed, or a small shelter from which the *corocobacho dotoc* gets its name. The *cobacho* is the major set piece in the *dotoc* performance second only to the main altar. This is a shelter on the roadside where the pilgrims meet another group of Christians who join them in the pilgrimage. The exchange between the first group of pilgrims and the *cobacho* occupants makes up the major part of the journey text in the *dotoc*.

² The final hymn that is sung in the novena is called *gozo*; this is also the simple title or name for most songs honoring or giving praise. The text itself appears as verse usually consisting of quatrains and it is always sung. I cannot find an exact meaning of *gozo*, but in Spanish it means 'joy', *gozoso* being 'joyous'.

The dotoc starts at eight or nine in the evening. The street would be crowded with the barrio folk who have turned up to watch the dotoc of the first night. It is a good time to socialize and mingle with friends, cousins, and neighbours. The paradotoc are lining up at the starting position and the musikeros are tuning up their instruments. The candles are lit and the crowd scrambles towards good viewing positions. The first strains of the introduction are heard and the crowd hushes up. The dotoc has started.

From an outsider's point-of-view, there may be very little in the dotoc to watch, however grand the cobacho, the chapel, and the street, however attractive the paradotoc and their attire, however beautiful the singing. For the action of the dotoc consists in walking—dance-like but basically walking, sitting for an extended period at the cobacho, and, in the chapel—the *Tierra Santa* (Holy Land)—kneeling, standing, offering flowers and showering them on the Cross. But the Santa Cruz folk stay to watch till the end of the dotoc, many of them also singing, forming the verses with their lips, or humming the melody. They make the sign of the Cross when the paradotoc do, and they walk towards the chapel with them.³

At the end of the dotoc, the crowd disperses and many go home. But others proceed to the house of the cabo, where they partake of the feast prepared by the hosts. The feast would be either a full dinner or *merienda* (snacks). The cabo's house would be full of people: the paradotoc, the musikeros, the village folk who have turned up to sample the fare prepared for the night, and the dotoc sponsors

³ Sally Ann Ness (1992) makes a similar observation about the *tindera sinulog* of Cebu, Philippines: to the visitor it was 'minimal, impromptu, and pedestrian', (89) 'not primarily concerned with making a visual impact...a dance meant to be felt, not observed...not a spectacle... nevertheless a social dance, a ritual service with ritual functions' (92) whose efficacy was not at all doubted by those who patronized the prayer services of the dancer.

who are there in full force to help out with the many chores of preparing and serving the food and cleaning up. And then, if the budget allows it, there would be dancing and the inevitable drinking of gin or beer or, occasionally, *tuba* (coconut wine). Such merrymaking would end at about two or three in the morning.

And so it would go for the entire duration of the dotoc, until the fiesta, when everything would be even grander, even the sidelights. There would be *globos* or hot air balloons made of paper flown into the air on the night of the fiesta and a *baile* (dance) that would have an orchestra attending, not just canned music played by a sound system. It goes without saying that the dotoc would have more beautiful music, more attractive dresses, brighter lights, grander sets.

After the fiesta, the neighbourhood dotoc would begin. And in these dotoc, the children enjoy the freedom of participating. It is here that they learn the *tonos* (dotoc melodies), so that even those who do not get trained by a *parabalo* (trainer/director) are able to learn the lines. Through this humble, candle-lit dotoc, the tradition becomes entrenched in the life of the barrio. The dotoc continues till the last days of May or sometimes even until June, when the rains make outdoor activities impossible.

I could stop here and let the reader think this is how it is *always*. But the story of the dotoc practice in Baao is not told yet, not really, in the foregoing synthesis of my personal experience of the dotoc, the accounts of it told by my informants in the interviews, and my documentation of recent performances. The account is taken mostly from the way the paradotoc interviewed spoke about the tradition, and the way they always referred back to the past—'*kadtong panahon*' (in the old days). The present practice is something many of the paradotoc deplore

as '*ka-ordinaryo na sana*' (ordinary, nothing special anymore) as though it has *regressed* into the everyday, with nothing special to set it apart, nothing to 'frame' it as an important, anticipated, prepared-for event. Emphasis is placed on *regressed*, because all *paradotoc* interviewed spoke of a glorious past with great nostalgia, in happy, almost breathless tones, their memories of past performances too full for words to even begin describing them. In contrast, their voices would grate with sadness, and in hushed tones speak about the present day *dotoc*. In 1998 Lolang Idat (then 69 years old, a *paradotoc* who used to help train young teen-age girls to sing the *dotoc*) said that the old folk of the *barrio* and the members of the Pastoral Council of Santa Cruz⁴ had already discussed whether or not to continue with the *dotoc* practice, considering the poor participation both of performers and audience. The *novena* or nine-day prayers could continue, but *without* the *dotoc*, or they could record the singing and just play the recording every time. '*Abo man... puro man gusto pang agko dotoc*' (They didn't like [to dispense with the *dotoc*]...everyone still wanted the *dotoc* to continue), she said with a laugh. The performances I witnessed in 1998 were indeed already small, unremarkable events, without any of the pomp or colour remembered by the older *paradotoc*. Nine years later, in the summer of 2007, I went back for further field work and I realized that perhaps I and the *paradotoc* themselves have to find a way to look at what is happening to the *dotoc* practice in a more positive light—otherwise, the nostalgic sadness would not go away.

⁴ The Pastoral Council is an organization of lay leaders in the *barrio*, the local counterpart of the parish pastoral council in the town that is in charge of all religious matters and events.

DOTOC PRACTICES IN BIGAA, NABUA, AND CANAMAN

The dotoc of Baao is only one of at least four current, active practices; the three others are those of Bigaa, Nabua and Canaman. In Bigaa, Legazpi City, the dotoc practised is the same dotoc performed in Baao, using exactly the same text but with an altogether different performance. The dotoc of Bigaa is actually a komedya,⁵ or a komedya and dotoc put together. In the town of Nabua, the community of Santa Elena, Baras also performs the *dotoc as komedya*, focusing on the search for the Holy Cross by St. Helene and her son Constantine.

In Bigaa, a small zone of the barrio called Tinago holds their santacruzán every year, with the fiesta falling on the 31st of May. The performance begins with the *sacada*, a parade with a band of musicians that fetches the performers, called *personajes*, from the *soldados* (soldiers) to Emperatriz Elena, and brings them all to the chapel for a mass. After the mass, the komedya begins. The action of the komedya segues into a procession around the barrio. After a brief rest for dinner, the cobacho dotoc is performed. The finale is capped by *diskurso* or speeches made by the *personajes*.

In Baras, Nabua the dotoc exhibits all the elements of the usual komedya, from the plot of Christian versus Moro and the *batallas* (choreographed fighting) that end in the victory of the Christian and conversion of the Moro, to the traditional *dicho* or ‘stylized delivery of verses which generally follows a singsong pattern’ (Tiongson 1999, 19), to the repetitive *marchas* (marches) for the entrances and exits, and the costuming with the Christians in black or blue and the Moros in red. The action is divided into two major parts: the first consists of the conflict

⁵ See later discussion on the *komedya*.

between Helena and Constantine on one side and the non-Christian *Emperadora* and her troops on the other side; the second dramatizes the pilgrimage to the Holy Land to find the Cross.

After watching the performances in Baras, it became clear to me that the Bigaa komedya is the second part of the practice in Baras. What is lacking in Baras, however, is the *cobacho dotoc* that forms part 2 of the practice in Bigaa and stands alone in a slightly longer form in the dotoc practice of Baao. The cobacho dotoc is shared by Baao with other barrios of Nabua, but not Baras, because its patron saint is Santa Elena. The *autora* (director) in Baras—that in Bigaa is called *maestra* (teacher/director) and in Baao *parabalo*—referred to the *cobacho dotoc* as ‘*walo-walo*’ (*walo* is the number eight in Bicol) because the Nabua practice requires only eight *cantoras* or performers. In Bigaa, these are in fact only six or seven, or 3 pairs, while in Baao they number an average of 20 and can be as many as 46, with the performers mostly women in their late 40s and older ones. The cobacho dotoc is thus common to the Baao and Bigaa practices, while the search and finding of the Cross by Helena, performed as komedya, is common to Bigaa and Baras.

The Canaman dotoc is distinctly different from the first three in the text/s used and in the manner of performance. The dotoc text changes from first day to ninth day and the ninth day dotoc can be any of several varieties (discussed in the next section), just as the Baao dotoc had several varieties before the 1940s. The practice is called dotoc, but it is often performed with a *lagaylay*, a song and dance praise for the Cross.

How might we speak of these performances, considering that they are obviously of Spanish origin, and that their continued practice even in the urban areas seems to be discordant with the look, sound, feel, and taste of the modern? From one point of view, it is not even *theirs* and the stories performed, especially in the enacted komedya, are totally removed from their everyday life and reality. In the Western world, these performances classified as medieval theatre forms have almost totally disappeared. How do we locate the performances in the globalized present, where a deterritorialized, diasporal culture is now strongly evident, in which 'everyday life is now primarily imagined through global images and representations' (Pertierra 2004, 125)?

This thesis therefore seeks to frame/reframe the dotoc as performance by individuals and communities caught in contemporary historical time of global change and mobility, and neo- and post-colonial contexts, but tied to a past that is always present; a tradition that lives on because it is kept up.

PERFORMING LIMINALITY AND HOPE

The Bicol landscape may have been carved, scarred, and mutilated by poverty and disaster and yet it blooms with colour and the flowers of May to honour the Holy Cross. Despite the bleak context of economic hardship, political instability and repression, and the lashes of natural calamities, the paradotoc celebrate triumph and hope even as they sing of sacrifice and the travails of their journey as pilgrims.

The dotoc is an embodiment of its narrative of pilgrimage. First of all it is a tradition of worship with definite roots in the church and may then be said to encapsulate the drama of humanity's pilgrimage toward salvation in both this life

and the hereafter. In this respect, the dotoc is an allegory, giving expression to what may be the most important theme in all religious literature and a central concern in the continuing story of salvation: man as merely passing through this life in his journey towards an ultimate end—a theme that is true not just to the Roman Catholic religion but also to Islam, Buddhism, and others. As religious drama the dotoc can be classed with the world's harvest of medieval religious drama, whose 'grandeur and sweep', says Eric Bentley, reflect 'a splendid vision of life' (1966, 117).

But the dotoc as pilgrimage is not an actual pilgrimage that is the subject of renewed interest by anthropologists. It is *a performance of pilgrimage*. The paradotoc enact a pilgrimage 'as if' they are the pilgrims in the narrative. In doing so, it is as if they do become pilgrims who journey to the Holy Land to visit and pay homage to the Holy Cross. The enactment becomes the act itself. The performance transforms intention into reality.

Literature on actual pilgrimage sheds light on the performance of pilgrimage as well. There is a debate on Christian pilgrimage that Coleman (2002) calls 'communitas versus contestation', the first propounded by Victor and Edith Turner (1978) and the second by John Eade and Michael Sallnow ([1991] 2000). The Turners propose that the pilgrim goes beyond 'historical, cultural and geographical boundaries' and moves into the larger realm of 'Christian culture' and experiences therein a temporary separation from 'mundane structures and social interdependence' and a 'commonality of feeling'—*communitas*—with fellow pilgrims (Coleman 2002, 356). In contrast, Eade and Sallnow argue that pilgrimage is 'a capacious arena capable of accommodating many competing religious and secular discourses' (357).

In looking at the dotoc as performance of pilgrimage, I take Coleman's view that there may not be such a wide difference between these two ideas. The dotoc brings about an experience of *communitas*, but it also becomes more than a movement into the religious realm. *Communitas* comes with the experience of ritual in drama, a strong fellow-feeling in the dotoc participants manifested in the way they behave as one big extended family, forgetting ill-will and mundane, petty neighbourhood misunderstandings in preparing the nightly events and the fiesta and celebrating with food and drink every night of the novenario, sometimes to drunken excess. Contestation understood as the multivocal quality of pilgrimage, the site as a 'void' that can accommodate varying 'hopes, prayers, and aspirations' beyond *communitas*—can be seen in the way each paradotoc brings to the performance her/his own prayer, hope, and aspiration in all its particularity. The dotoc text carries the 'official' community hopes, prayers, and aspirations, but even these lack any collective single meaning. If one should ask about individual prayers and hopes, one will surely find many conflicting voices, as in the case of neighbours fighting over a piece of land each praying to win over the other, convinced that he/she is the rightful owner. On the same note, participation for some is just a form of socialization, of seeking acceptance in the community, or of showing off a nice dress, or a good singing voice.

Overall, however, the dotoc does rise above personal differences in being a communal undertaking. The pilgrimage of the dotoc is a metonym for the community's effort and movement toward very earthly and secular goals such as having a good harvest. The collective petitions are very much about the here and now: food, sustenance, survival—interestingly all combined and mixed up with the religious and sacred. As one but also severally, the paradotoc pray for deliverance

from evil of all forms: hunger, war, pestilence, wild beasts, and the temptations of the devil. They implore the Holy Cross for unity of the community, blessings for the priests and leaders of nations, the dotoc sponsors and the audience, and for salvation in the next life.

Contestation may therefore be said to extend as well to the act of constructing a whole new meaning of the dotoc performance—of the words and the singing. In a kind of inverted virtuality, the stories and manner of performance in the dotoc take both participant and spectator to faraway kingdoms, to events, personages and texts that go back in history almost 1500 years. And yet only the act of performance really matters to the performers. Heraclius is not the protagonist in the dotoc enactment and the greater part of the dotoc text is made up of petitions and prayers. Helena's story may be enacted in full theatrical regalia in the komedya, but the telling, the act of presentation seems to be more important than the story itself. For the dotoc performers, the tale and hymn they sing do not mean as much as the continued practice of the dotoc.

Vicente Rafael's work on translation and conversion in early Tagalog society (1993) is instructive in my making sense of the dotoc texts, especially in regard to the concept of 'fishing' and 'haunting' with which Rafael begins his discussion. The Heraclius tale and *Vexilla* hymn are received texts and, while they have been appropriated as part of the entire dotoc parcel, so to speak, they seem to fulfil more of an artifactual function that do not really compel understanding. The paradotoc have 'fished' out—and continue to do so—those parts of the text that do speak about their experiences. They are 'haunted' by memories that persist because they live on in the present, always painfully real, like the repeated calamities, or

the incessant lashes of poverty. It is about these that the petitions and prayers are full of.

Talking specifically about the komedya in a recent conference, Resil Mojares pointed to its ‘exoticism’ and its ‘undisguised artifactuality’, a point I have already raised about the dotoc. As Mojares said: the komedya exoticizes the foreign, and in so doing renders it as Other.

What is cited as its flaw is its aesthetic: the *komedya* constructs the unreal. The effect of the unreal is created through the entire apparatus of the play: its plot, setting, characters, music, language, vocal delivery, and body movement...– all these serve to mark the form as exotic and thus ‘distance’ the audience from what is represented on stage (Mojares 2008, 3).

One recalls Michael Taussig’s story of the Cuna Indians’ healing figurines that looked European, the colonial Other, and his point about mimesis and alterity—‘in some way or another the making and existence of the artifact that portrays something gives one power over that which is portrayed’ (Taussig 1993, 13). One also recalls Cannell’s statement about the Bicolans that ‘submission can be turned into the beginning of a position of strength’ (Cannell 1999, 3). And in *Postcolonial Drama*, Gilbert and Tompkins, citing Bhabha (1984), make a similar point: ‘the colonised is never *always impotent*; the coloniser is never *always powerful*’ (1996, 6 italics provided).

Should I say the same of the dotoc? In my mind I hear Dwight Conquergood’s description of the dialogical ethnographer: s/he who seeks to ‘bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and beliefs’, the result being ‘an open-ended performance, resisting conclusions and seeking to keep interrogation open’ (Conquergood cited in Carlson 2000, 25). Perhaps talking about a tradition I grew up in, I am keeping true to my ‘Bicolano trait’ of avoiding a ‘closed notion’ of my own culture.

I argue, however, that the dotoc story is artifactual and thus continues to be performed as such, while the storytelling which is always now, always said as prayer for present relief and succour, is what is highlighted, in all its presentational aspects. And it is the storytelling rather than the story that draws the community as audience, for after all the community itself shares in the storytelling performed as ritual, as prayer, and in so doing transforms itself as always new, always current, but also always the same.

The village is rural and the community's agricultural life provides the underlying rhythm of the dotoc: regular, patterned, measured, repetitive—*uno, dos, tres, cuatro*⁶ and so forth, over and over. It also defines the space of the dotoc, and by this I mean both the physical space—the way the performance space is prepared with materials from the land—and the space of memory, the way the text speaks of remembered experiences of *hambre, guerra y peste* (hunger, war, and pestilence) and, outside the text, the way good or bad memories of any dotoc year are determined by a good or bad harvest.

Dialectically, the dotoc can be seen as a wish-fulfillment—because there is a sense of its being indeed a wish played out, fulfilled for the community, because in it the pilgrims always find the Cross of Jesus. Another way to say this is that it is a construction of a utopia, in the sense that Janelle Reinelt talks about in an essay 'Theorizing Utopia' in which she quotes Paul Ricoeur: 'At a time when everything is blocked by systems which have failed but cannot be beaten...utopia is our resource. It may be an escape, but it is also the arm of critique' (Case and Reinelt 1991, 231).

⁶ The verses of the *dotoc* are arranged as sets of quatrains, with four quatrains in a set labeled *uno, dos, tres* and *cuatro*. These are sung by four rows of cantors, one row each for each of the quatrains.

The dotoc is a narrative of triumph—triumph of the Cross over sin, triumph of Helena in finding the True Cross, triumph of Heraclius over the Persians and in returning the Cross to the Holy Land, and most importantly: triumph of the pilgrims in finding the Cross and of the community in producing and staging the dotoc every night of the novenario and each year for at least the last hundred years. It is a narrative of hope that feeds the community's resolve to go on despite hard times, because there are and have been many such hard times.

Take the case of Baao, a fourth-class municipality with a population of 46,693 people in 8,496 households (2000 census). Economic activity is mainly agriculture-based, with poverty rates estimated at 63.7 percent (Malay 2001, 76). Santa Cruz and the rest of the poblacion often suffer flooding and destruction of crops and houses whenever typhoons visit the area. The *Cuaderno* or chronicles of the town of Nabua⁷ gives an idea of exactly how often and how bad were the effects of such calamities, since Nabua and Baao are contiguous areas. There are almost yearly entries about the occurrences of '*baguios*' and '*hararom na tubig*' (typhoons and floods), usually during the months of October and November. Also recorded are occurrences of epidemics: '*poco*' (smallpox) killed 388 persons in the period 1879-1880, and '*colera*' (cholera) killed 1,340 persons in 1881-1882 (*Cuaderno* 1997, 50), and the coming of pests like '*doron*' (locusts), or of earthquakes like that of 1811 that was so strong that the ground cracked and all the churches (or parts of them) in the province crashed to the ground (46). These disasters could have also affected Baao and wrecked havoc there as they did in Nabua, although there is no

⁷ The *Cuaderno* or chronicles of Nabua are cumulative records kept by generations of Nabueños, compiled and presented as a single book by one Sr. Alverto Melos, and kept and safeguarded by the Capistrano, Dinero and Pasadilla families through the years. It was published for the first time in 1978 in the Nabua Quadricentennial Jubilee Souvenir Program, through the efforts of Liborio R. Bajandi who transcribed by hand from the original manuscripts. It was published for the second time in the 1997 *Nabua Town Fiesta Souvenir Program*, 38-54.

way of knowing whether they did so to a lesser or to a greater extent. We only know that the dotoc texts do speak of these experiences.

Added to this tale of travails are the experiences of war and revolution. The Baaoneños rose to the call for revolution against the colonizers with valour and nationalist fervour, first against the Spaniards and then against the Americans and Japanese. When the Americans came, the people of Baaone met them in barrio Agdangan. The Americans won but only after fierce fighting that lasted about three hours (Dato n.d., 2-5). Agdangan was to be the setting of yet another war episode, the gory massacre by the Japanese on October 17, 1944—houses burned, over sixty men, women and children murdered, including a pregnant woman whom the Japanese pierced with a bayonet through her stomach. According to written and oral accounts, the carnage was perpetrated in angry retaliation by the Japanese to the Baaoneños' one-too-many guerrilla actions against them (Arce 1973, 8-16). This tragic day and other sad tales of war were to be commemorated later by the Baaoneños, year after year, in pageant shows⁸ that became an integral part of the town's annual celebration of Independence Day. It is worth noting that many paradotoc tell of how the dotoc flourished even during the last world war while the people were in hiding in the hills and the guerrillas were launching attacks against the Japanese forces.

The dotoc embodies pilgrimage as a liminal space. The paradotoc is in a state of perpetual uncertainty, 'betwixt and between,' always in a journey between one point and another and the dotoc is both propitiation and incantation for the safety and well-being of the community. Like van Gennep's rituals, the dotoc can

⁸ The pageant shows were re-enactments of the tragic experiences of war, especially the ones of recent memory, through live moving tableaux of 'actors' on wagons or carts or on foot, with a contingent each from the different barrios. The 'actors' were appropriately costumed and 'made-up' and, though I cannot remember actual extended dialogue, there were lines spoken or shouted and appropriate sounds made. The term 'pageant show' is from a European medieval theatre form.

be looked at as processual/processional and, in its repetition as performance, exhibits a permanent liminality.⁹

The liminal is always in transition, neither here nor there, always in the interstices of structure. In the dotoc, this can be seen as the various contexts that the paradotoc community is intimate with: always being in between typhoons and other calamities, and thus being in the seemingly unending act of rebuilding; being vulnerable because of poverty and powerless to rise from the effects of foreign conquests and regimes of corrupt and unreliable governments; unable to make sense of a globalized present that is changing the very contours and make-up of the community.

In addition to the hardships of the past, the misfortunes of contemporary times cannot be disputed. At the time I was writing this, people in Santa Cruz and the rest of Bicol were trying to pick up their lives once again after the destruction wrought by yet another calamity, the recent super typhoon Reming that devastated the region in 2006, burying entire villages, claiming lives, destroying crops, houses and public infrastructure. And as people struggled to rebuild, the same old events and images were being replayed in their milieu, repeated like the dotoc, incessant, the same, as numbing as they are insidious. Politicians were scrambling to manoeuvre themselves into their most winning form for the elections in May 2007, each trying to outdo the others in demagoguery, in buying votes and wielding the dirty magician's wand. At the same time and in the same political space, activists or passionate citizens who had chosen to speak out were being killed or summarily arrested and tortured. Militarization was intensifying as the armed revolution that

⁹ Turner talks about 'the *passage* quality of the religious life' in the Christian tradition in which 'transition has...become a permanent condition' (1995, 107) extensively discussing Francis of Assisi, his life and principles and the Franciscan Order, as one example (145-154).

was almost forty years old continued to simmer and gain adherents in the countryside, while terrorist groups that operated mainly in the south thrived on, ruthlessly beheading hapless captives when ransom demands were ignored. Able women and men continued to leave for foreign lands to work as domestic helpers, as nurses, as construction workers, in order to escape gripping poverty. And with the incursion of the World Wide Web even in rural life, young females found partners through virtual dating programs.

A year later, the context had not changed. The year 2008 had the country suffering one major disaster after another, from the ZTE Scandal that implicated the president of the republic herself, the speaker of the house, and commissioner of higher education in a multi-billion corruption case, to the rice shortages that had people queuing for food rations in every town and city all over the country. And being an appendage of the colossal US economy that experienced an all-time slump close to a major recession, the Philippine economy suffered; with remittances of overseas workers decreasing and causing a major backslide in national earnings. Gas prices soared and transport groups threatened massive protest and indeed staged major road strikes. A controversial peace agreement granting ancestral domain claims to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Southern Philippines provoked protest actions in major cities of Mindanao, and was stopped by the judiciary, setting off counter-action by some MILF factions. The consequent military action by government troops even at the height of Ramadan escalated into a full-blown war.

One can perhaps say that these are states of victimhood and as Edward Said says in the preface to *Orientalism*, referring to a criticism of Arabs and Muslims, ‘...victimology and dwelling on the depredations of empire are only ways of

evading responsibility in the present' (2003, xvi). The same may be said about this narration of woes—that it argues too much for victimology and excuses the way the community has remained in the grip of poverty and underdevelopment. But as Said argues, the long term effects of imperial intrusion cannot be summarily dismissed by distaste for the 'wailing of the victims of empire' (xvi). Indeed the *paradotoc* community is in a state of postcolonial victimhood, because certainly postcoloniality can be identified as a most likely cause for this continuing effect: the low, weak, subordinate and inferior position of the liminal *paradotoc* as she/he finds her/himself perpetually in the post-historical context of conquest by 'superior' others, never quite escaping it. The reason may be that the imperial power did not really go away; it remains as a powerful influence on the decisions of government that wittingly perpetuate structures of poverty and powerlessness in the guise of progress and the demands of globalization.

But the point I wish to make is, precisely, that the *paradotoc* is *not a wailing victim*. The *dotoc* performs these liminal states, but slips away and conquers liminality by performing the narrative of triumph. The *dotoc* is action. The *dotoc* is hope deployed and mobilized to strengthen the community. With the *dotoc*, the community claims a space in which to exist as an integral whole by the enactment of a persistent sameness, something familiar amid a world of change, the *dotoc* as ritual and prayer. And in it the community revels and renews itself, for the *dotoc* is a ritual and prayer which the Bicol people have delighted in doing, in making grand and lavish, in dressing up for, in watching or participating in as spectator, or as cantor, musician, or sponsor. It is a ritual that has drawn out the creative impulses of the people in arranging verses, composing or improvising music, fabricating settings like those of a garden and a spring where real water

flows, a tomb, Calvary. It is a ritual and prayer that is also drama and theatrical performance, a festival and celebration of identity and hope.

REFRAMING THE DOTOC

The tradition is dynamic as the context is dynamic, liminal—always in pilgrimage as the performances are pilgrimages, but ever the same, an anchor to the known and familiar past, a stabilizing and invisible bond that keeps the community together in the perpetual state of becoming, in-between a colonial past and a globalized present. There is, however, a real threat to the survival of the dotoc as cultural performance: the onslaught of ‘modern’ ideas into the minds of the young that alienate them from the tradition and make them ashamed of being part of it. The dotoc and similar traditions are ‘*bakya*’—a Tagalog term that has come to denote the rural and provincial. This is the same attitude that develops the desire to leave the community just as soon as they are able, because in it they have no future. Poverty is an urgent, indisputable reality and many people have no choice but to take the government’s proffered way out of poverty: going overseas for contractual work. And as people become real pilgrims in search of a better life outside the community, the performer-pilgrims of the dotoc become fewer, their audience thinner, the grandeur gone. The actual pilgrimage towards the desired good life—however illusory it is and however hard the journey—has caught up with the performance of pilgrimage.

In a later book, *Reframing Pilgrimage*, Coleman and Eade (2004) look at pilgrimage as mobility or movement and explore various understandings of the idea: as performative action that ‘can effect certain social and cultural transformations’; as embodied action that enables certain kinds of ‘bodily

experiences’; as part of a semantic field that necessitates a contextualized meaning of pilgrimage ‘within local cultural understandings of mobility or such terms as space, place and landscape’; and as metaphor—touching on Bauman’s (2000) and Clifford’s (1996) discourses, but referring more to ‘the ways in which pilgrimage-related discourses may evoke movement rather than require its physical instantiation’ (Coleman and Eade 2004, 16-17). As the paradotoc moves from being performer-pilgrim to metaphorical pilgrim, these ideas of pilgrimage beyond ‘communitas vs. contestation’ invite attention vis-à-vis the dotoc and the paradotoc—both those who leave and those who stay.

For the Bicolanos abroad, being away from home is an even stronger reason to perform the dotoc. I learned from the parish priest of Nabua that Nabueños in the diaspora continue performing the dotoc, a notable case being the dotoc in San Diego, California performed by male cantors. There is also a youtube clip showing the performances of the Baras dotoc in San Diego by Baras folk who had migrated there¹⁰ and the autora told me that she sent a copy of the text to Baras folk in Germany who asked for it and staged the dotoc there. In Bigaa, the expenses of the 2008 fiesta performance were paid for by an OFW (overseas Filipino worker) who recently came home. And, in Baao, it is common practice among old paradotoc to go to other places in Bicol or outside Bicol to perform the dotoc at the invitation of townmates who have left the community but continue with their *panuga* (vow). Mobility or dislocation has therefore not become an obstacle to the continuation of the tradition whether in the home community or overseas. Globalization may send people out of the villages, out of the country, and

¹⁰ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU-idTP0gM4> and related clips.

into the vast diasporic world, there to become another kind of pilgrim—but they come back or send home money for the dotoc and komedya.

For those who are left in the community, the dotoc becomes even more a striving for the promise of salvation for which the Holy Cross stands, embodied hope that the next harvest would have better yield, the next typhoon would pass them by unharmed, and the next set of leaders would repair the irrigation system and not use the town's coffers for their own businesses. Doggedly, even without the flourishes, however meagre the décor and with just a few candles, they hold the dotoc—the same dotoc, the same text and narrative, the same music, but always with a different quality to it. I will venture to say that the liminality in this dotoc is more pronounced. There is a certain poignancy to a practice that is kept as though with stubbornness, or is it with desperation? I imagine that in this liminal state the paradotoc feels even smaller in face of the bigger world's suddenly being too much there, right in their midst. But then, again, people do change with the times, they adapt, and, because they do, they survive. They do not mope or harangue; they just live. The paradotoc do not ask why the seasons change, or why there is war and enmity, or death. They eat and make merry and celebrate when they can, not because they do not care for the morrow—that is everything they hope for to be better, the field of eternal light, the pilgrim's destination—but because they believe. And it is this celebratory, almost playful dotoc that is a demonstration of faith, a mantra of hope, performed but also lived, put up for show but also truly valued.

As to the nagging postcolonial question about identity, provenance, roots and so on lurking in these pages like a ghost, the following words console if not so much exorcise it:

Who owns a culture? Who inherits it, from the moments of celebration to the documents of barbarism? Nobody, of course. For when one inherits, one inherits a global collective web, a web not concentric or symmetrical, but connected in all parts (even if no one is privileged with seeing all parts of it at once), a web which one is meant, indeed bound, to re-weave. The point is to recognize the ways in which the documents of history may be documents of barbarism, and to repossess them differently (Peters 1995, 210).

The dotoc was a work of Spanish colonization, but it has become for the Bicol folk a means for articulating their aspirations. And how they have revelled in it, enough to claim it, to mark it as their own! The foreign and fantastic settings of the komedya were ‘translated into prosodic forms, visual types, and character traits that spoke to the local concerns common to actors and audiences’ (Rafael 1999, 1195). Reinhard Wendt (1998), a German historian who has done extensive research on Philippine fiestas, has observed that fiesta traditions (like the dotoc and komedya) are very much Filipino creations already, ‘opportunities to incorporate, and thereby preserve, their own traditions’ (1998, 7) and occasions for political resistance in the same vein that the Lenten *pasyon*¹¹ has been written about by Reynaldo Ileto (1979). The komedya, specifically, developed into a distinct theatrical form that during the colonial period angered and alarmed the Spaniards (Mojares 2008). Vicente Rafael suggests that the komedya was/is a ‘means for rehearsing the appearance of the foreign in its dual guise: as a domesticated and orderly presence given a place in the vernacular, but also as an uncanny recurrence threatening to disarticulate laws from above and mobilize desires from below’ (1999, 1195). The key idea relevant here is of the ‘foreign...domesticated... in the vernacular,’ which implies two opposite movements: that of passive acceptance and assimilation and that of appropriation and control by the colonized, both of

¹¹ The *pasyon* (also spelled *pasion*) refers both to the text on the passion of Jesus Christ and its ritual singing by cantors during Holy Week. The ritual singing is practiced all over the Christian Philippines and occurs for 2-3 days, sometimes longer. The dramatized form of the *pasyon* is called *sinakulo*.

which can nevertheless be considered as acts of power. For what can be seen as assimilation may actually have been an active containment through translation of the foreign into native terms, thus an act of taming or domestication. The Spaniards must have had an idea that this was the case and no wonder the performances got their ire and condemnation.

As for the cobacho dotoc and earlier dotoc texts and their performance, the unconscious act of appropriation can be seen in the use of the Bicol language, in the versification, music and other performance elements which are all products of endless improvisations. It is also strongly evident in the relegation of the story of Heraclius to just a tale told by the pilgrims—the framing story and dominant presence is theirs (Llana 1999). In the words of Wole Soyinka, these performances have become their ‘instrument of self-definition’ (Soyinka 1996, 341). The performance of pilgrimage happens in the *now*, the action their action, and the finding of the Cross each night their story of triumph.

Though ‘haunted’ by the past, the Bicolos are therefore are not so much bothered by it as they are about the present that causes them great anxiety. This explains why every dotoc and komedya performance is given a date, offered for the specific day of performance and for the particular intention of its sponsors, a practice continued to this day. As Mojares puts it:

If the komedya remains a valid and needed form today, it is because what it seeks to address remains: the anxieties we suffer from the structures of domination that hem us in, the conflictual mix of dread and desire we feel about the ‘outside’ powers that shape our lives without our consent, and our deep need to render all these in a form we can see, understand, manipulate or subvert (Mojares 2008, 7).

NOTES ON STRUCTURE

If the dotoc is a ‘song of triumph’ as I have tried to show in this introduction, the thesis attempts to write of it in all its polyvocality, its polyphony. Translation, appropriation, the construction and assertion of an identity and subject position – these are some of the concepts I begin with in thinking the dotoc. I sing in harmony with the many voices in the literature, also oftentimes in dissonance, surfacing my own voice while trying to co-perform with the paradotoc I write about. This is ‘poiesis’ and ‘kinesis’ in co-performance as understood from Dwight Conquergood, which become possible for me because of the decisions I have taken in the course of the project and its writing.

More than song, however, movement is the metaphor I work with in setting up the structure of the thesis. My invitation to the reader is to join me in the course I have chosen; to journey with me. Pilgrimage as the theme and event in the dotoc provides me with my main structural and rhetorical device. While ‘journey’ has become quite an overused metaphor and I court the danger of being (mis)read in many ways, there is no getting away from it. This project is about four journeys at least: those of the pilgrims in the dotoc texts, those of the paradotoc who become pilgrims, mine, and that of the reader. The thesis is as much about the last two as it is about the first two, each of the four woven in with the course and itineraries of the others.

It starts out as my own journey, but then it opens out into a journey which I take the reader through the many ways to see and think the dotoc. As in a pilgrimage it moves through terrain where the traveller encounters many temporary shelters, so many provisional structures, and tests of endurance, fortitude, fidelity. My pilgrimage is one where the destination is changed in the end because the

journey changes me: the encounter with the paradotoc and their own repeated pilgrimage, as well as the encounter with the wide array of thinking that could possibly present the dotoc and the conditions of its performance in ways that make sense—these encounters mark me as completely different from the way I am/was at the beginning of the journey.

The dotoc is a performance of pilgrimage and I look at the ways that ‘performance’ and ‘pilgrimage’ have been thought, discussed, written about. Each time I end up with more questions than before, and back to the same thinking of the dotoc as colonial legacy, even as I confront the challenges posed by ethnographic writing, as shown in chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the thick description and the desire to make the account as faithful as possible to how I encountered the dotoc. But the questions remain and this is why chapter 4 comes where it does, interrupting the ethnographic, in order to pursue other possibilities of thinking the dotoc, beyond interrogating my gaze as ‘indigenous ethnographer,’ and thus to expose gaps and weaknesses in the argument. *The intention is not so much to hold on to an argument or merely to defend it, but to test it, to stretch it to its limits and thus to open it up to other spaces of thought.* As far as my journey goes, it reaches a cul-de-sac, the cul-de-sac of postcolonial theory which I try to get out of, go beyond or over. *The argument becomes a Gordian knot that needs to be cut and the cut comes with Badiou.*

Chapter 4 fulfils a critical function in my ‘journey’ as researcher/ethnographer, both in its ‘real’, that is to say the process undertaken, and in the account of it that the thesis presents. Its placement in the thesis is intended, because it performs an interruptive function, embodying what it talks about by the end of the chapter: the ‘event’ as theorized by Badiou that makes possible the

‘emergence of truth/s’. This is the pivotal moment that changes the entire journey, as evident in chapters 5 and 6 that already follow routes opened up by the Badiourian framework. This is the moment of interruption that Alain Badiou himself talks about. Badiou’s thought provides a way for me to think the dotoc practice consistently with Conquergood’s ethnographic co-performance. And so the cutting of the postcolonial knot reconnects the thinking to what is by itself a radical departure from the ‘old’ ethnography that, in my account, ends with Geertz.

The way the chapter is developed is also intended, for it shows the possibilities for thinking the dotoc through the lens of postcolonial theory and builds up the argument to its limits. Peter Hallward is extremely helpful in showing a possible way out with his theory of the specific. But the real cut comes with Badiou, who argues for making a decision of thought, who writes that truth is possible at the point when the inconsistent flashes, pierces knowledge, stops time.

Chapters 5 and 6 thus explore how the dotoc’s inconsistent appearances may be thought as its very logic, and show how futile it would be and how ‘rude’ to insist on cultural-political categories of analysis. Instead, the use of concepts from Michel de Certeau and the works of various Philippinists are intended to make space for the inconsistent details, a setting loose of polyphonic speaking. Instead, the discussion is focused on such inconsistent fragments, the clashing elements, and argues that these speak of a truth: the dotoc participants moved by grace and acting as committed, faithful subjects.

Chapter Two

Ethnographic Seeing and Cultural Performance: *What is wrong with my gaze?*

One becomes increasingly exotic to oneself, as one imagines
how others might view that which we consider normal....

- Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

I just want to get the stories
And tell them again
For this gaping hole in my memory
Wounds my soul
I have thrown out all the books
Of all the others
And swore to publish
My very own

These stories are mine too
I tell myself
Though I need to hear them
Told by another
My mama my grandma
Aunts uncles neighbours cousins
In the telling I discover
I was absent in most of them

But I still want to get the stories
And tell them myself
And I look at my mama's eyes
And see them full and brilliant
My grandma has no problem with memory
She can recount in colourful detail
How as a young girl she danced and sang the *dotoc*
Under the watchful eye of the *parabalo*

I gaze with interest
For I will write my book
With all these stories
And they will be so proud
And maybe look at my pictures of them
In the book, a fine accomplishment
I won't be in the pictures...
What a pity

I have wounds for eyes
I need to return the lenses I borrowed
My gaze might turn my mama to stone.

‘A new figure has entered the scene, the “indigenous ethnographer”. Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways’ (Clifford 1986, 9). I begin with this quotation from Clifford to acknowledge at the outset how I am positioned: I am an insider studying my own culture. I do so not to claim authority or authenticity, but to problematize this position. As Clifford says, post- and neo-colonial ethnographic practices do not necessarily result in “better” cultural accounts’ (9).

In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford sets down a manifesto for an ethnographic practice that is always a process of writing, that is more allied to literature and art than to science, to ‘making up’ and ‘inventing’ rather than ‘representing’ cultures. The book incisively explicates what it calls ‘a crisis of anthropology’ as a ‘conceptual shift, “tectonic” in its implications,’ making what used to be perceived as solid ground unstable—‘moving earth’ where ‘[t]here is no longer any place of overview’ and ‘[m]ountains are in constant motion’ (1986, 22). ‘Ethnographic experience and the participant-observation ideal are shown to be problematic’ (14). Ethnography is now revealed as contingent, constructed, not the authoritative representation of peoples or cultures who could not speak for themselves (10), implicated in hegemonic projects or the workings of imperial ambitions. On the one hand, ethnography is ‘enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities... [and] enacts power relations’ (9). On the other hand, ‘[h]uman ways of life increasingly influence, dominate, parody, translate, and subvert one another’ (22).

The indigenous ethnographer stands within, not outside, this situation. The crisis of anthropology came about as a result of historical process, the critique of colonialism on the tail of the wars, the end of empire, and decolonization, that ‘[undermined] “The West’s” ability to represent other societies...[reinforced] by an important process of theorizing about the limits of representation itself’ (10). Culture, now seen as neither an ‘object to be described’ nor ‘a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted’, is ‘contested, temporal, and emergent’ and ‘[r]epresentation and explanation—both by insiders and outsiders—is implicated in this emergence’ (19).

Ethnography in the service of anthropology once looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or non-historical.... Now ethnography encounters others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as other (23).

Whither goes the indigenous ethnographer? If this last quote refers more to Western rather than to non-Western ethnography, where does she locate herself? Educated at home but in Western-style schools, or educated in the West, reading books from the West, learning ethnography from the West—she sees herself as other vis-à-vis the ‘object’ of ethnography, her ‘home’ culture. At the same time she is still very much—but also only—‘travelling in the West’ (Clifford 1997, 5).¹ She is ‘in the West’ but wants to be out of it, longing for home; she is not in or of it, just ‘travelling’, but she is also already a stranger at home. The indigenous

¹ In the book *Routes*, James Clifford shares the story of Amitar Ghosh, ‘native of India, educated at an “ancient English university” who has done field work in Egypt’. In his account he encounters an Imam whom he wished to interview, but their conversation becomes a heated argument, Ghosh reacting to the ‘barbs’ against his own Indian culture. ‘Amid a growing crowd, the two men confront each other, loudly disputing whose country is better, more “advanced”. They each end up claiming to be only second to “the West” in possessing the finest guns and tanks and bombs. Suddenly [Ghosh] realizes that “despite the vast gap that lay between us, we understood each other perfectly. We were both travelling, he and I: we were travelling in the West.”’ Clifford comments that Ghosh’s book is a sharp critique of the ‘classic quest—exoticist, anthropological, orientalist—for pure traditions and discrete cultural differences’. That Ghosh realizes that his only common ground with the Imam is that they were both ‘travelling in the West’ is ‘a depressing revelation for the anticolonial anthropologist’ (4-5).

ethnographer is therefore caught in dangerous waters—of self-representation, but also precisely of othering herself or being the other to the one being represented in her ethnography. This chapter then tackles the question of whether or not indigenous ethnography is a distinct methodological approach and its plus and minus points as an analytical tool in the research. Ethnographic practice as ‘personal self-fashioning’ (Clifford 1988, 9) is located in the liminal spaces of travel, drawing on Clifford. Also, the indigenous ethnographer faces, if painfully, issues of self-representation and her activist dreams of community and nation.

CULTURAL PERFORMANCE

Philippine scholars are one in saying that the dotoc and many similar forms have dramatic/theatrical qualities. Realubit says that the dotoc is a form of liturgical dramatization, a rekindling of native poetic craft (Realubit 1976, 10) or dramatic impulse that had been dealt a deathblow by the Spaniards (8-9). It shows ‘dramatic externalities and ceremony’ (11). Tiongson classifies the dotoc as a playlet that celebrates the feast of patron saints (Tiongson 1975, xix). In the *Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* edited by James Brandon (2002, 215), the ‘digging for the true cross by St. Helena (*tibag*)’ is cited as one of the ‘Hispanic-influenced genres’ of performance in the Philippines.

At the core of all discussions on practices like the dotoc is the question of whether it is indeed a form of drama and/or theatre. In *Palabas*, Doreen Fernandez debunks the observation of a Spanish scholar, Wenceslao Retana, that ‘the Tagalogs had no “representacion escenica” before 1571, the year of the founding of Manila’ and the contention of another Spaniard, Vicente Barrantes, that ‘all Tagalog theater was definitely derived from Spanish theater, and that there had

been none of it before Spanish contact' (Fernandez 1996, 2) —both of which then deny the existence of any form of indigenous theatre. By indigenous theatre, Fernandez means the rituals and ceremonies, songs and dances, and customs of the people. 'The indigenous drama of the Filipino...was described and recorded by the Spaniards, but not recognized as such since it did not have the stages, costumes, scripts, and conventions that they had learned to expect from their own tradition' (5). The Spaniards had come from a tradition 'that produced Lope de Vega and Calderon de la Barca' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and so they had a different set of criteria for what would constitute theatre or drama. Fernandez proposes instead that drama be defined... 'as it was in its beginnings in the Western world—as "action" or "deed" involving mimesis or mimicry'. If that were done, one would easily see that 'what the Spaniards dismissed as "pagan" and even "obscene" ...was...indigenous Philippine drama' (2).

In Fernandez's survey of Philippine theatre history, the *dotoc* would fall under the category of 'religious drama' either as one of the 'short dramatizations' or the 'more than full-length' dramas, that indeed include as example 'the *tibag*, the komedya-style play on the search for and finding of the cross' (11). Fernandez cites Tiongson's study that differentiates between dramatic observances based or derived from liturgy or on the liturgical calendar (Fernandez 1996, 10). These dramas developed from the early forms introduced by the friars, the *declamaciones graves*, *loas*, the *coloquio*, and *auto sacramental* 'to serve as audiovisual reinforcement in their teaching of religion' (10). In their present forms, 'they may well be more of folk spectacles and community projects than religious observances' (12).

Even in Fernandez's history as well as in Tiongson's categories *and* definitions, however, one gets a sense that forms like the dotoc can only be thought of as a 'dramatization'—not proper drama/theatre. Certainly it is a distinct kind of performance that cannot be classed with, say, the 'scripted, costumed, and staged' 'Western variety of theater' (12) like the zarzuelas of the early 1900s, much less with the modern dramas in English of the American period. I do not wish to build a case here against this way of presenting Philippine theatre history, nor do I wish to enter into the debates between folk versus fine, low versus high culture.² But the spectre of the colonial experience haunts these discussions, and those of Fernandez and Tiongson and all the others who have tried to put together an account of the past and of the present.

In *Theatre Histories* by Zarrilli et al (2006), the 'more inclusive' term 'cultural performance' is used.³ Citing the Mexican author Octavio Paz who regarded the fiesta as Mexico's primary mode of cultural performance, Zarrilli asks:

What happens when a specific culture's history or view of its cultural and artistic identity is shaped not by drama and theatre as defined by European standards, but rather by other indigenous modes of performance? Is a history of 'world theatre' to leave out cultural performances like fiesta? (Zarrilli 2006, xix).

The answer, obviously, is 'No', because even in the West the view of 'theatre' has had radical transformations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as avant-

² Also, for the purposes of this discussion, it suffices to understand the references to drama by both Fernandez and Tiongson as the Aristotelian definition of the term and concept in *Poetics*, as suggested by Fernandez. The fine distinctions between drama and theatre and between theatre and performance in contemporary debates are beyond the scope considered here.

³ In *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Marvin Carlson (2004) presents a historical overview of the development of the concept of performance, tracing the term to its first introduction by Milton Singer in 1959, through the ways that cultural performance was understood in terms of its context/s in the works of Dorson, Burke, Hymes, and Bauman, to Victor Turner's 'social drama' and the concepts of liminality and communitas, to Goffman's 'keying' and 'framing', the play theories, Schechner's concept of 'restored behaviour', and the concept of performativity from Austin, Searle, Butler, and Derrida. All these inform my own reflections on the dotoc, and key texts by the major theorists have been consulted, but they cannot be explicated here because of length constraints.

garde artists have 'revolted against bourgeois theatre' and produced works inspired by non-theatrical performances from the past or from other cultures. Nevertheless, most theatre histories are 'shaped by their concentration on western and pre-twentieth century forms of drama and theatre' that are in turn 'shaped' by 'western humanism'. Western humanism is 'limiting' even for western theatre/performance and all the more so if used to understand non-western theatre and performance (xx).

Cultural performance includes theatrical events, but has a broader meaning. 'Cultural performances are expressive events performed by at least one person for at least one other', ranging from storytelling or puppetry (small-scale events) to sports contests, religious rituals, and Mexican fiestas (large scale ones). They are set off from everyday life by their spatio-temporal frames, structures, and content. The performances are held at special times in special places and so spectators know that they are watching a performance. Each performance is governed by specific rules, conventions and/or techniques that constitute its unique structure. The content 'may be based on traditional tales or myths, contemporary events, or any human experience', providing an avenue for 'members of the community to reflect upon the ideas, meanings, images and/or experience of the performance' (xx). Moreover, performances are not static; they are 'always in the process of being reinvented'. The means and manner of production may be simple or complex; but what may be simple can require virtuosic skills from the performer, and complex ones may be the work of multiple specialists in highly interactive tasks.

Zarrilli notes that 'theatre', from the Greek *theatron*, meaning 'seeing place', came about with the invention of writing and that it often refers to the

structures where performances are held (xxii). ‘Drama’ has been associated with the written text or script meant to be read or performed and relies on narrative for its structure (xxiii). The ‘bias’ against non-western cultural performances developed during the period of colonization when the westerners encountered these performances in the colonies and judged them as inferior. ‘Europeans disdained and suppressed forms of performance that did not fit western prototypes of drama or theatre and in many areas actively eradicated them.’ They did see forms which ‘better fit their prototypes’ and were surprised at their existence in the cultures and peoples they had thought as inferior (xxiii).

It seems to me that Fernandez and Tiongson, and Realubit who worked specifically on Bicol performances, have been pursuing a direction vastly divergent from that suggested by Zarrilli. There is a sense that the Philippine scholars desperately want to prove that there was/there still are Philippine forms that were not brought by the Spaniards, but ones indigenous to the islands, which could pass the criteria of drama ‘as it was in its beginnings in the Western world’—upholding in effect the Western criteria and claiming some degree of dignity for the indigenous forms by measuring up to the criteria. In contrast, Zarrilli the Western theatre historian, mindful of the ways historiography has sidelined, silenced, or ignored the non-Western, is now conscientiously including them (us) and suggesting that a different category be used to understand their practices—in effect, telling us that the Filipinos might have been too fettered by their colonial training to escape its epistemological net. They find themselves stuck in the postcolonial predicament of thinking outside of while thinking in and with Western frames.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains this best as *a response to a command*. The intellectuals from the non-West did not or do not have a choice. '[O]ur turn towards the West—the so-called non-West's turn towards the West is a *command*. That turn was not in order to fulfil some longing to consolidate a pure space for ourselves, that turn was a command.' Whereas 'the Western intellectual's longing for all that is not West' can be seen as marking 'the management of crisis'—a repeated crisis of European consciousness, the reverse of this reveals 'the violence' wrought on the non-West, who could now be accused as being 'too Western' or, going the way of the West now turning to the East, whose 'desire to turn toward what is not the West...could very easily be transformed into just wanting to be the "true native".' The desire 'has become doubly displaced' (Spivak 1990, 8, emphasis in original). The response to the command is however seen as 'enabling'—'Without that turn we would not in fact have been able to make out a life for ourselves as intellectuals' (8). She talks about the 'enabling violation of the post-colonial situation' and says she is more interested in this 'than in finding some sort of national identity untouched by the vicissitudes of history' (137). She professes to be anti-imperialist, but says, again, that 'since it is the structures of cultural imperialism that has enabled me, I negotiate with it...' (147). Spivak thus hardly exemplifies the intellectuals in the former colonies unable to get away from the way they were brought up and trained to think courtesy of their colonial education. Spivak has made the 'turn' much like the intellectuals of the West have made the turn away from the 'grand recits'.

It is instructive that she speaks also of the negotiation that enabled the change in 'the indigenous power structure in the colonies in terms of what the colonists imposed.' The people who ascended to power, 'not always unwilling

objects of a certain kind of epistemic violence, negotiated with these structures of violence in order to emerge as the so-called colonial subject' (102). Perhaps this is why she says she is 'not exculpating' herself (148)? This colonial subject is not equal to or the same as what she posits as the 'Native Informant' in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), because the 'typecase of the foreclosed native informant' for her is 'the poorest woman of the South' (1999, 16), also her figure of the subaltern who cannot speak. But are not both forms of negotiation somehow equally complicit with perpetrating such structures of violence that she speaks about? While one is a manoeuvre for staying in power among the colonized, the other—hers and those of intellectuals in a similar position *enabled* by cultural imperialism—is a bid for a kind of comfort zone as subject that surely also brings some kind of economic and social security and upward mobility. Spivak derides the 'self-marginalizing or self-consolidating migrant or postcolonial masquerading as a "native informant"' (1999, 6), but is not one form of complicity much like the other and this criticism may therefore be considered a poor excuse for obeying the *command*? Surely the postcolonial intellectual as she points out cannot claim to be like the 'poorest woman of the South' or the 'genuinely disenfranchised who never had access to [the] grand narratives anyway' —the grand narratives, like nationalism, that were used as '*alibis* for decolonization' by those who aspired to climb to the high echelons of the power structure in the colonies. Is it a case of the pot calling the kettle black?

ETHNOGRAPHY AND COLONIALISM

The thesis argues that the subaltern can speak, have been and are speaking. They are not mired in despair and are about to break apart. Instead they are in

festival, are full of hope for the future. They are in the mode of action. Indeed one cannot gainsay the logic of the view that if the subaltern speaks she/he ceases to be a subaltern—that is, if the condition of subalternity is defined by the incapacity for speech wrought by subjugation. But perhaps we have not been speaking the same language or have been on different wave frequencies and so we have not heard and have therefore concluded that they cannot, could not, possibly speak.

Coronil remarks that ‘a critical awareness of the complicity between imperialism and anthropology should lead not to a rejection of the representation of “native” voices, but to a critical transformation of anthropology’s modes of representing (and of conceptualizing) itself and its objects of study’ (Coronil 2000, 44).

Although I sympathize with Spivak’s efforts to counter the conceit that intellectuals can directly represent subaltern voices or consciousness, I believe that reducing the analysis of subalternity to charting muted subject positions continues a history of silencing. Engaging with subaltern subjects entails responding to their presence within silenced histories, listening for voices—and to silences—within the cracks of dominant histories, if only to widen them (54).

Certainly this position has been taken by many other intellectuals in the fields of anthropology and sociology and those who count ethnography among their primary methodological tools. I started this chapter with James Clifford’s proposal that ethnography be viewed as always an act of writing, a conscious exercise in construction and invention allied closely to creative work. This is a call precisely for a critical self-awareness and transformation of ethnographic modes of representation.

But the burden and vulnerability of the subaltern or indigenous ethnographer is not simply about ethnographic representation of her own culture and cultural performances. It is first of all a problem of seeing and then a challenge

of acting, inaugurating a practice of an ethnography of performance that is attentive to the specific, raw, situated performances that surely go beyond the cultural. For David Scott (1989) it is a much more basic one:

[T]he question I want to ask is whether the postcolonial, once (and indeed still)—as subaltern—so decidedly the silent object of this practice of composing knowledges and of its idea, can become—as intellectual—its subject? Can the postcolonial (intellectual) accede to anthropology as discipline and to its concept, its idea of itself?

Can the object become a subject and what goes into this process of subjectification? Can the informant become herself the researcher? What is lost or gained in authenticity or authority when this happens? And what value does it bring to knowledge production? This line of questioning seems normal enough, but it seems to be coming from a very definite perspective: a Eurocentric one, positing the subaltern as a fixed other to an always assumed subject who comes from the West. Knowledge production is the domain of the West and it has always been about constructing a self as subject based on an alterity that objectifies all the rest. Given such a framing, indeed how can the object traverse the distance towards subjectivity? The question of authenticity is therefore also a question posed from within this same framework—raised because of the dubious location from which the object-becoming-subject speaks. And would not such act be no more than mimicry? The arrogance is vertiginous!

Alas, I cannot simply claim a subject position and be done with it. If the Western scholar is burdened by the weight of history, I have the double burden—of that same history and of speaking from within the silences wrought at the underside of that history, but using the same tools, hoping to use the same language as the Western scholar.

Ethnography and anthropology were tools of colonialism and imperialism. The first known ethnographic works on the Philippines were chronicles of colonial expeditions, reporting about the land and its riches, and the savage and strange beings who inhabited the 'discovered' land. The encounter with difference was tumultuous for the Westerners and certainly turned out to be tragic for the discovered people. For the contemporary Filipino intellectual and researcher, such tragic experience has shaped his/her specific circumstances of postcoloniality and its predicaments. I plumb this history at some length to get my bearings in the encounter with practices that appear as a confusing mix of inconsistent elements, while being constantly aware that I stand within this chaotic jumble.

Antonio Pigafetta was the first of the colonial chroniclers and certainly the most famous, not least because he reported about the first circumnavigation of the world by the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan who was in command of the first expedition and now known as the discoverer of the islands. Of Venetian descent, Pigafetta joined a crew of 265 to 280 men composed mostly of Spaniards, but including some Portuguese, French, British, German, Greek, and thirty Italian sailors, the latter mostly from Genoa, birthplace of Columbus. He enlisted as one of the *sobresalientes*, or supernumeraries. These were 'usually young men of good family who joined expeditions from love of adventure or desire for advancement in military service and had no specific duties except to be at the commander's disposal for such purposes as fighting and boarding' (Mojares 2002, 22). They set out in five ships from Seville on 10th August 1519; only one of these ships was able to return to Spain three years later, on 8th September 1522, with only 21 left of the original crew, Pigafetta among them. Magellan did not survive the journey; he

was killed on Mactan Island in the Philippines by Lapulapu, now considered by the Filipinos as the very first hero in the struggle against Spain.

Pigafetta kept a journal throughout the voyage where he recorded detailed information about the places and peoples they encountered.⁴ Resil Mojares (2002) describes Pigafetta's account as having three distinct parts, written in at least two distinct styles, and using rhetorical devices that Pigafetta would have learned from other earlier travel accounts and the literature of the period. The Philippine section makes up the middle part and it is here that the courtly and heroic style of romance writing is most manifest in contrast to the 'fabulist' and 'almost frenetic' descriptions in the first (of the Americas) and last part (of Moluccas and the journey thereon back to Spain). I mention these to situate Pigafetta, following Mojares, in the writing conventions of the period, but also to show how, nevertheless, such stylization could not hide but in fact highlighted Magellan as hero, the 'rightness' of the voyage, and the superiority of the European mind and civilization in contrast to the primitive and heathenish ways of the peoples they met.

The Philippine discovery is a piece of chivalric romance. Plotting the Philippine discovery experience as a romance meant that 'certain acts were to be performed, certain ends pursued, certain desires fulfilled.'⁵ Its

⁴ According to Resil Mojares (2002, 20), there are four manuscript versions of Pigafetta's account, the *Primo viaggio intorno al mondo* (First Voyage Around the World): 'one in Italian, the language in which it was originally written (now archived in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan), and three in French, all of which derive from a common source in a lost French translation of an Italian manuscript other than the Ambrosiana (two of the French manuscripts are in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris; one in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University)'. The Ambrosiana version was however first published only in 1800 by Carlo Amoretti in Milan. Mojares gives details of researches on Pigafetta's account (see note #1, 46-47) and other appearances in other works, including those of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. English translations are available, notably *Magellan's voyage around the world: three contemporary accounts: Antonio Pigafetta, Maximilian of Transylvania, Gaspar Correã*, edited and with an introduction by Charles E. Nowell (Evanston [Ill.]: Northwestern University Press, 1962) and *First voyage round the world, by Magellan, translated from the accounts of Pigafetta and other contemporary writers* with notes and introduction by Lord Stanley of Alderley (London: Hakluyt Society, 1874).

⁵ Mojares quotes from Wayne Franklin (1979), *Discoverers, Explorers, Settler: The Diligent Writers of Early America* (Chicago: University Press), 5.

witness-narrator is ravished in wonder and rapture at seeing a new world and the progression of action takes on the character of a spiritual and moral ascent, indexed by how often Pigafetta uses such words as ‘awed’ and ‘astonished’. Even as the idea of use and exploitation lurks everywhere in the narrative it is not foregrounded. Wonder and ceremony dominate (43).

‘The heroic mode is illustrated in Pigafetta’s portrayal of Magellan as courtly, authoritative, and fearless’ (36). His arrival in the Philippines has the character of a ‘ceremonial performance’ made up of ‘a series of premeditated acts’ of which the first is the act of naming. He names places, things (flora and fauna), and people (the ‘kings’ and ‘princes’ and their wives who are ‘converted’ and baptized in the Spanish religion). ‘The act of nomination is charged with meaning and power’ (36).⁶ A second ‘performance’ is the fixing of places reached and the ‘overtly symbolic act’ of establishing presence, for instance, by ‘the planting of a cross and celebration of a Mass, which “sacralised” places and placed them under the protection of higher powers’.⁷ A third kind of these acts are the ‘highly ritualized’ exchanges with the natives who were friendly (until Lapulapu, chieftain of Mactan), and the giving of gifts. But, as Mojares comments, the acts of friendship were made with full calculation of what it would bring in return. ‘[F]riendship was not a relationship of parity but of vassalage... [and] in the European view...vassalage was a gift’ (37).

⁶ As Mojares quotes from Stephen Greenblatt (1991), *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University Press), 83— ‘The founding action of Christian imperialism is a christening. Such a christening entails the cancellation of the native name—the erasure of the alien, perhaps demonic, identity—and hence a kind of making new; it is at once an exorcism, an appropriation, and a gift.’ However, for Mojares, this ‘performance of naming is constrained, in the Philippine case, by the fact that the Europeans had wandered into an archipelago with a forest of names’. Such local names were then subsequently subsumed into the exercise of power by the act of inclusion in the European records and thereby by an ‘accession to’ and ‘encompassing of places’ similar to map making (Mojares 2002, 36-37). Many of these indigenous place names remain to this day in many areas; some places (towns, barrios, etc.) have two names: an indigenous name and the name of their patron saint.

⁷ Magellan is said to have told the natives that the erected cross is a symbol of his appearance in the islands and that if other Europeans should see it they would be friendly to the natives. He also told them that the cross would protect them from thunder, lightning, and storms if they paid homage to it every morning (Mojares 2002, 37).

Mojares observes that Pigafetta was effective in shaping his narrative such that it would be meaningful to his European readers.

Such meaningfulness, however, involved the suppression of difference. Though a discovery narrative is dialogic, shaped as it is by the communicative relationship the writer makes with the book's patron and intended audience, it is a dialogue that excludes the people of the country the book has turned into an object of knowledge. One must not forget that they, too, 'discovered' Magellan (in the full hermeneutical sense of what 'discovery' means)—and perhaps discovered him all too well that they killed him (45).

But Magellan is the undisputed hero of the account and his heroism is not marred or annulled even by his death. His death, 'described as one superbly noble and heroic, is the emotional high point of the book' (39).

In contrast, Pigafetta portrayed the natives as naïve or ignorant and as heathens. They are 'awed' and 'astonished' by the ships and gadgets of the Europeans (Pigafetta 1874). The hospitality with which they welcomed the Europeans somehow was an indication that they were a people the latter can have transactions with and Pigafetta records some 'likeness' with European ways, but, always, they are objects for conversion.

Pigafetta records strange practices (mourning custom, betel-nut chewing, tattooing) and characterizes the islanders thus: 'Those people are heathens. They go naked and painted.' That they are 'naked' and 'heathens' (which, in the specific context of its use, means that they are not Muslims) signifies a lack of culture and religion that makes them objects of conversion. Yet, Pigafetta also observes that they 'live in accordance with justice' and goes on to note their ease with strangers, their knowledge of trade and agriculture, their social hierarchy and ceremonials. Pigafetta's narration suggests that the Europeans were with a people whose level of social organization was higher than that of the wild men they saw (or imagined seeing) in America (Mojares, 33).

Mojares notes a 'double movement' in the way Pigafetta portrays the islanders, a double movement that 'underlies the diligent conceit with which Magellan impressed upon [them] European civility and power' (33).

On the one hand, he notes the features, whether of physical appearance or cultural attainment, that make them 'like the Europeans.' Their weighing scales, flutes, and the rooms in their houses are 'like ours,' and their women are 'very beautiful and almost as white as our girls and as large.' On the other hand, he remarks on those features that mark them inferior and different. Likeness suggests that these are a people with whom Europeans can have intercourse; difference demands that they be subjected to the leveling, 'civilizing' power of Europe (33).

Many others came after Pigafetta. In 1565, after a succession of several other attempts after Magellan's, the sixth expedition under the command of the conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi finally succeeded in subjecting the islands to Spanish might. With him were the religious friars who became the inheritors of Pigafetta's self-assigned task, and for the entire Spanish colonial period up to the late nineteenth century, friars assigned to missions in the islands wrote journals, reports, and other accounts. Some of these are Miguel de Loarca (1582), *Relaciones de las islas Filipinas*; Marcelo Ribadeneira (1601), *Historia de las islas del archipiélago y reinos de la gran China, Tartaria, Cochinchina, Malaca y Siam, Camboxa y Japon*; Pedro Chirino (1604), *Relacion de las islas Filipinas*; Juan Francisco de San Antonio (1738), *Cronicas de la provincia de San Gregorio Magno*; Joaquin Martinez de Zuñiga (1800), *State of the Philippines in 1800*; Eusebio Gomez Platero (1887), *Memoria Complementaria de la Seccion 2a del programa pobladores aborígenes, usos y costumbres de los habitantes de Filipinas*; Felix de Huerta (1865), *Estado geografico, estadístico, histórico, religioso de la santa y apostólica provincia de San Gregorio Magno de religiosos menores descalzos de la regular mas estrecha observancia de N.S.P. Francisco en las Islas Filipinas, China, Japon*; Francisco Aragonese (1825), *Memoria sobre la Provincia de Camarines*; Jose Castaño (1895), *Breve noticia acerca del origen, religion, creencias y supersticiones de los antiguos Indios del Bicol*; and many more. Other sources of ethnographic data were lay persons, but still foreign:

Antonio de Morga (Spanish) (1958 [1609]), *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*; Tomas de Comyn (Spanish) (1969 [1821]), *State of the Philippines in 1810*; Sinibaldo de Mas (Spanish) (1843), *Informe sobre el estado de las Filipinas en 1842*; Jean Mallat (French) (1846), *The Philippines: History, geography, customs, agriculture, industry and commerce of the Spanish colonies in Oceania*; Feodor Jagor (German) (1965 [1875]), *Travels in the Philippines*; Juan Alvarez Guerra (Spanish) (1887), *Viajes por Filipinas: De Manila á Albay*, to name only a few of the more prominent. During the American period, there is the 55-volume work of Emma H. Blair and James A. Robertson (1973 [1906]), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, an extensive collection of letters, edicts, and official documents of the Spanish colonial period, as well as Dean C. Worcester's *The Philippines Islands and Their People* (1898), *The Non-Christian Tribes of Northern Luzon* (1906) and *The Philippines: Past and Present* (1914).

Of the Spanish materials, only Morga's *Sucesos* earned the favour of Jose Rizal,⁸ who annotated and published a new edition of Morga's work in 1890. Austin Craig tells us in his preface to *The Former Philippines Through Foreign Eyes* (1916) that Rizal's poems 'The Philippines A Century Hence' and 'The Indolence of the Filipino', written in his youth, can be read as vehement responses against the colonial construction of the Indios as lazy, evident in the travel journal of Jagor, who however became a friend and counsellor to the mature Rizal. Craig opines that the poems were also a response by the young Rizal in reading the writings of the Spaniard Tomas Comyn. Jagor travelled extensively in the Bicol provinces and it is from him that we get one of the few extended but entirely Eurocentric description of a *komedya* performed in Daraga, Albay:

⁸ Jose Rizal is the Philippines' national hero; he was killed by the Spaniards in 1896 for his inflammatory novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* that became the inspiring texts for the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

The actors stalked on, chattering their parts, which not one of them understood, and moving their arms up and down; and when they reached the edge of the stage, they tacked and went back again like ships sailing against the wind. Their countenances were entirely devoid of expression, and they spoke like automatons. If I had understood the words, the contrast between their meaning and the machine-like movement of the actors would probably have been droll enough; but, as it was, the noise, the heat, and the smoke were so great that we soon left the place.... Both the theatrical performance and the whole festival bore the impress of laziness, indifference, and mindless mimicry (Jagor 1965, 79).

As Mojares comments, ‘Jagor catches something of the spirit, though little of the sense, of the whole performance’ (Mojares 1985, 77). As to Comyn, he was quite vocal about his opposition to the training and ordination of native priests, saying that they were ‘in general unworthy of the priesthood, are rather injurious than really serviceable to the state’ and, therefore, ‘it should not be deemed unjust if they were altogether deprived of the dignity of parish curates, and only allowed to exercise their functions in necessary cases, or by attaching them to the curacies in the quality of coadjutors’ (Comyn 1821, 112). Comyn thus recommended for the bishops ‘to relax in the policy of raising the natives to the dignity of the priesthood’ (113).

All the rest of the other Spanish writings belittle the Filipinos, denying them even ‘their human attributes’ and ‘taking from them their good name’ (Craig 1916). The following extract taken from the *Relacion* of Chirino, one of the early missionaries sent to the islands, is just one example:

The Tagalos, which is the name of the whitest and most civilized race of Manila, were not the only ones who descended from the mountains.... After the men came the beasts of burden (namely, the Negrillos, who are more fierce, and dwell in the mountains) who came with outstretched hands to place themselves in those of their swift Angels, sent to succor this abject and ruined people. By this I mean that the Negrillos, of whom I have already spoken—who are the ancient inhabitants of some of these islands, including Manila, in which there are many of that race who live, as I said, in the mountains, merely like wild beasts—impressed by the example of the others, began to be peaceable and tame, and to prepare themselves for holy baptism. This, for those who are acquainted with their savageness and

brutality, is wonderful beyond exaggeration. But this very brutal and barbarous nature renders them (a marvelous thing!) less incapable of our holy faith, and less averse to it—because in their state of pure savagery they have not, as I know from observation, any idolatries or superstitions, neither are they greatly averse to the gospel and baptism. The others—who to their own detriment and misfortune, are more civilized—abandon more regretfully their idols, ceremonies, priests, sacrifices, and superstitions; and, although they renounce them in holy baptism and are converted (vanquished by the light of Catholic truth), the vestiges of the evil which they have sucked from their mothers' breasts are not so easily forgotten as to unburden us, their teachers, of many cares (Chirino 1604 in Blair and Robertson Vol 12, 261-262).

Writing in the late nineteenth century, Fray Castaño still basically says the same of the Bicolanos:⁹

Si la religion de los indios moradores de las encantadoras margenes del caudaloso Bicol y de las abruptas serranias que lo rodean, era tan torpe y grosera como hemos visto; si su culto, ademas de ser torpe y estrafalario, era tan poco racional, ¿Qué diremos de sus creencias supersticiosas? Estas eran tantas, tan raras y tan incomprendibles en cabeza humana, que a no verias admitidas por los escritores de la epoca a que se refieran, no las creeriamos. Porque a nosotros, los hijos de la gracia, los iluminados con la luz de la razon, sublimada por la antorcha de la fe, se nos hace casi un imposible el creer en la existencia de semejantes aberraciones y ridiculas monstruosidades. Y esto no debiera de ser así, sino que, por el contrario, deberiamos considerar lo que, según eso, seria el hombre privado de la revelacion divina y a solas con la tan decantada luz la razon (Castaño 1895, 39).¹⁰

The colonial discourse was clearly, as Gerona (2005) points out, that the pre-colonial people and culture were in such a state of abject barbarity, evil and

⁹ It is interesting that Fray Castaño served as parish priest in Baao for a period of eleven years, 1885- 1896 (according to the List of Parish Priests in the Baao Parish Record), and it is within this period, in 1895, that *Breve Noticia* was published as part of Retana's *Archivo*. His recorded observations could have been based on his experience of pre-Christian religiosity in Baao for it is very probable that he wrote most of his tract during his tenure there.

¹⁰ Gerona (2005, 240) has a translation of this passage: 'If the religion of the native inhabitants of the enchanting margins of the fulsome Bicol and the rolling hills which surround it is so rude and awkward as we have seen, if its cult, aside from being primitive and outlandish, which was hardly rational, what can we say of their superstitious beliefs? They are equally the same, so peculiar and so incomprehensible in the human mind, that have we not read them in the writings of the period we may not probably believe them. Because for us, children of grace, illumined by reason, made worthy by the grace of faith, could hardly believe in the existence of such aberrations and ridiculous monstrosities. And that this ought not to be such, on the contrary, we ought to consider that these are men deprived of the divine revelation, and only possessed with such distorted light of reason.'

darkness, under the influence of the Devil, that the natives could only be grateful for the salvation and light brought to them by the Spanish religion.

The tragic fact of Philippine historiography and scholarship is that these texts have become the sources of information about the pre-contact Filipinos, their society and their culture. Up to this day, any historian worth his salt cites these sources or goes to great lengths to visit the libraries and archives of Spain and the United States where many of the other ‘legitimate’ materials can be found. Except for the living traditions of indigenous peoples in the far South and in the highlands of the Cordilleras in the North, or those of the Aeta and Mangyan communities scattered in Central and Southern Luzon, many of which escaped Spanish influence, little is known about the Philippines and the Filipinos before the coming of the Spaniards outside of the texts written by the colonizers. It is commonly believed, from many of the source documents revealed for instance in Blair and Robertson, that the Spaniards did a thorough, total, and systematic erasure of the culture of the people they found in the islands and, up to this time, many scholars¹¹ wonder how a people so fierce, like the ancients Bicol, could have been subdued so totally—because the Spanish documents also reveal that they fought long and hard to the death when the conquistadors arrived.¹²

¹¹ For instance, see Cannell (1999, 1).

¹² In the Letter of Fray Martin de Rada to the Viceroy Martin de Enriquez, Manila, June 30, 1574 qtd. in Reyes 1992, 91, we find the following:

And so left Captain Juan de Salcedo and Captain Pedro de Chaves with soldiers to pacify the people in the Vicor river and los Camarines in the same Island of Luzon who are the most valiant and best armed in all those islands...and all the towns they defended and would not give tribute until conquered by force of arms.... Therefore, since all the people defended themselves, more have perished in that land than in any other yet conquered.

Similar testimonies can be found in the Letter of Governor Guido de Lavesaris to King Philipp II of Spain on the conquest of the Bicol peninsula, July 17, 1574, also quoted in Reyes 1992, 89. Miguel A Bernad, S.J. (1972) also talks about the valour of the early Bicol in *The Christianization of the Philippines: Problems and Perspectives* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild XX, 1972), 118.

The American materials are another thing altogether. Dean C. Worcester is now mostly indicted for directly working to provide justification for the colonization of the Philippines by the United States by arguing that the islands were inhabited by a multiplicity of separate tribal groups lacking cohesion and therefore could not be considered a nation. Abandonment by the Americans could result in tribal warfare amongst them. Advancing a migration theory of the peopling of the islands, the successive waves of migration of Negritos, Indonesians, and Malaysians, out of which sprung the numerous tribes that varied greatly 'in language, manners, customs, and laws, as well as in degree of civilization', Worcester emphasized not the later waves of migration 'predisposed to assimilation and civilization but rather the chaos, multiplicity, and backwardness' that resulted from such migrations (Kramer 2006, 122). In the 1898 book, *The Philippines Islands and Their People*, he counts these tribes as eighty in all, the Negritos being the 'lowest', who are 'incapable of civilization'. As to the lowland groups, he concludes: 'With all their amiable qualities it is not to be denied that at present the civilized natives are utterly unfit for self-government' (Worcester 1898, 482, cited in Kramer 2006, 180). Kramer suggests that Worcester thus contributed greatly to 'the racialization of the Philippine population in ways that would legitimate U.S. conquest of the islands before domestic and international skeptics' (121).

A zoologist from the University of Michigan, Worcester first visited the Philippines as part of a scientific mission under Joseph B. Steere in 1887 and returned on his own in 1890. By 1898 and especially after the publication of *The Philippine Islands*, he had become an 'expert' on the Philippines and was able to wield his influence in tipping congressional decision in favour of colonization of

the Philippines despite vigorous protests by anti-imperialists in the US. President McKinley was so impressed by Worcester he appointed the latter to be his personal representative in the colony and then to the First Philippine Commission. Worcester would subsequently serve as Minister of the Interior and become the commission's 'political sponsor and administrative architect' (Kramer 2006, 181). The Philippine Commission would cast their work in the colonial state in 'an aura of expertise' very much in the way that Worcester did it. 'The commission would...sponsor a great deal of scientific research during its first years, establishing scientific institutions and conducting surveys of the Philippines' agricultural, forestry, and mineral resources, as well as "ethnographic" data.... The commission saw the production of expert knowledge as central to colonial success' (181). Instructive are the following lines quoting William Howard Taft talking about the need for the systematic collection of information about the colony:

[F]or U.S. merchants to succeed in the islands, 'native tastes must be studied' and 'close examination made into the question of who of the natives may be safely trusted.' An 'intimate knowledge' of 'native customs and native desires as well as of the language of the country' was also necessary. This kind of knowledge was especially necessary in order to solve the islands' vexing 'labor question'.... 'To get the best out of the Filipino servants, one must know them and must study their traits.... [B]efore satisfactory labor can be obtained from [the Filipino], he must be under the control of a master who understands him' (Kramer 2006, 181 quoting from Taft's Union Reading College speech 1903 and Report of the Philippine Commission 1902).

All the foregoing may not qualify as ethnographic or using ethnographic or anthropological methods as they are understood at present, but they all fall within the purview of these disciplines in the general sense. In any case, these materials compiled or gathered in the course of violent campaigns to subjugate a people are still the major sources of ethnographic knowledge that I cite here as evidence that

the collection of ethnographic data and the ways that they were used in the Philippine case whether by the Spanish or by the Americans served the ends of colonialism and imperialism.

Blair and Robertson's massive collection continues to be a rich resource for researchers—providing access to many of the Spanish materials cited above in their English versions. But a recent article in the *Philippine Studies* journal interrogates its integrity in presenting an objective account. Gloria Cano (2008) suspects and presents persuasive arguments that the collection purposely cast the Spanish in a bad light in order to highlight in contrast the goodwill of the Americans and the legitimacy of their take-over of the colony. Her interrogation is driven mainly by evidences showing the hand of James A. LeRoy in the crafting of Blair and Robertson's oeuvre. LeRoy was secretary to Dean C. Worcester and was therefore directly connected to the colonial project of consolidating American hegemony after the Philippine-American War both in the colony and in the U.S. According to Cano, LeRoy first attacked the initial five volumes covering the period 1493-1583; the criticism came out in the *American Historical Review* in 1904, saying that the work was 'of small value' because it consisted of already published materials, that Blair and Robertson were 'being misled by someone who had been a "hireling of the friars"' (referring to the Spanish scholar Wenceslao Retana whom LeRoy thoroughly detested), and that the research 'was deficient'—the annotation was poor or lacking (Cano, 18). Emma Blair then corresponded with him and eventually asked for his assistance, which he gave. Cano says LeRoy's involvement was the reason why the collection was extended to cover the entire Spanish colonial period until 1898 instead of the originally planned 1493-1803, and shows evidences that LeRoy was later virtually dictating to James Robertson

which texts and authors to include or exclude; from volume 6 onwards, it was LeRoy and thus American interest that shaped the collection, and this is evident in the appendix on education in volume 46 where it is clearly LeRoy's voice speaking in passages such as: 'It is the chief glory of the American connection with the Philippines, that no sooner was their easy conquest an assured fact than attention was directed toward the education of the peoples who came under the control of the Western democracy' (Blair and Robertson 1906, 46:364). 'This praise for America was also a denigration of the Spanish system of education whose methods LeRoy and Robertson considered antiquated. This backwardness is blamed for the poor condition of Spain' (Cano, 30). Cano says that Filipino scholars who actually lived during the last years of the Spanish period: Clemente J. Zulueta and Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera already saw many defects in the collection—defects in the translations of documents and accounts to name only one among several. But later scholars have only praises for Blair and Robertson; the Bicolano archivist Domingo Abella's preface to the 1973 reprint is, for Cano, 'a eulogy to [Blair and Robertson... insisting] on the cultural value of *The Philippine Islands* and [stressing] that "it is the only collection of historical sources in English available to our scholars and students who are unable to read the originals in Spanish" [and saying, in emphasis] that even Retana recognized that there was no single Spanish work similar to the Blair and Robertson series' (35). For Cano, Abella's praise is proof of 'the triumph of Americanization in the Philippines' (36).

Because of nearly a century of using the Blair and Robertson compendium, stereotyped images of the Spanish regime, of Filipinos, and of the Philippines are difficult to deconstruct. It is hard even to try to retranslate the documents by going back to the transcripts used by Blair and Robertson, which are lodged in the Newberry Library, because even these are untrustworthy. In any case there seems to be no end in sight to the continued use of *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* (Cano, 36).

Gloria Cano is herself Spanish and it seems to me that she is somehow engaged in her own kind of recuperation of a tarnished image of her own country. Nevertheless, her ‘expose’ provides a disturbing glimpse into the dirty business of manipulating the construction of images and narratives—of ideologies that go down the ages and are consumed as truth by later users (or even if taken just as a body of facts, not truth, such constructions tend to become naturalised with constant use and have a way of working into the affections of users like Abella). Certainly her work is valuable even as late as now, more than a hundred years after Blair and Robertson’s work first came out, because the Americans are still at it, projecting a good image of themselves through and beyond texts like *The Philippine Islands*, in ways that perhaps even close investigative works like Cano’s cannot unravel. The Philippines is still in the firm grip of U.S. neocolonial control and the construction of the Filipino wrought during the early stage of imperial domination mainly through the public education system and the cooptation of elite interests has become entrenched deep in the Filipino psyche.

Blair and Robertson’s work conveniently stops at 1898, thereby not covering the period immediately after, when the Philippine revolutionaries discovered the true intent of the Americans as the new colonizers and the Philippine American War broke out—a war that killed hundreds of thousands of Filipinos in open battles and in the rampage of atrocities visited on entire territories like Samar.¹³ In the history books used in the schools, this is hardly taken up. To

¹³ Samar is an island province on the northwest of the Visayan group of islands. Its story, known by many as the Balangiga Massacre in the Philippine-American War is both a story of victory and a story of defeat, for it is both a story of attack and retaliation. The Samarons launched a successful guerrilla raid in Balangiga in 1901 that killed forty American soldiers; the Americans retaliated with their mighty force. General Jacob H. Smith gave the command to kill and burn and take no prisoners, to turn Samar into ‘a howling wilderness’. Kramer writes that ‘the direct result of these instructions was systematic destruction and killing on a vast scale. One marine wrote home that he and his comrades were “hiking all the time killing all we come across.” Another later recalled that “we were to shoot on sight anyone over 12 years old, armed or not, to burn everything and to make

anyone who comes to know how significant it is not only in the history of anti-colonialism in the Philippines but also in America's history of imperial ambition and drive for world domination evident to this day—the omission is very suspicious and insidious indeed. There is also no mention of the way Filipinos were displayed like animals or objects of curiosity in the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, how they were ogled like circus performers, their recreated village life and dog-eating turned into amusement fare for the ticket-paying U.S. citizens who came in droves to watch them.¹⁴ As a politicized Filipino I am both amazed and angered by the fact that these traumatic events seem to have been erased in the people's collective memory. Even my oldest informants can remember only the individual American soldiers who gave them canned goods and chocolates when the American forces came back to flush out the Japanese in 1946. In the minds of many Filipinos, the Americans liberated the country first from the Spanish, and then from the Japanese, and it is the legacy of the Americans that they are now enjoying: the democratic institutions, the American-style school system, the use of English, and so on.

the Island of Samar a howling wilderness.” While Capt. David D. Porter later explained that he believed Smith to have meant ‘insurrectos’ only, he recalled that marines at the time had understood that, with the exception of those who had taken an oath of allegiance, “everybody in Samar was an insurrecto” (Kramer 145). Also see various accounts of this incident online via links in wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balangiga_massacre retrieved 4 March 2009) or google scholar (search for ‘balangiga massacre’) or see Leon Wolff's *Little Brown Brother* (1961).

¹⁴ The St. Louis World's Fair 1904 exhibited a total of 1,200 Filipinos from at least 10 tribal groups in recreated villages spanning 47 acres of the fair grounds, the largest of all. It turned out to be the number one seller as fair goers trooped straight to the Filipino villages, their appetite for the strange and exotic roused by the advertisements. The exhibition was more than a commercial venture, however; it was an ethnographic display that was meant to show the American people that the colonial project was justifiable and fulfilled in fact the ‘white man's burden’ of bringing civilization to these wretched, backward, savage people who could not rule themselves. See Fermin, J. D. (2004). *1904 World's Fair: The Filipino Experience*: Infinity Publishing (PA); Parezo, N. J., & Fowler, D. D. (2007). *Anthropology goes to the fair: the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition*: University of Nebraska Press; Rydell, R. W. (1993). *World of fairs: the century-of-progress expositions*: University of Chicago Press; Vaughn, C. (1996). *Ogling Igorots: The Politics and Commerce of Exhibiting Cultural Otherness, 1898-1913*. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, 219; Blumentritt, M. (1998). Bontoc Eulogy, History, and the Craft of Memory: An Extended Conversation with Marlon E. Fuentes. *Amerasia Journal*, 24(3), 75-90.

Whether or not Cano's essay will have an impact on the Philippine community of scholars or on other Philippinists is, however, too early to tell. I can only hazard a guess that it will be noted but that the compendium will nonetheless continue to be used by default—because it is the most accessible material on the Spanish sources. The past has become a text and this text is provided largely by Blair and Robertson.¹⁵ And by dint of its current controlling power over knowledge production, now bolstered by even stronger weapons for influencing worldviews and even dreams and aspirations, like the mass media, the U.S. will continue to escape the Filipino's critical eye.¹⁶

¹⁵ Beyond Blair and Robertson, San Juan (1999, 56-58) provides a critical survey of American texts on the U.S. involvement in the Philippines or the U.S. –Philippine relations, critically citing major works such as W. Cameron Forbes' *The Philippine Islands* (1924), Joseph Hayden's *The Philippines: A Study in National Development* (1942), George Taylor's *The Philippines and the United States: Problems of Partnerships* (1964), Stanley Karnow's *In Our Image* (1989), and those of other authors like Theodore Friend (1986) and Peter Stanley (1974) as examples of what he calls 'the entire disciplinary apparatus of U.S. academic scholarship [being organized] to provide an explanation' for American presence in the Philippines and the later 'failure' of the project to have the Philippines as a 'showcase of U.S. democracy in Asia after World War II'. He concludes that 'the Philippines continued to be represented by imperial discursive practice...as a realm of irrational passion, chaos, internal disorder, corruption, and inefficiency to which only the "disciplinary technology" of counterinsurgency (if the surveillance of legal apparatuses for securing consent fails) can be the appropriate remedy. Lacking agency, the "uncivilized" Filipinos from the gaze of U.S. administrators cannot enjoy full, positive sovereignty' (65). San Juan praises the works critical of U.S. imperialism like James Blount's *The American Occupation of the Philippines* (1912), Leon Wolff's *Little Brown Brother* (1961), Benedict J. Kerkvliet's *The Huk Rebellion* (1977), and Stuart Creighton Miller's *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines 1899-1903* (1982).

¹⁶ Of course I am here speaking in general, because there has always been a significant number of Filipinos who see through the posturings of the U.S., from the very beginning in 1898 to this day. Even as this is being written, rallies by organized protesters are being held everyday in Manila against the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) between the U.S. and the Philippines, calling for its abrogation and the cancellation of the joint military exercises called *balikatan*, scheduled to be held in April 2009 in Camarines Sur, Albay, and Sorsogon in the Bicol Region. The Bicolanos have organized a regional anti-*balikatan* alliance and have launched a noisy and vigorous protest campaign. A bill has been filed in both houses of congress to repeal the VFA. The U.S. used to have two big military bases in the Philippines, but anti-imperialist groups succeeded in having the bases agreement repealed and the Americans dismantled the bases after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991. Several years later, the Philippine government consented to enter into another military agreement: the VFA, this time allowing the U.S. military access to virtually any part of the archipelago purportedly only for joint training exercises with the Philippine military and for 'humanitarian' projects. The government openly admits however that the VFA forms part of the global anti-terrorism drive. The recent vigour in the anti-VFA protests has been due to proven cases of abuse by US military forces, one of whom has been convicted for rape in 2006 but has not been surrendered to the custody of Philippine authorities to serve his sentence up to this time. In Bicol, clearing exercises in preparation for the *balikatan* in April 2009 has killed a one year old infant, injured an adult and destroyed their home in February 2009.

TEXTUALIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

Who should speak for whom? Do not the dignity and humanity of people make them equally capable of speech and action and thought for their own actualization? The Filipinos' colonial experience testifies to the contrary. The many ways we are now—in our bodies, in our minds, in what we desire and dream—are products of this experience. Others have spoken for us, about us, to us. They have defined to us who we are, what we need, how we should move, what we should dream and work for—without our consent. And their speaking has made us ashamed of our nakedness, of our barbaric ways. Suddenly we were lewd and uncivilized. Even our gods were less powerful and our priestesses were accused of being spawns of the devil, *brujas* or witches. So we had learnt the manners of civility and decency, how to cover our bodies or move with them, how to direct our thoughts to the prescribed good. We had to rethink what was right or wrong, or what worked. Suddenly everything that was ours paled in comparison to what the foreigners have brought. Worst of all, we now think this is how it has always been. We have lost our voice or the alien wind has wrested it from us. We feel our body should be different and our mind only knows the constant fear of dying in the poverty of the present. It seems we have lost even our memory.

We have become dehumanized by our oppression as a colonized people, as surely Paulo Freire would put it (Freire 1970), first by the Spanish and then by the Americans. The most manifest indication of such dehumanization is thinking like the oppressor, wanting to be like the oppressor, having a double consciousness.¹⁷

¹⁷ Freire says that dehumanization afflicts both the oppressed and the oppressor, but that it is the oppressed who by the act of freeing themselves free others, including the oppressor.

Reading Memmi (Fanon and Haddour 2006) reading Frantz Fanon, I feel the words like a brand on my wretched soul:

The identification of the former Black slave with the White nation which enslaved and then apparently adopted him inevitably contains a subtle poison: the success of the operation—if one can speak of success—demands that the Black man renounce himself as Black. It must be admitted that for a long time the Black himself consented to the White man's monstrous demand. This is understandable: it is not up to the powerful to become more like the weak; assimilation takes place from the dominated to the dominant; from the dominated culture to the dominating culture, hardly ever in the reverse sense.... Now as one of the results of this unnatural effort, the war waged by the White against the Black also brings about a war of the Black against himself, a war that is perhaps even more destructive, for it is unremittingly carried on from within (Memmi 1973, 15).¹⁸

But that 'the Black himself *consented* to the White man's monstrous demand' is something that must be read against its usual meaning, because it was not by any measure a freely willed consent. In the Philippine case vis-à-vis the Americans, assimilation was an official campaign by the colonizing state that used all kinds of strategies and tactics, overt and covert, including deception and manipulation.

How has this happened? Were we too weak we did not have a hope of resisting? We have lost all the battles on all fronts by common reckoning. The colonization has been total and thorough: in body, mind, and spirit. We are continuing to fight but at great cost, for the enemy is among us. We are continuing to fight for freedom and life, but risking that very life:

I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world—that is, of a world of reciprocal negotiations (Fanon 1986, 218).

Writing about Latin American experience, Diana Taylor (2001; 2003) provides an explanation: 'Part of the colonizing project consisted in discrediting

¹⁸ According to Memmi, this is the early Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks* that is contrasted to the late Fanon of *The Wretched of the Earth*; the first psychoanalytic, the second pure revolutionary praxis. (In the Introduction to *The Fanon Reader* by Azzedine Haddour 2006).

autochthonous ways of preserving and communicating historical understanding' (2001, 219). 'As a result, the very existence/presence of these populations has come under question. Aztec and Mayan codices, or painted books, were destroyed as idolatrous, bad objects. [T]he colonizers also tried to destroy embodied memory systems, by both stamping them out and discrediting them' (2003, 34). Most of the autochthonous ways are what she calls the 'repertoire'—'embodied memory' in the form of 'performances, gestures, orature, movement, dance, singing, and...traumatic flashbacks, repeats, and hallucinations'. Writing and written records—the 'archive'—were privileged over the repertoire (as they tend to be even to this day). Performances are ephemeral and thus disappear and leave no physical trace. They do not provide any lasting evidence that something did occur or was said or done. Taylor clarifies that she is not saying that their ancestors did not have writing—'the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas practiced writing before the Conquest—either in pictogram form, hieroglyphs, or knotting systems—[but that] it never replaced the performed utterance' (2003, 17).

What changed with the Conquest was not that writing displaced embodied practice (we need only remember that the friars brought their own embodied practices) but the degree of legitimization of writing over other epistemic or mnemonic systems.... Not only did the colonizers burn the ancient codices, they limited the access to writing to a very small group of conquered males who they felt would promote their evangelical efforts. While the conquerors elaborated, rather than transformed, an elite practice and gender-power arrangement, the importance granted writing came at the expense of embodied practices as a way of knowing and making claims. Those who controlled writing, first the friars, then the *letrados* (literally, 'lettered'), gained an inordinate amount of power. Writing also allowed European imperial centers...to control their colonial populations from abroad (2003, 18).

The performances 'were not considered valid forms of knowledge' and many that were 'deemed idolatrous by religious and civil authorities were prohibited altogether'. Writing was deployed to accomplish the disappearance of the pre-

conquest cultures. As Bernardino de Sahagun, one of the colonial writers, said, ‘he needed to write down all the indigenous practices to better eradicate them’—and so for Taylor, “‘preservation’ served as a call to erasure...’ (2003, 41).

All these can be said as well for the Philippine experience, qualifying only that in the Philippine case, the impact on women was perhaps all the more insidious, because the friars launched fatal blows directly against what they perceived as their direct competitors in the realm of religion: the *balyanas* (Bicol priestesses) who were women, and their associates called *asog*, men who dressed as women in their performance of their shamanic duties.¹⁹

Paradoxically, as Taylor points out and as suggested in the earlier discussions here, the ‘preserved’ colonial writings have become the sources of knowledge by natives studying their own culture. On the one hand, such practice has resulted in the reversal or subversion of the colonial agenda and led to the production of emancipatory texts by radical scholars; on the other hand, the uncritical use of such inherited materials has fulfilled precisely the colonial project beyond even the expectations of the colonialists during their time.

The value of Taylor’s work goes beyond explaining the colonial condition that persists even after the colonialists have physically left.²⁰ For this thesis, in fact, it provides a way forward in methodology: using performance as an epistemic tool

¹⁹ This is the subject of Carolyn Brewer’s investigation in the book *Shamanism, Catholicism and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines* (2004) focusing on the clash between the native shamans and the friars and how the former were systematically eradicated from powerful positions as brokers of the sacred. See chapters 5 and 6.

²⁰ The next chapter takes up the colonial/post/neocolonial condition in relation to the problem of representation and subaltern agency. I have to note here, however (though not as a critique of Taylor), that I subscribe to the view that the colonial condition cannot be reduced to a problem of cultural representation. Although it is in this arena where some of the greatest and most violent battles are fought, this problem in fact has been produced by centuries of oppression in the Marxist sense and the handiwork of imperialism in the Leninist sense. According to Kumkum Sangari, ‘To believe that a critique of the centred subject and of representation is equal to a critique of colonialism and its accoutrements is in fact to disregard the different historical formation of subjects and ways of seeing that have actually obtained from colonization’ (1995, 146 cited in San Juan 1999, 22). Also see Callinicos 1989 and Appiah 1995 for similar views.

that is equally as valuable as the archive in the production of social memory and historical knowledge. Taylor is not rejecting the archive or writing—her work itself is ‘destined’ for it (2003, 52). She avers in fact that ‘writing and embodied performance have often worked together to layer the historical memories that constitute community....’

The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through the bodies and mnemonic practices. Memory paths and documented records might retain what the other ‘forgot.’ These systems sustain and mutually produce each other; neither is outside or antithetical to the logic of the other (2003, 35-36).

For my work on the dotoc, I see these interlocked logics of the archive and the repertoire in dynamic play, although I do argue that it is the performance that is primary and that the archive dimension of the practice, represented by the text, the *orihinal* passed down from one generation to the next or copied and multiplied by hand (now computer-encoded and printed), is an artifact and treated as such by the performers and their communities.

But given the primacy of writing and what is at stake in this discussion, I join Taylor in asking: ‘What is at risk politically in thinking about embodied knowledge and performance as ephemeral [and] that which disappears?’²¹ Whose memories “disappear” if only archival knowledge is valorized and granted permanence? Should we simply expand the archive to house the mnemonic and gestural practices and specialized knowledge transmitted live?’ Echoing Rebecca Schneider’s questions,²² Taylor asks further: ‘If we consider performance as a

²¹ The idea of performance as disappearance is propounded by Peggy Phelan in her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993). The idea is wholly radical and emancipatory in that it rejects foreclosure and fixatedness of performance or its being frozen into materiality and prized/priced as something exchangeable in a highly commoditized world. While recognizing the value of Phelan’s view, the questions asked here are nevertheless important for thinking about how indeed embodied practices can produce knowledge that will remain and be carried forward down the ages.

²² See Schneider’s essay in *Performance Research* 6/2 (2001), 100-108.

process of disappearance...are we limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive?’

Embodied memory, because it is ‘live’ and uncapturable, exceeds the archive. But that does not mean that performance—as ritualized, formalized, or reiterative behavior—disappears. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of again-ness, they reconstitute themselves—transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts, though they belong to the repertoire, in themselves record and transmit knowledge through physical movement (2001, 220).

Joseph Roach talks about ‘expressive movements or mnemonic reserves [that include] patterned movements made and remembered by bodies....’ He cites Pierre Nora, the French historian, who finds ‘true memory’ in ‘gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories’ (1996, 26).

Embodied performance does disappear; it is indeed ephemeral in that it cannot be contained by the archive. A video documentation is not the same as the performance itself and no ethnographic account can be the last word on what is described. The liveness of the event prevents it from being repeated in exactly the same way. Taylor emphasizes this as an advantage of the repertoire and insists that the friars did realize how such performances ‘functioned as an episteme as well as a mnemonic practice’ (Taylor 2003, 43). That they did was in fact the reason for the colonizers’ extreme nervousness and the violence with which they sought to eliminate the ancient rituals and performances or tame them or replace them with their own embodied practices like the dotoc. They realized that the repudiated practices did not or were not disappearing. The practices lived on, were in fact ‘transferred and reproduced within the very symbolic system designed to eliminate them: Roman Catholicism’ (44). The colonized were ‘converted’ but not subdued.

Mimicry is ‘camouflage’, says Bhabha (1994, 85-92)—‘exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.’ It can become ‘mockery’ of whatever is imitated; it is ‘at once resemblance and menace’ and is, at best, ‘ambiguous’, suggesting that the domination of the colonial authority can be total, but ‘not quite’. The colonized who lacked the means for physical combat resorted to a revolt of another kind altogether in undermining the efforts and intentions of the colonizer. This is what Philippine scholars like Mojares (2008) and Rafael (1993) assert. The terms of conversion were altogether different if seen from the perspective of the colonized.

James Scott’s ‘everyday forms of resistance’ is relevant here: ‘the constant, grinding conflict over work, food, autonomy, ritual’ that peasants patiently endure and wage on an everyday basis, by means of ‘foot dragging, dissimulation, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on’ (1985, xvi). I came across the idea first from Danilo Gerona, who talks about the ways by which the ancient Bicolos ‘consistently avoided absorption into the mainstream of colonial life’ and how, ‘in this ambiguity[,] the natives developed their unique form of resistance’ (Gerona 1997, 34). This is akin to Michel de Certeau’s ‘making do’ in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), where de Certeau writes that consumption is really a different kind of production, ‘characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation ..., its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi invisibility...’ (De Certeau 1984, 31). Thus, the terms of conversion were altogether different if seen from the perspective of the colonized, who were not mere consumers but producers:

Thus the spectacular victory of Spanish colonization over the indigenous Indian cultures was diverted from its intended aims by the use made of it: even when they were subjected, indeed even when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices, and representations

that were imposed on them by force or by fascination to ends other than those of their conquerors; they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within—not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them in the service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonization which they could not escape. They metaphorized the dominant order; they made it function in another register. They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally (31-32).

The colonized were active agents who ‘performed’ for the colonizer and negotiated the doubling process that this entailed. They accommodated the new belief and practices into their repertoire and by such act survived the violence of conquest. But what this means is that the archive can never contain the repertoire; there would always be something in excess, something that escapes, but also something that is retained that could develop as counter-knowledge, as counter-memory.

To understand how the archive, nonetheless, had hold over the conquered populations, let me move back to the point already made earlier: that, with colonialism, *the past became a text*—the past was textualized with the intention to erase it, to repudiate it. This is not just one single past but layer upon layer of it, whether we are talking about the friars writing about the natives they ‘discovered’ or about the Americans making the Spanish look bad so they can claim the good credit and so on. And the tool has been writing, specifically ethnographic writing. Ethnography’s itinerary is towards the archive through textualization.

Clifford Geertz makes precisely this point: that culture is text and ethnography is writing. He propounds an interpretive anthropology, a semiotic concept of culture:

Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz 1973, 5).

For Geertz, doing ethnography or anthropological analysis is ‘not a matter of methods’ or the techniques used such as participant observation. ‘What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is’—an exercise in ‘thick description’, a term he borrows from Gilbert Ryle. ‘Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript’ (10). This is made possible because meaning, and thus, culture, is public (12) and thereby accessible. For Geertz there is no point to engaging in the ‘interminable, because unterminable debate within anthropology as to whether culture is “subjective” or “objective,” together with the mutual exchange of intellectual insults (“idealist!”- “materialist!”; “mentalist!” – “behaviorist!”; “impressionist!” – “positivist!”)’. Though ideational, culture is real and not just ‘an occult entity’. There are ways in which this fact is ‘obscured’—‘to reify it’, ‘to reduce it’ or to say that it is ‘in the hearts and minds of men’ (10). He rejects these and instead strongly avers that all three must be avoided by understanding that ‘culture is not a power’ but ‘a context, something within which [social events, behaviours, institutions or processes] can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described’ (14).

Geertz gives ‘three characteristics of ethnographic description: it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms’. A fourth characteristic is that it is ‘microscopic’ (20-21). There are three important points here: first is that doing ethnography is writing, which is really saying, as Geertz explains, that it is an act of construction of what the ethnographer perceives as what people think and say they and their compatriots are up to (9), in effect saying that the writings that come

out of it are interpretations (second and third order ones to boot)²³ or that they are ‘fictions’: ‘in the sense that they are “something made,” “something fashioned”—the original meaning of *fictio*—not that they are false, unfactual, or merely “as if” thought experiments’ (17). Also, ethnography as writing is therefore destined for the monograph, for publication. The second point is that ‘the ethnographer “inscribes” social discourse’ and in so doing fixes it (in answer to Paul Ricoeur’s question of ‘what does writing fix?’). Ethnography rescues what is ‘said’ from the event of saying so that it may be looked at again, away from or after the event that passes (19) (or disappears?). The third point is that ethnographic writing must stick close to that which is described, in its detail: ‘The important thing about the anthropologist’s findings is their complex specificness, their circumstantiality’. Here Geertz is attentive to what he calls ‘the mega-concepts with which contemporary social science is afflicted—legitimacy, modernization, integration, conflict, charisma, structure...meaning’. Only through rigorous field work: ‘long-term, mainly (though not exclusively) qualitative, highly participative, and almost obsessively fine-comb field study in confined contexts’ can such concepts ‘be given the sort of sensible actuality [that can enable one] to think not only

²³ Geertz qualifies his statement with a parenthetical aside saying that ‘only a “native” makes first order [interpretations]; it’s *his* culture’ (15, emphasis in original). In a footnote he explains further that the ethnographer’s view may even be of the fourth order or higher and the native informant’s may also be second order or higher. Mark Schneider (1987) raises the issue of validity or scientificity of the knowledge produced by such an interpretive methodology as Geertz outlines, specifically as he sees this applied by Geertz in the essay on the Balinese cockfight. He suggests that Geertz seems to be presenting an interpretation that can be said as approaching ‘the sublime’ since he does not present ethnographic evidences but ‘intuitively’ builds on observed behaviour of the Balinese in saying that the ‘why’ of the Balinese going to cockfights is so they can be in touch with their subjectivity, their sensibility as Balinese. The cockfight as the ‘web of significance’ described by Geertz may be so only to Geertz himself and not to the Balinese. Even when informants speak about their practices, what they say may not be as the practices are—it may be mere ‘flummery’ and how should the ethnographer see through it? ‘In principle if not always in practice, Geertz emphasizes that cultural texts must employ native codes.... [But] if cultural texts must necessarily use native codes to convey messages, this might be done either consciously or unconsciously. In fact (as is presumably the case with our own “body language” on occasion) it is possible that natives might be quite unaware both of the messages they send and the codes they employ’ (Schneider 1987, 812).

realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them' (23).

Of the three points gathered from Geertz, it is the second one that I wish to tie in with the thread of the discussion on textualization: that ethnography as writing fixes so that the said can be culled for future examination from the event of saying that is soon over. The performed is separated from the performance. The archive is built from the repertoire. While Geertz is saying that the product is 'fiction' (qualified nevertheless as not false, just constructed), in the passage of time such fiction tend to speak as truth, the 'real', to readers, especially if the author is not visible in the text—and authors are (invisible) most of the time. The origin of the constructed world or image of that world disappears, dies, according to Barthes' thinking; only the text remains. Moreover, the 'sayer' who is supposedly foregrounded with the 'said' may not be so, and in fixing the said the sayer is fixed as well, petrified in the textualization. Agency is foreclosed; the sayer is silenced. The situation is complicated as it is, more so when we locate it in the historical complexities of colonialism and the conflict and violence-ridden, assymetrical struggle for the power of 'worlding' (as Spivak terms it) or articulating realities, spaces, events, identities, rights and wrongs—both the 'what is' and the 'what should be'.

But of course as Geertz says, 'anthropologists do not study villages...; they study *in* villages'—meaning that they do not get 'the entire thing' (22). For me this also means that the villages live on, as they do (except if they are decimated by a campaign to 'kill and burn' and be turned into 'a howling wilderness' as happened to Balangiga and Samar during the Philippine American War), and the life and embodied performances inscribed by the ethnographer go on, paralleling the life of

the inscription or diverging from it in radical ways, disproving the ethnographer's 'fiction'. To be sure, in coercive and oppressive contexts, the ethnographic constructions circulate as truth and dehumanize the subjects by having them reject their accursed state and desire to be like the oppressor. The challenge then for the contemporary ethnographer is not so much to practise humility as to ensure that the ethnography does not serve the ends of oppression, the purposes of erasure.

James Clifford follows Geertz in saying that 'ethnography is from beginning to end enmeshed in writing' (Clifford 2003, 124). Presenting an historical development of 'ethnographic authority',²⁴ Clifford clearly locates ethnography as a twentieth century science, different from the enterprise of the colonial missionaries and travel writers. Authority derives from the labours of the ethnographer enabled by 'institutional and methodological innovations'. Clifford enumerates six characteristics of the new science: first, the 'new-style', 'professional' ethnographer adopted a 'prescribed cultural relativism' that enabled him to 'get to the heart of a culture more quickly' without being constrained by agendas like conversion; second, it was 'tacitly agreed' that the ethnographer could learn to use the native language but could manage without mastering them; third, there was 'an increased emphasis on the power of observation' and 'a distinct primacy [accorded] to the visual: interpretation was tied to description' (due to a suspicion, after Malinowski, of "privileged informants"); fourth, certain theories 'promised' a faster way of '[getting] to the heart' of a culture than conducting a thorough inventory of customs and beliefs, like Rivers' 'genealogical method' or Radcliffe-Brown's model of 'social structure'; fifth, ethnographers adopted a 'predominantly synecdochic rhetorical stance' that assumed parts as analogies of

²⁴ Clifford's essay on ethnographic authority first came out in *Representations* 1, no. 2, 118-46.

wholes; and sixth, 'the wholes thus represented tended to be synchronic' (2003, 125-127). Ethnographic authority thus developed from, first, the 'use' of 'privileged informants' through to the invocation of experience, and then to the interpretive, the dialogical, and the polyphonic. The role of interpreters and privileged informants was seen as secondary to the actual field experience of the ethnographer which was considered the 'unifying source of authority' (128). But issues of verifiability were raised; '[I]like "intuition" one has it or not, and its invocation often smacks of mystification' (129). '[The "world" conceived as experiential creation] is subjective, not dialogical or intersubjective. The ethnographer *accumulates* personal knowledge of the field' (130, emphasis in original). Interpretive authority thus became a better alternative to experiential authority. But the problem with textualization that interpretive authority engenders is precisely that it tends to have an 'unreciprocal quality' whereby cultural realities of peoples are depicted by the ethnographer 'without placing [his/her] own reality in jeopardy' (132).

Dialogue and polyphony are the new modes of ethnographic authority. Clifford explains that a dialogical ethnography is not an actual dialogue recreated in writing; it is still a 'condensation, a simplified representation of complex, multi-vocal process'. It is still, in effect, writing. But it is one produced from or with an understanding 'of the overall course of the research as an ongoing negotiation' (132). I understand this to mean that the ethnographer does not enter into the negotiation as privileged or a priori better or superior than the other—the object of research who is now treated as the *subject* that he/she is. Polyphonic authority is explained as 'a renewed sympathy [for a] compendia of vernacular texts' (134).

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC OBJECT AND SELF REPRESENTATION

'Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography.... They are ethnographic not because they were found...but by virtue of the manner in which they have been detached, for disciplines make their objects and in the process make themselves' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998a, 18). It does not matter if the object is a physical thing displaced from its source or if it is intangible, ephemeral, or animate, like people and their embodied performances. These too are detached, segmented, and objectified by the act of inscription in field notes, recordings and reproductions via photography or filming (30). In the case of the Filipinos exhibited at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, the tribal peoples were uprooted from their communities and made to travel the great distance to the U.S. to live in reconstructed villages within the fair grounds, to perform their rituals and ceremonies, and even to slaughter dogs and eat the meat as part of the show. They became a display of the exotic, their strange ways and skimpy g-stringed attire embodied the savage, but at the same time served to increase the attractiveness of the 'spectacle' for the fair goers.

Ethnography not only studies performance...; it is a kind of performance.... The object of analysis is present, embodied cultural behavior that, as in theatrical performances, takes place live in the here and now. The ethnologist (like a theatre director) mediates between two cultural groups, presenting one group to another in a unidirectional way. The target group that is the object of analysis (the natives) does not usually see or analyze the group that benefits or consumes the ethnographer's accounts (the audience). And it rarely, if ever, gets to respond to the written observations that, in some cases, it might never even see. The live audience in the ethnographic encounter is not the intended audience (Taylor 2003, 75-76).

The 'unreciprocity' of ethnography described by Clifford is for Diana Taylor the violence of the ethnographic encounter which is committed both in the act of taking of the 'fragment', as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls it, and in the way the

‘performer of the ethnography’ (the ethnographer) remains invisible, ‘hidden from the spectator’s view’, while insisting, through the performance (or, in the textualized version, the inscription), that the spectacle is ‘real’.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett avers that the problem of representation does not diminish when people themselves stage a representation of themselves—‘when they perform themselves, whether at home to tourists or at world’s fairs, homelands entertainments, or folklife festivals—when they become living signs of themselves’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998a, 18). ‘Self-representation is representation nonetheless. Whether the representation essentializes...or totalizes..., the ethnographic fragment returns with all the problems of capturing, inferring, constituting, and presenting the whole through parts’ (55). The difference is that they are the ‘agents’ of the display, although one must ask exactly who the ‘they’ are and what had authorized or enabled them, or whether they were mobilized by coercive means, in which case agency is questionable. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett distinguishes between performance displays in festivals and those in traditional feasts celebrated to honour a saint for instance. While festivals derive from the traditional feasts, the latter ‘do what they are about’ whereas the former are put on ‘in discrete performance settings designed for specular (and aural) commerce’ (66).

My concern however is the representation of these traditional feasts not as a festival but as ethnographic writing by an insider—the ‘indigenous ethnographer’ who is really both insider and outsider. Inferring from Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s discourse, the work of the indigenous ethnographer is still fraught with tensions compounded by the insider-outsider status. Does the indigenous ethnographer commit the same ethnographic violence described by Taylor when researching and

writing about her country/culture of origin—her home? A controversial example of this is the alleged ‘creation’ of the Tasadays by local and foreign ethnographers—an alleged staging of a ‘discovery’ of a group of people still living in the stone age—commissioned in the 1970s by then President Marcos.²⁵ In 2001, the exhibition called *Dayaw* organized by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) was criticized for being a repeat or imitation of the St. Louis fair because it brought to Manila and exhibited indigenous groups and their rituals, performances, and material culture from all over the country. In the foreword to the book *1904 World’s Fair: The Filipino Experience*, Jaime C. Laya writes:

These days...one wonders what the fuss was all about. On canines, it was even reported that Cordillerans (the Igorots, Kalingas, Ifugaos) touch dog meat only in rituals—and if truth be told, dog meat (or *azucena*) is not unknown among the lowland masses’ drinking bouts.... In the 1970s, Nayong Pilipino (a park in Manila) was built on exactly the same principle as the St. Louis ‘tribal villages’...We also dispatched Bayanihan dancers abroad proudly highlighting the very Ifugao, Badjao, Bagobo, Tingguian...cultural communities that were presented at St. Louis. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts now gives grants to allow chanters and ritual dancers from the Bagobo, T’boli, Ifugao...to participate in folk arts festivals overseas where they win prizes....The Philippines was featured in the 1998 Smithsonian Folklife Festival held in Washington D.C. Entitled ‘*Pahiyas: A Philippine Harvest*,’ the participants were described no longer as ‘human exhibits’ but as ‘some of the very best community-based artists who demonstrate mastery of their tradition.’ ...[H]ow

²⁵ In the 1970s the Tasadays were brought to the attention of the public and the academe by Manuel Elizalde who was head of the government agency that looked after cultural minorities. The news made headlines not just in the Philippines but abroad; a documentary was made by *The National Geographic*. In 1976 Marcos ordered the closure of the Tasaday area to visitation. In the 1980s, after Marcos was deposed, a Swiss anthropologist Oswald Iten, aided by some locals, exposed the Tasaday story as a hoax and again it made the headlines. Elizalde was rumored to have fled the country taking with him vast sums of money intended for the Tasadays. The exposure of the ‘hoax’ presented an interview of two Tasadays who admitted that their community did not in fact live as they have been described—undisturbed in their way of life from the Stone Age. Later however the same two persons said they lied because they were promised to be given ‘cigarettes, clothes, anything we wanted’ by one of the locals who was with Iten. The tensions and fraught emotions as well as the debates continue to this day. I witnessed a highly charged discussion of the Tasaday controversy in a panel at the International Philippine Studies Conference held in Manila in July 2008. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasaday> (retrieved 8 march 2009) for details and links; see also <http://www.tasaday.com/>; “Stone Age Tasaday” in http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/Hoaxipedia/Stone_Age_Tasaday/. Also see Fernandez, C. A., & Lynch, F. (1972). *The Tasaday: Cave dwelling food gatherers of South Cotabato, Mindanao* (Philippine Sociological Society) and Hemley, R. (2007). *Invented Eden: The elusive, disputed history of the Tasaday* (Bison Books).

confident they have become since 1904.... I would like to think that Filipinos are now proud of the country's rich cultural diversity, proud of the old and distinctive culture of the very same cultural communities that were presented at St. Louis (Fermin 2004, 9-12).

Laya also mentions the Dayaw festival cited earlier which he had a direct hand in organizing because he was then the chairman of the NCCA.

Times have changed indeed and the Filipinos' attitude towards displaying themselves has also radically changed. But there is a grave flaw in the argument presented above. Laya seems to have forgotten that the context of St. Louis was much different. It was organized at a time when many Filipinos were still fighting a guerrilla war against the American forces even as the major leaders of the revolutionary government had already been arrested. In Manila theatres, the likes of Aurelio Tolentino, Severino Reyes, and Juan Matapang Cruz were writing and staging what would later be called by Filipino theatre historians as 'plays of circumvention' or by the Americans as 'seditious plays' with theatres being raided and the playwrights, directors, actors and some of the audience members being arrested and jailed for their defiant display of the Filipino flag, to say the least (— they did worse of course but the colonial spies could not figure out exactly how 'seditious' they were because they could not decode the highly symbolist performances).²⁶ The U.S. army troops were still roaming the villages and forests and U.S. military officials and personnel were the ones responsible for 'mobilizing' the tribal peoples who were brought to St. Louis. And even if the

²⁶ See Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio's *The "seditious" Tagalog playwrights: Early American occupation* (1972) and Fernandez (1996, 95) who quotes from Arthur Stanley Riggs' 'The Seditious Plays', the introduction to Riggs' *The Filipino drama* (1905): '[T]he Filipino audience [was] "on its feet, rabid with fury and frenzy, for three hours" (Riggs 1904, 279), risking arrest and imprisonment to be there, the message [of the plays] was obviously clear and enthusiastically received; the performance as vital and immediate as a call to arms.' Riggs was an American journalist who was alleged to have spied on the activities of Filipino nationalists. The people described here by Fernandez, drawing from Riggs' account, could hardly have countenanced or been happy about the exhibition of Filipinos at St. Louis, not because they were ashamed of themselves or their fellow Filipinos but because of the travesty brought upon them, one more on top of many already committed.

contemporary context has indeed changed, I argue that the problem of self-representation still haunts these contemporary self displays, considering that image and identity construction by the Filipinos to themselves and to the rest of the world is still a violently contested ground. The government is desperate to present the country as idyllic for tourists and foreign business and the Filipinos as reliable contract workers anywhere in the world, even as it launches total war campaigns like Oplan Bantay Laya and the national democratic forces, now tagged as terrorists, retaliate and pursue guerrilla offensives (besides the operations of other armed groups like those of the Bangsa Moro people in Mindanao). Moreover, and this is an even graver flaw, Laya seems to be working mainly on the shame felt by Filipinos, especially the elite many of whom were working for independence, at the portrayal of the Filipinos as tribal, savage, dog-eaters. This is the reason he applauds the pride now felt by his fellowmen for what he sees as the same things exhibited at St. Louis that are now part of regular culture and arts events in the country and abroad. The imperialists who set up the St. Louis exhibition do not figure in his discussion. He focuses on the self recriminations and internal disunity of the Filipinos which, while regrettable, do not exculpate the Americans or erase the violence of this particular ethnographic act from the collective memory. It must also be said that he plays right into the game set up by colonialists like Dean C. Worcester who precisely wanted to show how the Filipinos were a bunch of warring tribes unfit to be called a nation.

Moving now fast forward to the present, many of the contemporary self representations go by the name of heritage and heritage preservation. As suggested earlier, government efforts are directed mainly towards tourism and there is much rancour among the artists and cultural workers about this, not to mention the

politically charged debates about what counts as heritage. The search for roots going back to pre-colonial times is dominant, but much of the articulations are intended to get the tourists' money. Festivals big and small have sprouted all over the islands in the last ten or fifteen years, many of them recently set up by local governments mimicking each other, the festivals poorly curated, if at all, and hardly backed by study or research. Many universities and local colleges are hardly involved except as competitors in the street dancing or similar events. Aside from the efforts of agencies like the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Center of the Philippines and their allied bodies that propound a developmental approach rather than a tourism approach, most government national programs are tokenistic at best, obviously unguided by any clear and firm adherence to a vision of 'Filipino heritage' and with policies contravening the supposed commitment to Filipino culture and arts—for instance, in the insistence to use English as the primary medium in the schools, in government, in business, and most of public life. What is prevalent and clear is the agenda to have as much colour and excitement served up to the tourists, however eclectic, depthless, or superficial, while the country's exit doors are held wide open for the Filipinos to work as domestics or professionals overseas. One has to wander farther afield to see beyond the surface cosmopolitanism. And one need not go out of the city to experience the vibrant living traditions of Filipino communities. Some of the most active komedya troupes for instance are in the Metro Manila area, like the Komedyang San Dionisio in Parañaque. The biggest religious processions like those for the Black Nazarene and the Peñafrancia are held in major cities like Manila and Naga. And then there are the yearly community novenarios like the dotoc in Bicol. Even these traditions, however, are still forms of self-representations, some

increasingly so than others. When one watches or immerses in these events, one gets the sense that there is an inherent desire to show or show off, perhaps unacknowledged, sometimes articulated. In Tinago, Bigaa, for instance, the organizer of the dotoc and komedya gives a speech on the day of the fiesta, just before the final part of the event. In the 2007 speech, she said she wanted the spectators to understand why they continued the santacruzian practice. In what could be regarded as a summary of the collective meaning of the event for the people of Tinago, she explained that this was a demonstration of their abiding faith in the God who keeps them safe from all dangers, most especially the deadly natural calamities that visit the area; that they were offering this as a thanksgiving to be shared with all who believed in their miraculous *Santo Cristo*; that the tradition kept them united and working together as a community.

‘Walter Benjamin spoke of the “appreciation of heritage” as a catastrophe,’ says Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998a, 1). And yet, for many Filipinos who may know heritage only as ‘*su nagimatan*’ (roughly translated as the world as they have known it with the coming of awareness), it is as vital as breath, and its fading away brings disorientation and a kind of death, of loss.

While it looks old, heritage is actually something new. Heritage is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past. Heritage thus defined depends on display to give dying economies and dead sites a second life as exhibitions of themselves.... The problematic relationship of objects to the instruments of their display...is central to the production of heritage, if not its primary diagnostic. Display is an interface that mediates and thereby transforms what is shown into heritage (7).

It seems to me that there is a world of difference in the understanding of heritage by state agencies or by individuals out to make it into an economic good (or by academics analysing it from a detached perspective), and by ordinary people whose lives are entwined in its ramified forms. In fact it is for the latter that

heritage is always new, ever in the present, because it is lived; the past is not severed or forgotten because it is continuous to the present, only modified or improvised. As Taylor asserts, it does not disappear. Wole Soyinka also says that if it does it soon resurfaces in another form (Soyinka 1996), which is like saying that it does not disappear. Display is part of the process. Goffman's theory of self-presentation is instructive about how individuals assume roles in social transactions and I understand this to apply as well to people's creative expressive behaviours that might later end up as 'art' or 'heritage'. I am not saying that it is not problematic; there is nothing simple or straightforward about it. But, the problem, as I see it, is with heritage as commodity, and fetishization, complicated by the totalizing agendas of governments and contexts of oppression. Schechner talks about how he realized that some communities put on shows for the tourists which are not exactly what they actually do in their rituals and ceremonies (Schechner 1988). Should they be lambasted for doing that because the tourists feel cheated when they discover it? They have learned how to play the game. 'We will give you gore if you want gore.' I can well imagine the Igorots at St. Louis playing up to the shocked American audience watching them slaughter dogs and cook and eat the meat in elaborate 'rituals'. In the case of peoples pushed to the brink of death by colonialism, by imperialist aggressions or enticements (which are really sugar-coated poison), heritage becomes a lifeline, a defiance of death, a wellspring of hope—'look at us, this is who we are and we live!'

Michael Taussig (1987) is unsurpassed in illustrating how the white man lived in fear of the Indians and in his fear committed the vilest terrors on them. He writes that Indian guards called *muchachos de confianza* ('trusted boys') circulated stories about the Indians that 'functioned to create through magical realism a

culture of terror that dominated both whites and Indians' and the 'unstable reality of truth and illusion' that it produced '[became] a phantasmic social force' (121).

All societies live by fictions taken as real. What distinguishes cultures of terror is that the epistemological, ontological, and otherwise philosophical problem of representation—reality and illusion, certainty and doubt—becomes infinitely more than a 'merely' philosophical problem of epistemology, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. It becomes a high-powered medium of domination, and during the Putumayo rubber boom this medium of epistemic and ontological murk was most keenly figured and thrust into consciousness as the space of death (121).

The managers lived obsessed with death, Romulo Paredes tells us. They saw danger everywhere. They thought solely of the fact that they live surrounded by vipers, tigers, and cannibals.... Like children they had nightmares of witches, evil spirits, death, treason, and blood. (122).

In the space of death, says Taussig, 'reality is up for grabs' (9) and the *muchachos* did their share of grabbing. 'Not only did they embellish fictions that stoked the fires of white paranoia, they also embodied the brutality that the whites feared, created, and tried to harness to their own ends' (122). What I understand Taussig is saying here is that the problem of representation and self representation, in the death spaces created by cultures of terror that arise with colonialism, confounds interpretation. '[T]hings are never quite so simple. Even the manipulators have a culture and, moreover, culture is not so easily "used"' (122). We will give you gore if you want gore.

INDIGENOUS ETHNOGRAPHY

Anthropology, the science of man, confounds itself in its very moment of understanding the natives' point of view (Taussig 1987, 135).

In 1978 a group of anthropologists met in Burg Wartenstein, Austria for a conference entitled 'Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries'. The conference worked with the term 'indigenous anthropology' as 'the practice of

anthropology in one's native country, society, and/or ethnic group' (Fahim 1982, xi)²⁷ with the basic understanding that with a change of actor (the anthropologist) there is a corresponding change in role and perspective and possibly the use of a set of theories based on non-Western precepts and assumptions. The term 'indigenous' should not, however, be taken as 'a synonym for Third World perspectives' because indigenous anthropology 'should not imply a total alienation from established anthropology' (xii). Given such a framework, the conference examined the 'conceptual and operational implications of indigenous anthropology for theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, and ethical issues'.

My interest is mainly on the question of the existential distinction of indigenous anthropology and its epistemological, methodological, and ethical implications. It is clear from the proceedings that this is not an easy question and the answers range from outright rejection of the concept to its use in anthropology's service for human/community/national development. The rejection view holds that the difference between Western and non-Western 'is a construct derived from the colonial process which "creates false problems and irrelevant" issues' (xiii). The concept of indigenous anthropology risks 'legitimizing a particularistic nationalistic approach to social facts' and 'could result in extreme subjectivity and relativism' (xiv). This would be counterproductive to the 'goal of generating universally applicable and valid statements and could result in the proliferation of innumerable anthropologies on the same topic'. A better endeavour would be to challenge the epistemological base of the discipline as 'the study of others'. Indigenous anthropologists should 'question, redefine, and if necessary, reject particular concepts long established in Western anthropology because the

²⁷ For ease of reference, my citations are focused on the introductory essay by Hussein Fahim and Katherine Helmer who take up the 'themes and counterthemes' of the conference; the major points raised are argued and presented in detail in the individual papers included in the proceedings.

cultural biases of Western anthropologists have at times produced distorted, incomplete, or simply incorrect models of reality' (xiv). One of the papers (Altorki's) '[raises] questions about the impact of Western training and the importance of indigenous status for new perspectives in the discipline' (xv).

Supporters of the concept of indigenous anthropology hold that 'new cultural perspectives brought into play' should be seen 'not as obstacles to be overcome, but as new sources of understanding for the discipline' (xv). Clearly, the experience of colonialism and subsequent decolonization by Third World nations has had an impact on 'indigenous cultural traditions', which, says an African scholar (Kashoki), have lacked 'originality' due to three factors. These are the 'imitative learning' that predominate in the educational system; 'patterns of human resource deployment' that place scholars into operational or administrative posts instead of research; and third, 'the inner conditioning and attitudinal orientation of the colonized mind that looks to the West for intellectual, moral, and technological guidance' (xvi).

To find new moorings for the African intellect, Kashoki suggested that Africans return to their own cultural roots in search of a new epistemology that would spring from local knowledge, meanings, and perceptions; indeed from their own sociocultural biases.... The quest for knowledge should not be comparable to a world cup competition, he quipped. What is necessary is the recognition of a fundamental ability of all men to contribute from their different perspectives. Returning to one's cultural roots does not mean a total rejection of all that is 'Western.' It is an attempt to be a positive force in the scientific community by the advancement of fresh insights (xvi).

While some of the papers carefully put in qualifying passages like Kashoki's that indigenous ethnography need not be a total rejection of Western anthropology, it is obvious that the discipline itself is under critical scrutiny. It is equally obvious that the participants in the discussion balk at the threat posed for 'epistemological

unity of the discipline' (xxx) by the concept of indigenous anthropology and its related interrogations of Western anthropology.

The consideration of indigenous anthropology as a form of service for national development is equally rejected. Fahim highlights the views of T.N. Madan:

'Every act of development is also an act of destruction. It can result in the over-dependence of local communities and minimize their self-sufficiency by creating new needs of pseudo-utility value.' Equating socially relevant research with 'saving people's lives'...reveals an exaggerated view of the impact of anthropology and other social sciences on processes of change in developing countries (xviii).

But what indeed is anthropology for? If it is for the purpose of understanding, one may ask how it can come about and for what ends? Cohen comments that 'understanding may be a luxury under conditions of poverty when prospects of food, shelter, and a better future are of more immediate worth to the people concerned' (xvii). For Madan, it is 'to know in order to predict; predict in order to control; and...control in order to serve.... The concept of service implies the application of knowledge, which in turn leads to the problem of values'. But serve who? '[T]he people, a sponsor, or an abstract entity? How does the anthropologist select what is best for those whom he serves?'

Looking at the advantages and constraints of the indigenous anthropologists, the conference participants agree that they are advantaged in terms of their insider knowledge, their mastery of the language and cultural codes, their at-homeness with the place, climate, food, and so on. They are however constrained also precisely by the advantages which work against being able to ask direct and probing questions about what would appear as commonsensical to a native or to behave in ways divergent from local norms. The local and the foreign anthropologists thus have 'differential abilities to create roles for themselves in the

local setting, to gain access to information, and to understand the values underlying behaviour' (xxxi). Kelman notes that the difference between the local/insider and the foreign/outsider anthropologists is 'primarily a methodological issue', whereas the distinction of Western/non-Western is ideological and epistemological. A third distinction, of the dominant versus the dependent, concerned 'controversial issues of ethics with... political implications' (xxxi).

In the concluding paper, Talal Asad pushes the discussion further by asking if there is such a discipline as Western anthropology and, ergo, of non-Western anthropology. Western anthropologists are as diverse in their thinking and methodologies as non-Western ones are in theirs (284-285). Even granting that the term applies to the work of non-Westerners, Asad avers:

[I]t should not be assumed that work produced by non-Western anthropologists is always and necessarily best understood, evaluated, and criticized by non-Western anthropologists. What is required is a continuous process of *argument* in which the work that is produced (regardless of its origin) is tested, and if necessary, reconstructed.... It is not enough to call for indigenous paradigms.... There is, after all, no guarantee that indigenous paradigms will be any better" (285-286, emphasis in original).

Asad poses the question of whether non-Western anthropologists can conduct their studies in the West instead of confining their labour to their own countries, which is the norm, due perhaps to a lack of funding. 'Does this perhaps mean that Western academics are not really as interested in how people from non-Western societies see Western cultures as they are in studying non-Western cultures for themselves?' The question is not simple, he says. '[I]t is worth considering whether the asymmetry with which we are all familiar (between most Western anthropologists who study other cultures and most Third World anthropologists who study their own) hasn't also something to do with the problem of cultural imperialism—that is, with how cultural products of all kinds which are created in

Western societies gradually replace or radically transform those created in non-Western societies' (287).

Following Asad, my own question is whether the major Filipino scholars published in different fields such as in the social sciences and humanities derive their authority from or exercise their strong sway on Filipino intellectual life because of their Western affiliations? Most of the names cited in this thesis for instance studied and have continued their institutional membership in American, European, or Australian universities and/or have published their work abroad—like Rafael, San Juan, or Ileta. They are also globe-trotting intellectuals like many of their counterparts from the West or other 'Third World' societies.

Introducing a collection of essays, Rafael (1995) asks 'what it might mean to write about the Philippines from the "outside"' (xv) and calls their work 'displaced scholarship' (xvii). The Filipino scholars have 'the ability if not the vocation to travel, crossing borders that constitute areas of knowledge and experience' (xvi). Elsewhere, talking about 'white love',²⁸ which is also the title of the book (2000), he says he writes 'from exile'. For Rafael, exile is 'an ironic condition that sees itself as such yet also dreams of abolishing such irony' (16).

TRAVEL AND THEORY

Is it true that one must travel in order to theorize? 'The Greek term *theorein*,' according to James Clifford (1989), '[is] a practice of travel and

²⁸ 'White love' is Rafael's take on 'benevolent assimilation' that assumes white Americans' 'moral and political' superiority over the Filipinos (2000, xi). 'White love' is, however, also the 'love of ...whiteness that came to inform if not inflict the varieties of Filipino nationalism that emerged under American patronage...the intimate relationship between nationalism and colonialism, suggesting how each shaped the other's unfolding' (xii). 'White love' is therefore '*sumpa*,' a Tagalog term that means both 'curse' and 'pledge' and 'part of a history that keeps arriving from the future' (xiv). But significantly he wants to focus on what escapes this history—'*yung meron pa at yung natitira*, what is still there, what endures, and what is left behind...events that fall short or exceed the narrative frames of white love' (xiv).

observation, a man sent by the polis to another city to witness a religious ceremony. "Theory" is a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home.'

In 1989, eleven years after the Burg Wartenstein conference, another conference (this time at the University of California, Santa Cruz) tackled the theme of 'Predicaments of Theory' that also talked about the coming of the indigenous ethnographer/theorist and the way that theorizing is not anymore an activity of Westerners.

Why [does one go] elsewhere to 'theorize' a problem, or to imagine a national identity? ...How are specific ambivalences of local and cosmopolitan attachments to be understood? What are the continuing claims of 'home,' 'nationality,' 'the return' for traveling theorists? How can the anti-essentialism of much current theory be used to question dominant visions and to historicize representations of complex identities, bodies and experiences? And what are the dangers of making anti-essentialism into a kind of theoretical absolute? How, strategically, is an essence (origin, nature, universality) identified, rejected, embraced? Are there contexts in which histories or identities need to be taken as unproblematic? (Clifford and Dhareshwar 1989).

It is clear that much had changed in the time between the Burg Wartenstein and the Santa Cruz conferences. Whereas in the former there was a strong concern for the 'unity of the discipline' and the production of 'universally applicable and valid statements', in the latter the assumption of an a priori dominance or prevalence of anti-essentialism and fragmentation is apparent in the papers. The common thread that did not change is the role of the indigenous scholar, although he is more clearly located not just as coming from the 'Third World' but as post- or neocolonial. And it is evident, for instance from the paper of David Scott cited earlier, that the question is basically the same one: how can the indigenous ethnographer make use of anthropology when it is a 'study of (subaltern) others' and he/she is part of the 'others'?

[I]f anthropology, in the constitution of its knowledges, privileges a tacking between places, this tacking has still always been between the West and elsewhere.... [T]he anthropological cogito is always returning to the West.... [H]ow is one to participate in that tacking and displacement that is its distinctive idea? ... [M]ust the postcolonial anthropologist enter upon this *location*? (Scott 1989, emphasis in original).

Scott is not saying that they should not but pointing out the risks of the enterprise. He supports Talal Asad and Arjun Appadurai who have called for postcolonial anthropologists to study Western society in order ‘to undermine the asymmetry in anthropological practice’.

In any case, while there is asymmetry, ‘[the] once privileged place is now increasingly contested, cut across, by other locations, claims, trajectories of knowledge articulating racial, gender, and cultural differences’ (Clifford 1989). The questions are now, for Clifford, altogether different: ‘[H]ow is theory appropriated and resisted, located and displaced? How do theories travel among the unequal spaces of postcolonial confusion and contestation? What are their predicaments?’ What happens to theory construction if it is still held as an activity that paints ‘the big picture’? ‘Localization undermines a discourse’s claim to “theoretical status”....[To theorize] cannot simply be dissolved into—or, put more positively, be “grounded in”—the local, “experiential”, and circumstantial. To theorize about “women” or “patriarchy” one must stand in some experience of commonality or political alliance, looking beyond the local or experiential to wider, comparative phenomena.’

So theories travel, because theorists do. For ethnographers, travel is a given; it is in fact a requirement. But what can only be called a reverse travelling by those who used to be the objects of ethnographic travel and theorizing has turned the world upside down, both for the old travellers and the new ones. For the

latter, it can still be said that the travelling makes one actually ‘find’ oneself and define ‘home’ more clearly, although the travelling itself overturns all pre-conceived plans and gives one a feeling of vertigo, haziness of purpose, and an inability to find the way back. The arrival is always postponed.

For this indigenous ethnographer, however, the journey is inexorably destined for home. The thesis may have sounded thus far as embodying the ‘always-postponed arrival’ but its ethical commitment and hope is to go back to where it started: to the Bicol dotoc and to the land and people that enabled the journey in the first place.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CO-PERFORMANCE

If Clifford Geertz wants to rescue the said from the saying, Dwight Conquergood wants to go back to the event and act of saying and to bring back the sayer in the telling of the tale. He calls for a ‘radical rethinking of the research enterprise’ in the face of ‘the double fall of scientism and imperialism’ and the ‘ensuing “crisis of representation” that has set off the discipline’s self-questioning about its basic assumptions, principles, and methodologies’ (Conquergood 2003b). While he refers to and uses many of Geertz’s ideas, Conquergood’s praxis and proposals for ethnography in general and the ethnography of performance in particular reject and criticize textualism or the idea of ‘world-as-text’ that Geertz propounds; instead he espouses what Victor Turner calls the ‘performative turn’ in ethnography.

For Conquergood, ‘[t]he hegemony of textualism needs to be exposed and undermined. Transcription is not a transparent or politically innocent model for conceptualizing the world’ (2002, 147). But not only is it not innocent, ‘this

scriptocentrism is a hallmark of Western imperialism' (de Certeau cited in Conquergood 2002, 147); Raymond Williams has attacked its 'class-based arrogance' since it is typically the 'highly educated' who commit the 'delusion', because they are "so driven in on their reading" that "they fail to notice that there are other forms of skilled, intelligent, creative activity"....' (Williams in Conquergood 2002, 147). Geertz's 'culture-is-text' is revealed as ethnocentric especially 'when applied to the countercultures of enslaved and other dispossessed people' who are excluded from acquiring literacy but have nonetheless their repertoire of performance practices (150).

Geertz's theory needs to be critiqued for its particular fieldwork-as-reading model: 'Doing ethnography is like trying to read [...] a manuscript.' Instead of listening, absorbing, and standing in solidarity with the protest performances of the people..., the ethnographer, in Geertz's scene, stands above and behind the people and, uninvited, peers over their shoulders to read their texts, like an overseer or a spy (150).

Conquergood supports Jackson's critique: "Textualism tends to ignore the flux of human relationships, the ways meanings are created intersubjectively as well as "intertextually", embodied in gestures as well as in words, and connected to political, moral, and aesthetic interests' (Jackson [1989, 184] quoted in Conquergood 2003b, 364). Drawing on his years of fieldwork among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, Michael Jackson says that the only way that ethnographers can genuinely make a connection with the people studied is 'to open ourselves to modes of sensory and bodily life which, while meaningful to us in our personal lives, tend to get suppressed in our academic discourse' (Jackson, 34). These embodied articulations are Foucault's 'subjected knowledges'—local, regional, vernacular, naïve knowledges, that for Diana Taylor form the repertoire.

They have been erased because they are illegible; they exist, by and large, as active bodies of meaning, outside of books, eluding the forces of inscription that would make them legible, and thereby legitimate.... What

gets squeezed out by this epistemic violence is the whole realm of complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, co-experienced, covert—and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out. Dominant epistemologies that link knowing with seeing are not attuned to meanings that are masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded, or hidden in context.... (Conquergood 2002, 146).²⁹

Against textualism, Conquergood propounds a performance-centred ethnography: ‘performance as concept, practice, and epistemology’ (1995, 139) (1995), what Johannes Fabian calls a ‘performative’ rather than ‘informative’ ethnography (Fabian 1999, 25; 1990, 3). It is useful to look at the basic premises, principles and methodologies of this ethnographic practice.

Performance can be thought of in four ways: in terms of ‘poetics, play, process, and power’ (Conquergood 2007, 38). *Poetics* refers both to the invented character of realities, the expressive forms that performance-centred research looks at (like rituals, festivals, celebrations and so on), and to the way that scholarly writing is also constructed: ‘the persuasive telling of a story of the stories one has witnessed and lived’. But attending to such poesis—‘the culture-creating capacities of performance’ pointed out by Turner (Turner 1995, 138)—alerts us to the fact that ‘culture and persons are more than just created; they are creative’ (Conquergood 2007, 39). *Play* is likened to the activity of the trickster whose ‘playful impulse promotes a radical self-questioning critique that yields a deeper self-knowledge, the first step towards transformation’. *Process* signals ‘the shift from mimesis to kinesis’, ‘from product to productivity’. Researchers attend not to concepts but to the ‘unfolding voices, nuances, and intonations of performed meaning...the irreducible and evanescent dynamics of human life—all the forces that resist closure’. Such attention to the processual nature of culture leads to ‘a

²⁹ To my mind this is the ‘diabolic opaqueness of performance’ (Taylor 2003, 40) (Taylor 2003) that provides opportunities for parody and subversion (31).

both/and’ rather than to an ‘either/or’ position or consideration of how *power* invokes politics, domination, ideology as well as struggle, resistance, and subversion (39).

Drawing on Turner, Conquergood propounds performance as agency that Mary Strine (1998, 7) calls ‘an integrated agency of culture’ and not just an ‘act of culture’ (cited in Spry 2006, 342). Cultural performances do not just reflect culture but are ‘active agencies of change’, because they promote or enact reflexivity by means of which people ‘bend or reflect back upon themselves’ and are able to explore or realize ‘designs for living’ (Turner and Schechner 1987, cited in Conquergood 2003b, 364).

‘Conquergood’s performance-sensitive way of knowing is an *empathetic epistemology* merging participant-observer positioning with the vulnerability of the felt-sensing “un-learning” body’ (Spry 2006, 342, emphasis in original). Spry calls attention to Conquergood’s call to ‘return to the body’, the awareness that ethnographic activity is corporeal, requiring the bodily presence and engagement of the ethnographer—‘an ethnography of the ears and heart that reimagines participant observation as coperformative witnessing’ (Conquergood 2002, 149). ‘Ethnography is an embodied practice...an intensely sensuous way of knowing’ (2003b, 353). Such engagement poses risks for the ethnographer, making him/her vulnerable,³⁰ but it is the only way to do it; even Geertz calls for such physical engagement in an intensive and long-term field study. Vulnerability, in fact, not authority, is sought by the radical ethnographer and responded to with ‘honesty, humility, self-reflexivity, and an acknowledgement of the interdependence and reciprocal role-playing between knower and known’ (356). Time rather than

³⁰ See Ronald J. Pelias’ *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life* (2004): ‘Empathetic scholarship connects person to person in the belief in a shared and complex world’ and Ruth Behar’s *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart* (1996).

space—recognition of a shared, coeval time, because ‘denial of coevalness’ is a strategy of colonialism and imperialism to keep the dominated others in their marginal, backward time, always the primitive to the imperialist’s civilized. Sound and voice instead of sight and vision—for “‘the eye of ethnography’” is connected to “‘the I of imperialism’” (citing Rosaldo 1989)³¹ and sight and observation connote space, and space divisions, and surveillance while the gaze constitutes and forecloses. Performance rather than text.

This ethnographic practice is liminal, betwixt and between worlds, processual. The ethnographer is not a solid and unified subject and the people studied have no essential identities. Culture and identity are constructed and relational, contingent, invented. Boundaries are blurred and categories are ‘leaky’ (Minh-ha 1989, 94). ‘Meaning is contested and struggled for in the interstices, in between structures’ (Conquergood 2003b, 359).

This is ethnographic co-performance: ‘the ethnographer moves from the gaze of the distanced and detached observer to the intimate involvement and engagement of “coactivity” or “co-performance” with historically situated, named, “unique individuals”’ (363). It is ‘knowing how’ and ‘knowing who’...’[on] the ground, in the thick of things’ (2002, 146)— ‘learning something “on the pulses”’ (2003a, 363). It is dialogical.

[Dialogical performance] struggles to bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another. [Its] aim... is to bring self and other together so that they can question, debate, and challenge one another. It is [a] kind of performance that resists conclusions... intensely committed to keeping the dialogue... open and ongoing...and does not end with empathy. There is always enough appreciation for difference so that the text can interrogate, rather than dissolve into the performer. That is why I have charted this performative stance at the center of the moral map.³² More than a definite

³¹ See Renato Rosaldo’s *Culture and truth: The remaking of social analysis* (1989).

³² Conquergood distinguished dialogical performance from four other moral stances to the other: ‘the custodian’s rip-off’ that is characterized by self interest and plunder; ‘the enthusiast’s

position, the dialogical stance is situated in the space between competing ideologies. It brings self and other together while it holds them apart. It is more like a hyphen than a period (Conquergood 2003a, 407-408).

To engage in dialogical performance is ‘to recognize others as others [in order to love] them better’ (409). Tami Spry coins her own version of this ethnographic moral stance: ‘performative-I positionality’ that she describes as concerned less about identity construction and more about constructing a representation of the ‘incoherent’, fragmented, conflictual effects of the copformance, of the copresence between selves and others in contexts (Spry 2006, 344). Soyini Madison calls this ‘the dialogic performative’ defined as ‘a generative and embodied reciprocity’ that encompasses both reflective and reflexive knowledge—not just an awareness of ourselves, or showing ourselves to ourselves, but being conscious of that consciousness of the self...’the quintessential difference between solipsism and self-reflexivity that the dialogic performative begs to take up’ (Madison 2006, 321-322).³³

I, too, would like to claim ethnographic co-performance for my own epistemological and ethical stance and methodology. But I wish to call it by a name using my own vernacular tongue, Bicol. Ethnographic co-performance is *anduyog*, which means being in total unity with the other.³⁴ *Anduyog* is an ancient Bicol word that appears in Lisboa’s 1628 *Vocabulario*, thus:

infatuation’ that trivializes the other while holding oneself from any moral engagement; ‘the curator’s exhibitionism’ that exoticizes and sensationalizes in order to astonish, full of ‘sentimentality and romantic notions about the “Noble Savage” but actually dehumanizes the other’; and ‘the skeptic’s cop-out’ that is ‘the most reprehensible’ because ‘it forecloses dialogue...shuts down the very idea of entering into conversation with the other before the attempt, however problematic, begins’ (403-407).

³³ Madison urges a distinction between autoethnography and autobiographical performance, suggesting that some of the performances have become too focused on the self but only reflectively, not reflexively, in effect excluding the other. She calls for performances that, like Conquergood’s caravan, would have space enough for other people to ride in.

³⁴ I am borrowing the term and its definition from Aquinas University in Legazpi, Philippines, my home university, that has adopted *anduyog* as its principle of action both for its internal operations as an institution and for its engagements with the external community—not that Aquinas has

Andoyog. pp. Imperativo, o el que favorece a otro en alguna cosa, o el favorecido tambien. *Ynaandoyog*, vel *pinag*, ser asi favorecido, o ayudado (Lisboa 1865 [1628], 25).

The fundamental idea is favouring or helping others, but among the Bicolanos it means lending one's bodily presence to help another carry out a task or a project that a person, alone, cannot accomplish, for instance the transfer or physical carrying of an entire house (usually of light material but still enormously heavy) to another location (more popularly known as *bayanihan* in Tagalog), or the preparations for a wedding feast. In short, this is a communal effort. 'Favouring' or helping does not mean that one has more and the recipient has less or that one is superior to the other; it is an act of community. It is the very same act that enables poor communities to stage the dotoc performances year in and year out, however meagre the individual contributions.

Anduyog as ethnographic co-performance is premised on a shared history—of colonialism and a liminal present that is not yet post- but neocolonial, an oppressive present that is a continuation of that history, characterized by vulnerabilities due to economic lack, political marginalization and silencing, and a subsequent incapacity to deal with disaster both human-made and natural. It is founded on a shared culture that might seem to an outsider as an odd mix of various influences: Spanish, but not quite, Catholic but not quite so, etcetera, one that seems to have remained the same for centuries but is actually changing so rapidly that it leaves people disoriented. It presupposes a people who have survived through hard times and are capable of advancement, of making things better, however they may define it or want it to be. It claims a stake in a common future

exclusive rights to it; others are using the term as a name for their organization or program (e.g., the Anduyog Federation at the Mt. Isarog National Park in Camarines Sur and the Anduyog Fund of the Naga City Government). At any rate, I had a hand in bringing to birth its use in the institution in 1999.

and risks the heartache and despair that come with failures and the lashes of greater ills. It invests in and partakes of a sensibility of a people who come from a place called home.

I propose six defining principles of *anduyog* as ethnographic co-performance: presence, paying attention, participation, visibility, reflexivity, and activism. All these are drawn from Conquergood, but also from many of the people cited here who have chosen a radical ethnographic practice that recognizes that individuals and communities have never stopped speaking, that their performances have not disappeared, that they in fact live in the ethnographer's own time and space.

Presence is corporeal engagement that enables 'thick description' and the doing of all the others listed. **Paying attention** is listening, but, more importantly, it is an expression of a 'godly' gratitude, a recognition both of beauty and of anguish and misery—a 'body-to-body convergence that pays attention to the right now and newly comprised by all the representations, histories, and longings that came before this moment to make the now extraordinary' (Madison 2006, 323). **Participation** is performing the act, ritual, tradition, celebration; being taught and learning with humility; singing the song; dancing the dance, donning the dress or shoes of the other, and knowing how it feels like. **Visibility** is showing my hand in the writing, holding back but also disclosing the 'me' so that both I and they are in the text, on the photograph, and in the memory of the lived moments; acknowledging a common bond, but also the possible chasm between us and the tensions that it holds. **Reflexivity** is constant awareness of me trying to see myself seeing them or they seeing me and in the seeing, feel or in the feeling, see, and hear, and taste, and touch and smell; examining my methods, evaluating my

outputs whether performed or written up. **Activism** is a commitment to go back to where the journey began, and to give back in return what has been received: time, trust, memory, fears, hopes and dreams, faith; it is taking responsibility as a daughter, sister, neighbour, citizen, friend, or a fellow seeker of the creative good that must lie somewhere in us or in the gaps between us, and that we ‘coactively’ perform as best as we are able.

If the indigenous ethnographer or traveller from the non-West wills it, *anduyog* can bring her home. The curse of the ‘always postponed arrival’ can end and a new journey begun—one in which she has many fellow travellers, the community, the village *in* which she studies and who would study with her, and would co-perform the ethnography with her. *Anduyog* is an ethics of action as well as a cultural politics, Conquergood’s poiesis and kinesis, a claiming and exercise of power—the power of the subaltern.

Chapter Three

The Bicol Dotoc: Ethnography of Performance

I immersed myself in four distinct current practices: the cobacho dotoc, the Canaman dotoc, the dotoc as komedya, and the lagaylay, doing fieldwork in 1998 and in 2007 and 2008. This chapter describes these dotoc forms and their material practices, from the texts used to the performed actions, the spaces and duration of the performances, aspects of production like costumes and music, as well as practices of transmission. I focus on Baa0 as my main site and include one of the other sites as a point of comparison in the different sections. A discursive thread runs through the writing, but the main aim is documentation and the organization of ‘data’, which strives at completeness but can only really be contingent, unfinished, and forever a work in progress.

PILGRIMAGE AND RITUAL: ACTION IN THE DOTOC

I will have to talk about three things: the action as described in the text, the performed action, and what the performers say they are doing. The basic narrative is that of pilgrimage: a group of pilgrims sets out to look for the Holy Cross, finds it and, on finding it, adores and praises it and submits their petitions for peace, justice, prosperity, good health, and deliverance from evil. All of the four dotoc forms have this narrative, but they can be grouped further into two: those that tell of the pilgrimage of ordinary, unnamed folk, and those that depict the pilgrimage of Helena and Constantine. The second group has the form of the komedya. The

lagaylay is unique in that the action is set at the end of the pilgrimage, when the cross had been found, although there is at least one dotoc variant (*porlaseñal*) where the action is also set at the end of the pilgrimage.

Older Texts in Baao

In Santa Cruz, Baao, seven texts can be identified: *calle amargora*, *tres marias*, *sinanta-Elena*, *sanabua*, *panjardin*, *porlaseñal* and *cobacho*. I could not find any copies or text samples of the first three; I was able to retrieve copies of the last four, but the text currently used is now only the *cobacho dotoc*.

The older text variants are remembered by older paradotoc, but hardly known today by the current singers (mostly in their late 40s or 50s), except from stories of the older women, their mothers or grandmothers or aunts. Examining these older texts and performances helps in understanding and/or ‘placing’ the current practice vis-à-vis the religion and ritual practices of the official church.

The **calle amargora** tracked the path taken by Jesus to Calvary—‘*nagsususog ku gira ni Amang Dios*’ (‘tracking the traces of Father God’—Jesus is here referred to as ‘Amang Dios’ [from ‘ama’ which means ‘father’ and ‘dios’ which means ‘god’] which is fairly common to the Bicolanos.) On their way the pilgrims find traces of Jesus’ suffering: His footsteps, droplets of blood from His body, the crown of thorns, three nails used on the Cross, and the imprint of His face on Veronica’s veil. These traces keep the pilgrims on the right track and they eventually find the Cross. The trail is long and uncertain and the dotoc even longer because the pilgrims stop each time they find a trace, heap praises and petitions on it, and kiss the ground.

In the **sanabua**, a group of pilgrims sets out to search for the Cross, saying that they would be like those two monarchs (Helena and Constantine). They decide

to get flowers to bring to the Cross: *lirio*, *azucena*, *sampaguita*, and *clavel*—one kind of flower for each of the four rows of pilgrims. They soon find the Cross, bathed in light, and high on Calvary. They offer the flowers, one row of pilgrims after another, and then praise the Cross and offer their petitions. A notable petition that is repeated is one for life and health and deliverance from the *peste* (pestilence)—perhaps from smallpox or cholera.

The **panjardin** is similar to the sanabua that highlights the offering of flowers to the Cross, but grander than the sanabua, because it involves the offering of a whole garden of flowers. The pilgrims are divided into two groups of *pasajeras* (travellers) and one group of *jardeneras* (gardeners). There is a long-drawn out exchange between the travellers and gardeners, a rare example of dramatic conflict, but this is soon resolved and all proceed as pilgrims in search of the Cross.

The **porlaseñal** has two texts: 1) a printed text attributed to Mariano Nicomedes; and 2) one text variant used in Canaman. In both texts, the pilgrimage is done; the pilgrims have reached the site of the Cross and are now intending to approach it, to praise and adore it. And they proceed to do so. The pilgrims may sing the *pasion* of the *corocobacho dotoc* for a longer adoration. The internal structure of the text is according to the ‘Por la señal’ prayer, the phrases of which are integrated, one after the other, into the quatrains. The prayer goes: *Por la señal / de la Santa Cruz / de nuestros enemigos / libranos señor / Dios nuestros / el nombre del padre / y del hijo / y del Espiritu Santo / Amen, Jesus* (By the sign / of the Holy Cross / from our enemies/ save us, Lord / our God / in the name of the Father / and of the Son / and of the Holy Spirit / Amen, Jesus).

The **tres marias** dotoc is not extant anymore, but the narrative can be reconstructed from the sketchy descriptions culled. The pilgrims represent the three Marys, with three paradotoc dressed as the three Marys, positioned in front and carrying an imprint of Jesus' face (*'lalawgon ni Ama'*), an incense (*'incienso'*), and a broom (*'sighid'*). The three groups of pilgrims led by the three Marys merge and take the path to the *linobngan* (the tomb). First, they rest by a tree; then they proceed to the tomb where they kneel and pray. And then they go to where the Holy Cross is laid and there sing the *Vexilla Regis* and the *Pasion*.

The identity of the three Marys in this dotoc narrative is not clear, although mention of the imprint of Jesus' face brings to mind Veronica and the other two may be Mary Salome, because of the incense, and Martha, because of the broom.¹ It is possible that the dotoc was taken from the *Pasion Bikol*, in which the tres marias narrative mentions not *'lalawgon ni Jesus, incienso, asin sighid,'* but *'sighid, incienso,[asin] camangyan'*. The change may have been inadvertent, but it is also possible that my informant just forgot what things the three Marys carry in the dotoc.

The **sinanta-Elena** has no extant text and there are no details from which I can reconstruct the narrative, but the dotoc, by name, implies the Santa Elena narrative: Helene's search for the cross and her finding of it, believed to have occurred in A.D. 326.² Elena and Constantine's story is the same as told in the

¹See Note #2255 in Rene Javellana, S.J. 1988, 149. Even the Bible does not have a definite account of the identities of the three Marys, although Mark identifies them as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Mk 16:1). Matthew mentions only two Marys who visited the tomb of Jesus: 'Magdalene and the other Mary' (Mt 28:1) and Luke identifies the three as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James (Lk 24:10).

² See 'Triumph of the Cross' in the *1988 Catholic Almanac*, ed. Felician A. Foy, O.F.M. (1987). See also 'Helena, St.', p. 607; 'Invention of the Cross', p. 674; and 'Cross, relics of the', pp. 381-382 in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, gen. ed. Richard P. McBrien (1995). For a fuller account of the finding of the Cross by St. Helene, see Voragine 1993, 278-283. See also Thiede and D'Ancona's book (2000) presenting historical evidence of Helena's search and finding of the cross.

legends, and in the Filipino versions of the legends. Mampo (1980, 40-59) devotes an extensive part of her thesis to a discussion of the four legends of the finding of the Cross and the 'Filipino versions' of the legends. In three of the four legends, the finding of the Cross is attributed to St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine.³ There is no way of knowing whether or not the Santa Elena narrative of the *sinanta-Elena dotoc* is also placed inside the basic story of ordinary people's pilgrimage to the Cross.

A closer consideration of the older texts in Baao reveals several points: First, the Santa Elena narrative is carried by one text, the *sinanta-Elena*, but it is mentioned, referred or alluded to in others like the *sanabua* and the *panjardin*. Second, the Heraclius narrative in the *corocobacho* follows faithfully the historical account of the loss and recovery of the Holy Cross and the campaign of Heraclius against the Persians, although it seems to be more legend than chronicle or historical fact in the face of the many versions that are sometimes even

³ The Filipino versions of the legends are the following: 1) *Buhay na Pinagdaanan ni Santa Elena sa Paghahanap ng Santa Cruz sa Bayan ng Jerusalem* [Life/Struggle of St. Helena in Finding the Cross in the Land of Jerusalem] (Anonymous, n.d., Maynila: Imprenta, Libreria at Papelaria ni J. Martinez); 2) Fruto Cruz's *Ang Pagcaquita nang Emperatriz Elena sa Cruz na Quinamatayan ni Jesus* [Empress Helena's Finding of the Cross where Jesus Died] (1909); 3) Fruto Cruz's *Ang Pagcabunyi nang mahal na Santa Cruz o ang Pananalo ng Emperador Heraclio sa Haring Cosroas sa Persia at Pagcacasauli ng Mahal na Santa Cruz, sa Bundoc ng Calvario* [The Triumph of the Cross or the Triumph of Emperor Heraclius Over the Persians and the Return of the Holy Cross to Mount Calvary] (1909); and 4) Hermenegildo de Guzman's *Comedia de Emperatriz Elina y Constantino con Tres Acto* [Play about the Empress Helena and Constantine in Three Acts] (1910 typescript summarized in Tiongson 1978, 158-161). The first is an *awit*, a verse form of Spanish origin with stanzas of four monoriming dodecasyllabic lines; the second and third are called *tibag*, the komedya type performance version of the Santacruznan narratives; and the fourth is a *komedya*. Another text listed in the *Updated Checklist of Filipiniana at Valladolid* (Spain) by Rodriguez (1976) is *An Paghanap ni Sta. Elena can Sta. Cruz na pinacoan qui Jesus asin si pacacoania. Drama na pinamogtac sa verso nin sarong sacerdote secular. Nueva Caceres, Imp. La Sagrada Familia, 1896* (The search by St. Helena of the Holy Cross on which Jesus was nailed and her finding of it. Drama set in verse by a secular priest). The various *dotoc* texts, specifically the *sinanta-Elena* and the *corocobacho*, and the 1896 drama at Valladolid are obviously the Bicol versions of the legends, because the narratives of these texts are one and the same: the Heraclius narrative. Also, the Bicol versions predate the other Filipino versions, if we go by the dates of printing, at least with respect to the *tibag* (1909) and the *komedya* (1910); the *awit* date of printing is not known.

contradictory. Third, the tres marias narrative may have been adapted from or based on any or all of three possible sources: 1) the *Pasion Bikol*; 2) the Biblical account of Mark 16:1; or 3) the original '*Quem quaeritis?*' trope. The first and second have almost identical action especially in the beginning. The third is said to be 'the first point of dramatic growth in the liturgy' logically given the most attention by the medieval church, because the visit of the three Marys to the tomb and the joyful message they received from the angels that Christ had risen emphasized the theme of resurrection that was absolutely central to the early Christian Church. It is the 'original' *quem quaeritis* because the other tropes directly based on this Easter *quem quaeritis* came to be performed for other important ceremonies of the church year, like those for the Nativity and the Ascension⁴ (Harris 1992, 28-32). Fourth, a significant part of the dotoc is the *pasion* of which there are two clearly distinct versions: the *pasion* of the sanabua and the *pasion* of the panjardin and corocobacho. The first contains the narrative of Christ's passion from the Garden of Gethsemane, immediately after the Last Supper, to His death on the Cross; the story is interspersed with exhortations to remember Jesus' sacrifice, to repent, and to live in constant gratitude to Jesus in return for his pain and suffering. The second consists of petitions to and praises of the Holy Cross, similar to but not the same as the Lenten *pasion*. Fifth, the *calle amargora* may have been strongly influenced by the narrative of Christ's passion, or it may have been an imaginative recreation of Helene's search for the Cross—imaginative because the legends mention only the finding of three crosses and the

⁴ The name of the Easter trope is taken from the lines sang by the angels and addressed to the three Marys at the tomb: '*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, O Christicolae?*' (Whom do you seek in the sepulchre, Christian women?)

test of the True Cross, not a tracking of the path taken by Jesus.⁵ It is also entirely possible that the pilgrims who search for the Cross in the calle amargora are the same ordinary folk in the other dotoc narratives. Sixth, the texts may be said to have a main part and auxiliary parts. I call the main part the ‘journey text’ to distinguish it from the auxiliary parts, which are the Vexilla Regis, Pasion de Dotoc, and the Adios. These are present in most but not all of the text variants.

Table 1. Parts of the Baao Texts (Extant)

	Main Body	Vexilla	Pasion	Adios
Sanabua	√	√	√	√
Panjardin	√	√	√	√
Cobacho	√	√	√	√
Nicomedes Porlaseñal	√	x	x	√
Canaman Porlaseñal	√	√	x	√

Vexilla Regis. The *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt* or ‘The Royal Banners Forward Go’⁶ is a Latin hymn composed by the sixth century poet and bishop of Poitiers Venantius Fortunatus (A.D. 530-609)⁷ to celebrate the receipt, in a solemn procession, of a relic of the True Cross. The relic was sent by the Emperor Justin II and his wife to Radegunde and the convent at Poitiers. Sung for the first time on November 19, 569 (Rousseau 1967, 635), the Vexilla Regis was adopted by the church ‘as one of her great Passion hymns’ (Raby 1966, 89) and became a favorite

⁵ See ‘An pagpaduman pagdalao nin Emperatriz Elena sa pinaglobngan can mahal na Santa Cruz asin paco ni Jesucristo Cagurangnanta’, *Casaysayan can Mahal na Pasion ni Jesucristo Cagurangnanta na sucat ipaglaad nin Puso nin siisay man na magbasa*, Decima Sexta Edicion, ipinabikol ni Sr. Dr. Fr. Francisco Gainza, binikol ni Tranquilino Hernandez (Manila: U.S.T. Press, 1984), pp. 206-209 (‘The search and visit by the Empress Helena of the tomb/place where the cross and nails of Jesus our Lord were buried’, History of the holy pasion of Jesus our Lord that inflames the heart of anyone who reads it, Sixth Edition, Bikol translation ordered by Fr. Dr. Francisco Gainza, translated to Bikol by Tranquilino Hernandez). See also Javellana 1988, 122-124 (the Tagalog *Casaysayan*) and 228-230 (Javellana’s English translation).

⁶ The title translation is taken from *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, p. 1307. Another English title—‘The Triumph of the Cross’—is provided by K.P. Harrington (1967, 60).

⁷ The Vexilla Regis, along with *Pange lingua gloriosi* (‘Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle’)—both hymns in honor of the Cross—are said to be the distinctive marks of Fortunatus’ genius. Indeed, on the basis of the merits of these two hymns, Venantius Fortunatus is regarded as ‘the first of medieval poets’.

song of the crusaders (Kuhnmuench 1929, 396). There are fifty translations into English verse that ‘testify to its universal appeal’ (Kuhnmuench, 396; Rousseau, 635).⁸ In the church services, until 1956 it was used in the Roman missal as a processional hymn for Good Friday when the Blessed Sacrament is brought back from the repository. It also used to be the Vesper hymn for Holy Week and for the Feasts of the Finding of the Cross (May 3) and the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14).⁹ The original hymn was modified for liturgical use and the dotoc author who included the hymn in his text used the church-modified verses but retained much of Fortunatus’ text.¹⁰ One point that should be made is that this text of 569 AD comes from a different era—neither of the time of Heraclius (630 AD) nor of Helena (325 AD).

To this day, the hymn is still sung by the paradotoc in original (though slightly corrupted) Latin, with some few modifications in the text, and with music composed by locals. The paradotoc do not know what the verses say, but they love to sing the hymn. The stanzas are sung as solo pieces with the first stanza as the chorus.

Pasion de Dotoc. The *pasion* has two distinct versions: the *sanabua pasion* that resembles the Canaman *pasion* recounting Christ’s passion and the *pasion* of the *corocobacho* and *panjardin* that is composed only of petitions and praises. The petitions are found from beginning to end, even interspersed with the action of the narrative, but they are particularly concentrated in the *pasion* of the *corocobacho*

⁸ Dante even parodied the hymn’s opening line in the final canto of the *Inferno* (Canto 34): “‘*Vexilla Regis prodeunt inferni*’ towards us: therefore look in front of thee,” my master said, “if thou discernest him.” (English trans., ‘The standards of the infernal king advance.’)

⁹ The feast of the finding of the Cross is also known as the feast of the Invention of the Cross, from the Latin ‘*invenire*’ (to find). It was observed every May 3 from the seventh century until 1960 when Rome suppressed it as part of the reform of the liturgical calendar. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross continues to be observed on September 14. See the *HarperCollins Encyclopedia*, 381-382; 674.

¹⁰ The dotoc author obviously had access to both the original sixth century text of Venantius Fortunatus and the church-modified verses.

and panjardin. They range from prayers for guidance and strength needed for the journey—

Awot pang tabangan quita
Can Sta. Cruz na bendita
Parigonon an boot ta
Sa paghanap ta saiya
(cobacho 4: 1)¹¹

May the blessed Holy Cross
Help us
Strengthen our hearts
To search for Him

Coro nin magna angeles
Tronos nin dominaciones
Tabangi an samong isip
Paghanap can lignum crucis
(panjardin 2: 8)

Choir of angels
Thrones of rulers
Help our mind
Find the wood of the Cross

Asin an ca angelisan
Sa langit camurawayan
Cami saindong tocdoan
Nin maliwanag na dalan
(porlaseñal 2:1)

And all the angels
In the glorious heavens
Teach us
The right path

--to repeated prayers for deliverance from evil of all forms: hunger, war, pestilence, wild beasts, and the temptations of the devil:

Iligtas mo ngani cami
Na nagtitipon digdi
Sa hampac na macuri
Sa hambre, gierra, y peste
(pasion-cobacho 2: 2)

Save us
Who are gathered here
From the ruthless lashes
Of hunger, war, and pestilence

Agawon mo cami gabos
Sa mababangis na hayop
Sagcod can magna pagsogot
Nin caiwal na demonios
(cobacho 4: 17)

Deliver us all
From ferocious beasts
And the iniquitous lures
Of the devil enemy

An huring hinahagad mi
Bai pabayaon cami
Ibahan sa aldao sa bangui
Na makaligtas sa peste
(sa-Nabua 5th coro)

The last thing we ask of you
Do not forsake us
Be with us by day, by night
Save us from the pestilence

--to prayers for unity of the community and blessings for the priests and leaders of nations, the dotoc sponsors and the audience, and for salvation in the next life:

¹¹ The reference is to the specific text or part of a specific text; the first number pertains to the quatrain number in the set (or which row of cantors sings it), the second number is the sequence number of the quatrain set in the entire text.

Sa banauan mo lilingya
Pag caherac mong dalisay
An gabos na tawo tawan
Cacanon sa aroaldaw
(sa-Nabua 2:10)

Cast upon your people
Your mercy most pure
Give to all people
Their daily bread

Caheraque cruz na mahal
Mga padres sa banwaan
Asin ta sinda magdanay
Sa mga guibong marahay
(sa-Nabua 4: 9)

Have mercy, Oh Holy Cross
For the priests of the town
May they continue
With their good works

An hagad mi saimo
O Santa Cruz na bendito
Sa caratan iligtas mo
Inihong bilog na barrio
(pasion-cobacho 4: 2)

We ask of you
Oh blessed Holy Cross
Deliver from evil
The entire barrio

An mga poon siring man
Caining bilog na quinaban
Sagcod can may caaldawan
Nin gracia simong tabangan
(pasion-cobacho 1: 3)

The leaders too
Of the whole world
The dotoc hosts this day
With your graces help them

Saro pang hagad mi naman
Saimo O Cruz na mahal
Nin gracia simong tawan
Mga tawong nangagdalo
(pasion-cobacho 2: 3)

Another favor we ask
Of you oh Cross adored
Grant your graces
To our visitors

Asin sa gabos caiyan
An huri ming hagad ngonian
Samuya logod camtan
An langit camurawayan
(pasion-cobacho 3: 3)

And of all these
Our last petition this day
May we obtain
The glory of heaven

Adios or Paaram. All the extant texts, except the porlaseñal, have only the one single Adios text, preceded by the same *Con Sucat coro*. The *coro* is notable because it is the only *quintilla* or five-line stanza in the whole text.

Con sucat maheracan
O Jesus ming Cagurangnan
Samuya logod macamtam
An langit camurawayan
Awot pa logod guiraray

If thou wouldst grant your mercy
Oh Jesus our Lord
May we attain
The glory of heaven
Now and forever

Adios

Adios ligno sa Cruz Santo
Adios ligno del Cristiano
Adios salve y bendito
Adios redentor del mundo

Farewell, wood of the Holy Cross
Farewell, wood of Christians
Farewell, hail and blessed
Farewell, Redeemer of the world

The dotoc texts are therefore made up of the account of the pilgrimage, the petitions of the pilgrims, and praises and adoration. The lines reveal that the journey—the walking—is mostly done at night, on a night brightly lit by the moon and the stars. One informant speculated that this must have been the practice in the medieval times by those travelling to the Holy Land, to travel on foot by night in order to escape the scorching heat of day. And because the setting is at night, a dominant image in the dotoc is light and brightness—the bright night made even brighter by the light emanating from the Holy Cross.

There are many indications that the journey occurs in May, the month of flowers: in the corocobacho, ‘the sky is clear like the month of May’; in the sanabua, ‘the month [of May] is truly fortunate [with] the powerful scent of flowers’; and the panjardin is all about the offering of flowers in bloom. The image of flowers as offering is strongly associated with simplicity, purity of heart, humility, smallness of being in the face of the infinite greatness of God who died for the salvation of all—themes that are particularly strong in the sanabua but also present in all the other texts. Other environmental details are given in the corocobacho, such as the places through which the pilgrims passed: sea, plains, and valleys. The Cross in the sanabua is ‘*labing langkaw*’ (very high) and so is Calvary. The journey is long and tiring and the pilgrims encourage each other to endure the tiredness, thirst, and hunger they felt.

In sum, the dominant recurring images and themes in the pilgrimage narrative can be seen as opposing pairs: the light of the moon and the stars versus

the darkness of night, the light of God's love versus the darkness of sin; the beauty of the surroundings, the sweet scents of flowers, the calmness of the hour versus the travails of the journey; salvation, redemption, life versus death, war, pestilence, and eternal damnation. These images and themes permeate even the petitions and the verses of praise and adoration. From beginning to end, the Holy Cross is praised and adored. The Cross is blessed (*bendita*) and is the glory (*cabantugan*) of the world. It is the Christian's corps of arms in the fight against evil (*barote[ngl marigonon*) and on it was hung the great body (*an hawak na sinanglitan*). In the porlaseñal dotoc, we come to know from the sections that praise and adore the Cross that it was made out of four kinds of wood: cedar, cypress, palmwood and olivewood¹²—one kind of wood for each of the four parts of the Cross: the upright or vertical shaft, the crossbeam, the tablet above, and the block into which the cross was fixed. The praises and adoration in almost all the texts are capped by the offering of flowers and, in the corocobacho, of paper flags and paper half-moons. The concept is that of adoration through '*pagsamno*' or the act of putting '*samno*' (adornments)¹³ on the Cross.

When performed, the action would closely follow the structure in the texts. The following table provides a comparative description, culled from observation and from descriptions by informants:

¹² In Stanza # 23 in the porlaseñal or Dotoc Numero Uno in Canaman. The legends that identify the kinds of wood that made up the Cross are also those that tell of an earlier finding of the Cross: by Adam's son Seth in the earthly paradise, by Solomon in Lebanon, by the queen of Sheba in Solomon's temple, and by the Jews in the water of a pond called Probatia. See Voragine, Vol. I, pp. 277-278.

¹³ See the entry for '*samno*' in Lisboa 1865, 333 and the discussion in a later section in this chapter.

Table 2. Action Structure of the Extant Texts in Baao

Cobacho	Sanabua	Panjardin	Porlaseñal
1. Introductory Coro	1. Introductory Coro	1. Introductory Coro by the jardeneras	1. <i>Tindog</i> (stand): Intentions to walk toward or approach the Cross
2. Journey before reaching the cobacho	2. Start of journey	2. Journey to laguerta ¹⁴	2. <i>Luhod</i> (kneel): Explanations of the signs of the Cross made on the forehead, on the mouth, and on the chest
3. Cobacho exchanges	3. Getting of the flower offerings	3. Arrival at the laguerta and tending of plants	3. <i>Tindog</i> (stand): Praises to the Holy Cross
4. Resumption of journey	4. Sighting of the Cross	4. Resting/Napping	4. <i>Paaram</i> (Leave-taking)
5. Arrival and adoration	5. Arrival	5. Coro of pasajeras	
6. Vexilla Regis	6. Adoration and offering of flowers	6. Prayer (on knees) by pasajeras 1 and 2, severally	
7. Pasion	7. Vexilla Regis	7. Start of journey	
8. Adios	8. Pasion	8. Resting/Stopping by roadside	
	9. Adios	9. Meeting/Merging of pasajeras 1 and 2	
		10. Prayer (on knees), together now	
		11. Resumption of journey	
		12. Sighting of laguerta	
		13. Arrival at laguerta and waking of jardeneras	
		14. Confrontation/Conflict between pasajeras and jardeneras	
		15. Clearing up of conflict	
		16. Going to the spring	
		17. Watering of the plants	
		18. Harvesting the blooms and pulling plants from the roots	
		19. Resumption of journey	
		20. Finding of the Cross	
		21. Offering/Showering of the Flowers and Plants	
		22. Vexilla Regis	
		23. Pasion	
		24. Adios	

The Cobacho Dotoc

The *cobacho dotoc* text tells of a group of pilgrims who journey to the Holy Land to visit the Holy Cross. On their way, the pilgrims come upon a *cobacho* (shed/shelter) with people inside. The pilgrims are dissuaded by those in the cobacho who had heard that the Cross has been stolen. But the pilgrims say the

¹⁴ From the Spanish *la huerta* (Mintz and Britanico 1985, 359) or ‘the garden’ where various *macetas* (garden plants) abound: *lirio, rosas, azucena, jasmín, rosas*, and other *sampagas* (flowers). The gardeners are thus also called *Ortelanas*, Bicolized from the Spanish, *hortelano/hortelana*, says Fr. Jorge Tirao, interview conducted July 21, 1998. Also: ‘*Hortelano-na*: gardener, horticulturist’ (Gooch and Garcia de Paredes 1978, 356).

Cross that had been stolen has already been recovered. And they proceed to tell how it happened.

According to the tale, the Cross was stolen and brought to Persia by the Persian king Cosrohas (Chosroes), who coveted Byzantine territory and stole the Holy Cross (Voragine 1993, 170). The Emperor Heraclio¹⁵ (Heraclius, Byzantine emperor of 610-641 A.D.) waged war against Persia and won. Cosrohas was killed by his son Serwis who then ruled Persia, and Serwis surrendered all to Heraclio, including the Holy Cross, which was then returned by the emperor to the Holy Land.¹⁶ The emperor attempted to carry the Cross up Calvary as Jesus did, but could not do it, succeeding only after heeding the advice of a patriarch to shed his rich clothes, ornaments, and crown because Jesus himself had been a poor man.

New material on Heraclius points out that it is not Serwis (or Kawadh or Kavad-Seroi), son of Khusro II (Chosroes), but the Persian commander Shahrvaraz who eventually located the fragments of the True Cross and arranged for them to be sent to Heraclius as part of an agreement in which Heraclius promised to help Shahrvaraz assume power in Persia if he would return the True Cross that he took during the violent sacking of Jerusalem in 614 (Regan 2003, 132). Regan also identifies as erroneous the account of the presence of the patriarch Zacharias in

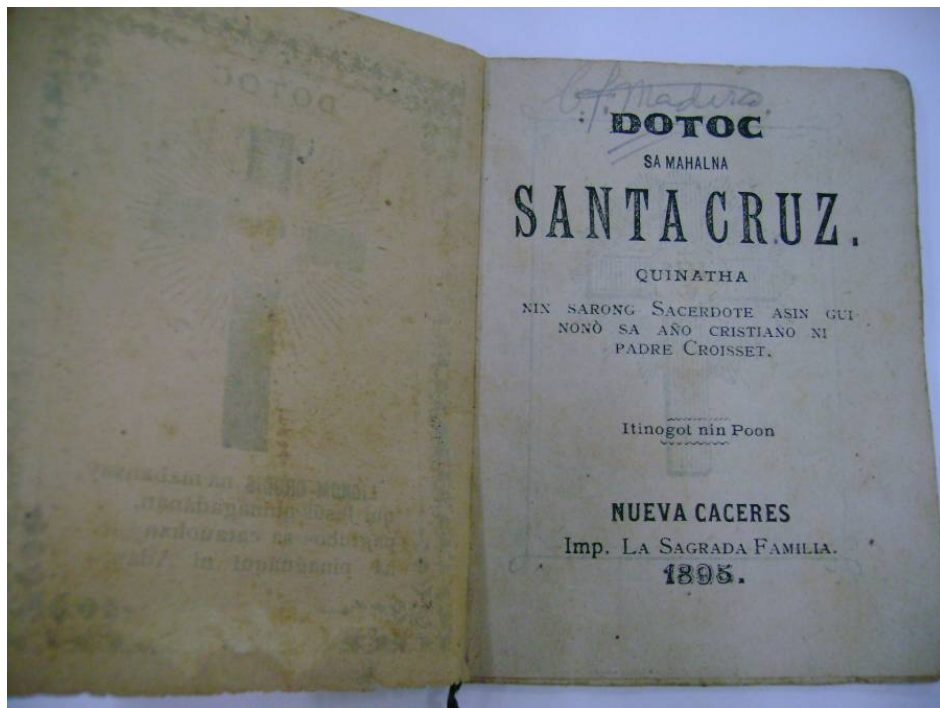
¹⁵ In many *orihinals* (scripts), Heraclius is '*Herachio*', an error due perhaps to careless copying from one *orihinal* to another. The many years of wrong transmission have fixed the name which is now pronounced as '*Herakyo*'.

¹⁶ In Voragine (1993, 170), Serwis is Syrois, the eldest son of Chosroes who made a pact with Heraclius when he learned that his father, fallen ill with dysentery, wanted his other son Medasas to inherit the crown. Then Syrois pursued his father, put him in chains, fed him '*with the bread of afflictions and the water of distress*', and eventually killed him with arrows. He freed all the Christian prisoners and the patriarch Zachary and sent them, together with the wood of the Cross, to Heraclius. Here the patriarch in the *dotoc* narrative is named. Of the two versions presented here, Voragine's version is the more likely source or basis of the *dotoc* narrative, though it is not the only chronicle mentioned by Voragine. (See also 169-170.) In 'Heraclius, Byzantine Emperor' (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1976 [VI], 1047), Serwis is Kawadh who acceded to the Persian throne after Chosroes was defeated by Heraclius. Kawadh is not mentioned to be a son of Chosroes; neither is it said that Kawadh killed Chosroes, but it was he who agreed to restore the occupied territory and the Holy Cross to the Byzantine Empire.

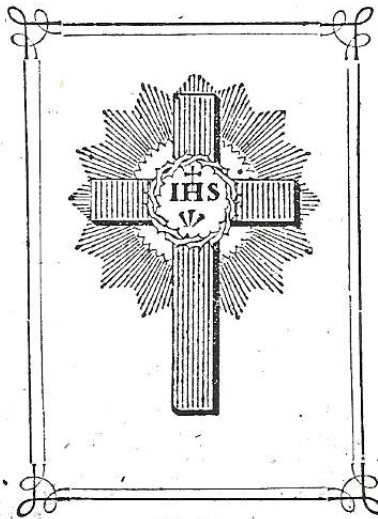
Jerusalem during the return of the True Cross by Heraclius in 630, for Zacharias died in captivity in Persia long before this day. The account is named as a miracle in the Second Nocturn of Matins of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Regan 2003, n85, 271).

After the Heraclius tale is told, the people in the *cobacho* go with the pilgrims. On reaching the Holy Land, they praise and adore the Cross and adorn it with flowers. Then they sing the *Vexilla Regis* and offer their petitions in the *Pasion*. The *dotoc* ends with the singing of the *Adios*.

In the surviving copy of the 1895 printed text,¹⁷ there are specific directions for the performance:



¹⁷ The text is part of the Bikol Special Collection of the University of the Philippines Main Library in Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.



PATANID.

Sa orog carahay na paagui can *Dotoc* na ini, mapoon an duang padis ó pareja sa haroharayó dian sa Altar na may enramada. Dian sa cabagnaan can lugar na popónan asin can Altar, bobogtacan sa guilid can dalan nin sarong corocobacho na sa atubagnan caini magtotorocao an ibang magna padis, asin sa atubagnan ninda may sarong lamesang nabobogtacan can magna bandera, media luna na nasasarábit na nag-oro-ortan sa mismong magna bandera, na siring man sana an pagcolocar na pagsamno ninda caiyan sa Altar pag-abot ninda: cayá sa atubang can Altar cacágan nin sarong grado ó bancò na bobogtacan caiyan. Tara

duman man sa lamesang may corocobacho, may manlaenlaen na magna burac na nasasa magna plato ó ramilletes, ta iyo an isasamno ó isasaboag.



DOTOC

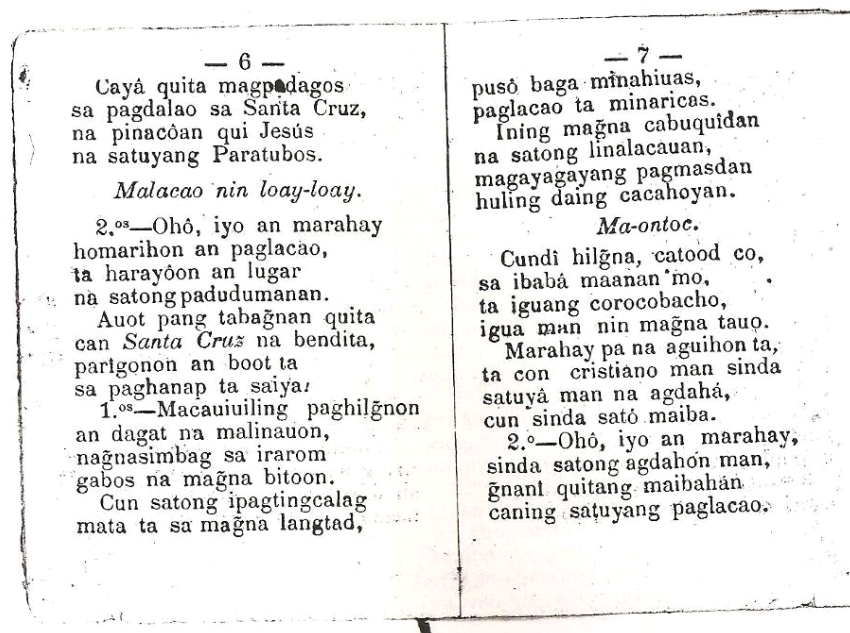
SA MAHAL NA

SANTA CRUZ.

1.^{os}—Ó banguing maliuanagon, horas na matoninoñon, gabos na magna bitoon maquiquintab na paghilgnon. Malinao an Firmamento, siring sa bulan na Mayo, an doros na nag-áamio nasadol sa peregrino.

The instructions (*Patanid*) on the first page translate as follows:

For the best way to do this dotoc, two pairs will start at a distance from the altar in a roofed structure (*enramada*). Midway between the starting point and the altar, a corocobacho will be constructed on the side of the road and in front/in this structure will sit other pairs and in front of them will be a table on which will be placed the flags (*bandera*) [and] half-moons (*media luna*) arranged in an alternating position, the same way that these are to be placed when offered at the altar when they reach it; so much so that in front of the altar a chair or bench should be set up for this. And on the corocobacho table, there are various flowers on plates,¹⁸ because these will be offered (*isasamno*) or showered (*isasaboag*).



On pages six and seven of the text, we start seeing directorial notes or instructions for the action, printed in italics: *Malacao nin loay-loay* (walk slowly); *Maontoc* (stop); and this is kept up to the last part, the leave-taking or *Paaram*: *Magñatirindog gabos* (all stand) on page 30. Andrew Recepcion provides a full list of these instructions or rubrics for the paradotoc (and translations of these) that he culled from a 1939 printed text, probably a reprint of the 1895 text (Recepcion 1997, 42):

¹⁸ In Lisboa (1865, 85 and 368) *ramilletes* is 'ramilletes de flores o de otra cosa, que solian ponerse en el pelo'; the Bikol term is *tadyoc* and the entry reads: 'como ramillete de flores o de otro, que las mugeres se ponen en las cabellos'—both referring to flowers that are used by women to decorate their hair.

Table 3. Structure of the Cobacho Dotoc (1939 Text)

I	<i>Pataratara</i>	Introduction
II	<i>Malacao nin luayluay</i>	Walk slowly
III	<i>Maontoc</i>	Stop
IV	<i>Madagos, pag-abot sa tognod can corocobacho maontoc</i>	Continue, and stop upon reaching the tent (caseta)
V	<i>Mabuhat an nasa corocobacho asin magnasimbag</i>	The tent-dwellers rise and answer
VI	<i>Maturucao</i>	Sit
VII	<i>Madagos nin paglacao</i>	Continue walking
VIII	<i>Maontoc an gabos</i>	All cantors stop
IX	<i>Malacao</i>	Walk once again
X	<i>Malohod asin macanta</i>	Kneel and sing
XI	<i>Solo</i>	Solo
XII	<i>Matindog an gabos</i>	All rise
XIII	<i>An duang nasa enotan, nagcacanta na nagbubugtac can bandera</i>	The two cantors in front sing while placing flags
XIV	<i>An masunod nagcacanta sa pagultanan can magna bandera</i>	The next two in line sing while placing the moon crescents between the flags
XV	<i>An natatada nagcacanta na nagasabuag can magna burac</i>	The last in the line are singing while showering the flowers
XVI	<i>Malohod an gabos asin macanta can Vexilla</i>	All kneel singing a hymn
XVII	<i>Coro can magna cantora</i>	Chorus of the lady cantors
XVIII	<i>Matindog an gabos para sa paaram</i>	All rise for the conclusion

Cobacho in Baao. Performances in Baao follow these rubrics, with very little modification.¹⁹ The opening Coro is sung in place, then the ‘pilgrims’ move forward, walking in a waltz-like movement: step-close, step-close, keeping time with the singing and the accompaniment. On reaching the *cobacho*, the pilgrims stop and the *cobacho* occupants stand to welcome them. All sit at the invitation of the hosts. The pilgrims tell the Heraclius story. From the *cobacho* they all go to the chapel, the *tierra santa* or Holy Land, walking in the same waltz-like movement. At the chapel, they all kneel, standing only at the invitation of a soloist. This is followed by the adoration with flowers, paper flags, and paper half-moons, the four

¹⁹ One major modification is the grafting of the Adios to the 1895 text. The latter has a different *paaram* consisting of eight stanzas or quatrains, which in current practice are sung as part of the *pasion de dotoc*.

rows of cantors alternately stepping forward to give their offerings. Then all kneel for the *Vexilla Regis*, still inside the chapel. For the *Pasion*, they go back to the *cobacho* and sit on the benches, which are now facing the chapel. The *Adios* is sung back at the chapel again.

Cobacho in Bigaa. The performance follows the basic rubrics, but differs in the walking, for the cantoras do not walk dance-like as in Baa but briskly, almost running, going from one stopping point to another until they reach their destination. Everything else is much the same, especially in terms of the journey text or the main body of the dotoc. However, the *Vexilla Regis* is not sung as the 1895 text directs, on the pilgrims' arrival at the altar, but as the hymn in the procession at the conclusion of the komedya, when the cross had been found by Elena and her entourage. The *pasion de dotoc* is sung, but the *adios* is entirely different. In place of the *adios* is the *viva* of the entire troupe composed of the dotoc cantoras and the komedya performers all saying "Viva!" (Long live!): long live the Holy Cross and long live they who praise and honor Him. The children in the audience as well as the grown-ups all shout 'Viva! Viva!' in response. The cobacho dotoc is therefore sandwiched within the frame of the komedya performance, with the following sequence of events being followed:

- I Komedya begins and ends with the finding of the cross
- II The finding of the cross is proclaimed in a procession around the barrio with the *Vexilla Regis* as processional hymn
- III Break for supper
- IV Cobacho dotoc
- V *Diskurso* or speeches of the komedya personajes
- VI Viva

What seems to be an arbitrary mix and match that the Bigaa folk did with the dotoc and komedya has a quite different effect on the drama of the cobacho pilgrimage, if one would go by the use of time and space. First, the cobacho

cantoras join in Elena's procession, which could then be interpreted as local folk joining Elena in the celebration of the finding of the cross, with them sharing the same time and space. Second, the cobacho cantoras do their own pilgrimage to the Holy Land, relate the story of another finding of the cross, by Heraclius, and on reaching their destination they submit their petitions and adore the cross. Elena and the rest of the komedya *personajes* are not involved in the main cobacho journey, but they turn up as a tableau on the altar, *with* the Holy Cross. And this is what the cobacho pilgrims find on their arrival. There is a sense then that they occupy different time and space dimensions at this stage: both in the here and now but one is in the plane of the physical (the cobacho pilgrims), the other in the realm of the spiritual (Elena and her entourage with the Holy Cross), merging in shouting 'Viva!'

One other difference from the Baao practice, concerning action, is the use of *lamano* (or 'la mano'—in Spanish, literally, 'the hand') or hand gestures. The cantoras use these hand gestures from beginning to end of the journey text. During the exchanges in the cobacho, when the Heraclius story is told, the girls (who sing in pairs) stand when it is their turn to sing, and make the *lamano* motions. When they resume the journey, bringing with them the *banderas* and *media lunas*, they make the motions with these hand properties. These hand gestures are also used in the komedya as characters deliver their lines in the form of the *dicho* or stylized verses.

Dotoc in Canaman

Mampo (1980) describes the dotoc in Canaman as 'an action prayer which consists of praise and petition to the Cross [that] may simply be recited, although the participants usually sing it, accompanied by a guitar' (61-62). The lines of a

silaba or stanza are dictated by a *notador* (also called a *maestra* or teacher). The plot follows a basic pattern of ‘women expressing a desire to adore the Cross before actually doing so’ for the first two nights and develops into ‘women [going] in search of the Cross which they subsequently find and adore’ for the third night and variations of this pattern for the fourth to ninth nights (66).



There is a variety of texts: one for each of the first eight days of the novenario and a choice of nine different texts for the ninth day. All texts ‘follow the basic pattern of search, finding, and adoration of the Cross with some subsidiary actions’ and, for the ninth night, ‘the choice depends upon inclination, preparation, and availability of manpower’ (Mampo 1980, 97).

There are three parts: the *dotoc*, the *pasion*, and the *paaram*, each of which is treated as a major part of the performance and marked by an interval after each part. The Dotoc Numero Uno goes with the Pasion Numero Uno; the Dotoc Numero Dos with Pasion Numero Dos, and so on, but there is only one Pasion for the ninth night and only one Paaram for all nine nights.

Table 4. Dotoc y Pasion Texts in Canaman

	Dotoc	Pasion
First Night	Dotoc Numero Uno	Paglalang (Creation)
Second Night	Dotoc Numero Dos	Pagnaqui ([Christ's] Birth)
Third Night	Dotoc Numero Tres	Pasion Numero Tres
Fourth Night	Dotoc Numero Cuatro	Pasion Numero Cuatro
Fifth Night	Dotoc Numero Cinco	Pasion Numero Cinco
Sixth Night	Dotoc Numero Seis	Pasion Numero Seis
Seventh Night	Dotoc Numero Siete	Pasion Numero Siete
Eight Night	Dotoc Numero Ocho	Pasion Numero Ocho
Ninth Night	1. <i>Pagboniag</i> (Christening)	Pasion sa Pagtanggap (Passion of the removal of Christ's body from the cross)
	2. <i>Paggabot</i> (Uprooting)	
	3. <i>Pagsamno o Paghapit</i> (Decorating and fetching/getting flowers for the cross)	
	4. <i>Pagsamno y Pagsabuag</i> (Decorating and showering flowers)	
	5. <i>Pagsamno, Pagsabuag, Pagnandila</i> (Decorating, showering of flowers, and offering candles)	
	6. <i>Panharden</i> (Gardening)	
	7. <i>Panharden May Bobo May Sabuag</i> (Gardening with watering of plants and showering flowers)	
	8. <i>Panharden May Burabod May Pambobo</i> (Gardening with a spring of water and tools for watering)	
	9. <i>Pagnortina</i> (Putting up a curtain)	

Mampo's thesis (1980) provides descriptions of the texts and performances. The texts used in current practice are the same and the manner of performance has hardly changed. A look at the text for the first night's dotoc sets the action and tone of the entire collection: The pilgrims say that the heavenly beings are rejoicing and they call on them for guidance. They express their intention to adore the cross, for it is the Christian's weapon against the lures of demons. A close reading of the Canaman texts (for the ninth night) reveals similarities with some of the older texts

in Baa0 like the panjardin, which in Canaman has at least three variants. Also, the text of *Pagboniag* (Christening), one of the text choices for the ninth night closely resembles that of a komedya text where female Moors (Moras) are eventually converted to Christianity. All these show strong evidence that the dotoc texts may have come from the same source/s and that these texts in Canaman were developed by the locals into their present forms (in the same manner that in Baa0 my informants spoke of how at least one *parabalo* (director) arranged or improved the verses). A striking feature of the Canaman texts is the tracing of the origins of the wood of the Cross to the tree in Paradise (identified as an apple tree) from which Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit; the tale is found in Dotoc 3, Pasion 3 and Pasion 6. Scenes from the birth, life and passion of Jesus are cut up and narrated in sequence in the other dotoc and pasion texts. The journey texts are mostly short and speak of the decision of unnamed, ordinary people to look for or visit the Cross, their actual journey, and their finding of the Cross bathed in a great light. All ‘action’ happens in the *engramada* or roofed performance space and the ‘journey’ or walking is a mere few steps towards the front of the altar.

The komedya (both the Bigaa and Baras texts) and the lagaylay have more of the same in the texts and in the performances: people journeying to the Holy Land to find the Cross; praises for the Cross and the value of faith and sacrifice; and the rewards one can expect for good deeds. These two forms of the dotoc are the ‘more dramatic’ versions because of the role-taking in the depiction of the search for the cross by Helena and Constantine and the clash with the Moors (in the Baras version). It can be said that these versions are more clearly ‘inherited’ from the friars because the stories played are clearly traceable to Spanish materials

and the characters or personages are recognizable figures who loom large in the history of the Roman Catholic religion.²⁰

The Dotoc as Komedyá

The *dotoc as komedyá* depicts Helena's finding of the Cross. It is performed in Baras, Nabua and in Tinago, Bigaa in Legazpi City. The Baras performance has two parts: Helena and Constantine's battle with a non-Christian Emperadora and the pilgrimage to find the Cross. In Bigaa the komedyá is made up of only the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Bigaa folk call their performance komedyá, while the Baras folk refer to it only as dotoc.

The *komedyá* is a dramatic performance tradition that developed out of the Spanish *comedia* (plays) brought to the Philippines by colonization. Strongly influenced by the Spanish *capa y espada* (cloak and sword) plays, the *komedyá* also came to be known as *moro-moro* because the story and plot is usually about the contest between Christians and Moors ('*moro*') with the former always the victor in the end. As Fernandez (1996) explains, the form developed a distinct character different from the Spanish plays and thus became the *komedyá* (spelled with a 'k').

Nicanor Tiongson describes the komedyá as 'a play in verse [that] has conventions of stylized verse delivery, marching for entrances and exits, choreographed fighting, and, very often, artifices to create magical effects on stage' (1999a, 1). It is practiced in many areas in the Philippines and is called by many names. Tiongson further notes that in the Tagalog regions, 'the *komedyá* about the search for the Holy Cross by Elena and Constantino is called *arakyo*, *tibag*, *elena* or *kolokyo*'. Philippine scholars and komedyá troupes agree that at

²⁰ See the Notes on Textual Sources below.

least four elements make the komedya a distinct form: the *berso* or verses of dodecasyllabic or octosyllabic lines, the *batalla* or choreographed fighting between warring kingdoms, the *sintahon* or courtship scene, and the clown figure or trickster variously called *payaso*, *pusong*, or *bulbulagaw* (Perez 2008).²¹

The action of the dotoc as komedya is focused on the encounter between the Christians (Helena and Constantine and troops) and Moors (the *emperadora* and her troops) and on the embassies sent by both parties to each other, first for the battle and then afterwards, at the defeat of the latter, for the terms of surrender. This first part ends with the *emperadora* and her troops being converted to Helena's religion. The second part consists of the pilgrimage to find the Cross of Jesus. Here, tension is provided by the resistance of an old man to reveal what he knew of the whereabouts of the Cross. Helena directs the soldiers to soften him up by putting him in a well and starving him for three days. He relents eventually and leads the entourage to the 'mountain'. Helena orders the soldiers and ladies-in-waiting to dig on the area pointed out by the old man. They find three crosses, three nails, and the crown of thorns, but they are confused as to which of the three crosses found was Christ's. God takes pity on them and sends an angel who tells them to have a sick person kiss the three crosses; whichever would heal the sick person would be the True Cross. They also test the crosses on a dead person. The cross that is able to rouse the dead to life would be Christ's cross.

²¹ The four elements listed here are specifically enumerated by Edward Perez in a paper presented at the Komedyang Conference in Manila in February 2008, the first of its kind that generated many new materials on the komedya as theatrical practice. Other major discussions on the form can be found in Tiongson 1999a and Mojares 1985.

Table 5. Action Sequences of the Komedya

<p>TINAGO, BIGAA in Legazpi City</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elena decides to embark on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem; she orders her people to prepare for the journey 2. Elena and Constantino set off for the pilgrimage with their court 3. On Elena's orders, the <i>Pregonero</i> (messenger) announces their mission to people in the communities they pass through and seeks everyone's cooperation; anyone who has knowledge of the whereabouts of the place where Jesus died is to report to the emperatriz 4. An angel descends from heaven to guide the entourage 5. Two Judean women say they know of a <i>Gurang</i> (Old Man) who might know the place 6. Elena's soldiers find the Old Man but he denies any knowledge 7. Elena orders the soldiers to punish the Old Man; the soldiers detain the man by putting him in a well and starving him for three days 8. After three days the Gurang is brought to Elena and he then leads the empress and her soldiers to a mountain upon which was built a shrine to Venus 9. Elena's troops dig on the mountain, destroying the pagan shrine 10. They find three crosses, three nails, the crown of thorns, the linen that wrapped Jesus' body (called <i>sabanas</i>), and the wooden tablet (called <i>rotulo</i>) on which was inscribed the sign 'INRI' 11. Unable to tell which of the three crosses was Jesus' cross, they consult a bishop; an angel also tells them to have the three crosses tested on a sick person and on a corpse 12. Each of the three crosses is laid on the sick person; at the touch of the third cross the sick is healed 13. Next the crosses are laid on a corpse, one after the other; the third cross raises the dead to life 14. On finding the true cross, Elena and her troops rejoice—Elena puts the Cross upright on a prepared <i>andas</i> (a litter) and organizes the nails, rotulo, and <i>sabanas</i> on the cross (these are small or miniaturized pieces) and they bring the cross in a procession to announce the finding and invite people to praise and adore it 15. There is a break in the performance, for the fiesta dinner, and then the cobacho dotoc is performed 16. At the concluding part of the cobacho dotoc when the pilgrims reach the Holy Land (which is the same Kalbaryo of the komedya), Elena and all members of the komedya cast appear again in tableau formation with the Cross at the Kalbaryo 17. There is another break or interval in which the <i>hermana</i> (chief organizer) gives a speech and thanks donors and
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	<p>sponsors and all members of the komedya cast deliver prepared speeches in the same stylized verse delivery (dicho) of the komedya</p> <p>18. All shout Viva! (Long live the Holy Cross)</p>
<p>BARAS, STA. ELENA in Nabua</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elena announces her wish to find the cross, saying she was given a sign by God; the cross is in territory controlled by nonbaptized, in Judea, so she has decided to engage and defeat them in battle, destroy idolatry, and get their submission 2. Constantino gives assent; her people express support and commitment to the mission 3. In the pagan camp, the Emperadora makes an appeal to her troops; she has been given a sign by their gods that Elena would engage them in battle to get the cross of Jesus 4. The Judeans assure her of support, confident they will win the battle 5. Emperadora sends an embassy to Elena 6. The ambassadors make clear to Elena that the Emperadora will meet her and Constantino in battle; if not they will attack 7. Elena and Constantino concur 8. The Emperadora reviews her troops 9. Elena reviews her troops 10. The two armies meet in the battlefield 11. Elena fights the Emperadora, their troops fight alongside 12. Constantino takes charge, fights the Emperadora and thereafter her troops, one by one and then altogether 13. He defeats the Judeans; some of them plan to escape; the Emperadora weakens and orders surrender 14. The Judeans kneel and beg Constantino for mercy 15. Constantino spares their life but demands that they convert, to believe in the one true God, and to become their vassals 16. Constantino brings them to Elena and the Judeans pledge their allegiance 17. Elena orders them disarmed, warns of severe punishment for anyone who disobeys. She sends them home and orders for a public announcement and celebration of the victory 18. Back in their land, the Emperadora accepts their defeat and muses that perhaps they were defeated so they can be baptized as Christians; she orders her people to follow all of Elena's orders; her people agree 19. Elena orders for a circular to be made announcing her intention to find the cross and soliciting cooperation; Constantino seconds the order; all her people give support 20. Elena sends ambassadors with the circular to the Emperadora

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. The Emperadora receives the circular and asks the ambassadors to wait for her reply letter; she consults her people, who tells her to say they will meet with Elena the next day; a letter is made and the three of them sign the letter 22. Elena waits for the embajadoras, worried why they took so long; the embajadoras hurry back 23. Upon arrival of the ambassadors, Elena reads the letter and immediately orders her people to prepare for the journey to find the cross 24. The Emperadora gathers the Judeans to disseminate the circular, which orders everyone to assemble so Elena can speak to them about the search for the cross; they are aware that they face grave punishment if they go against her wishes 25. The journey begins. They reach Jerusalem and pitch tents and wait for the arrival of the Emperadora; they hear an angel sing 26. Elena orders two women to sow some seeds at the edge of the forest; she will harvest the plants and flowers and offer them to the cross 27. The seeds are planted 28. An old man prays for strength for his feeble body; he meets the Emperadora and her two soldiers (women) 29. The Emperadora and her women reach Elena's camp and tell her their intention to join her in the search for the cross 30. Elena asks them what they know about it; they say they do not know but an old man may be able to tell where it is; Elena orders them to get the man 31. The old man goes with the Emperadora, but when Elena asks him about the cross, he denies that he knows 32. <i>At this point, the action already moves in the same way as the Bigaa komedya, from the punishment of the old man to the finding of the three crosses, the tablet, the three nails, crown of thorns, and linen, and the test to see which of the three crosses is the true cross (7-13 above). As in Bigaa, an angel sings to guide them, but here in Baras there is no Bishop character.</i> 33. When the true cross is identified, Elena orders two women to harvest the plants and flowers: <i>palma, sipres asin sidro</i> (palm, cypress, and cedar) and wild roses, which are then made to adorn (samno) the cross 34. The cross is assembled with all the found objects: the INRI tablet, crown, nails, and linen and set up on the city square 35. The scene that follows resembles that of the offering of Elena's crown to the cross followed by her being crowned as saint in the lagaylay of Canaman
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	<p>36. Everyone sings ‘Viva’ (Long live the cross) and a hymn that tells of the origins of the wood of the cross—narratives that are found in the <i>pasion de dotoc</i> of Canaman</p> <p>37. Finally everyone sings the Adios.</p>
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It is significant to note that in both the Bigaa and Baras versions, there is no trickster figure or *pusong*, but this is effectively played, I would argue, by the Old Man (called *Gurang* in Bigaa, *Magurang* in Baras) who defies Elena and gets punished for it. Nothing in the text explains why this character decides not to reveal what he knows of the whereabouts of the cross or why he suffers for three days before telling Elena where to dig. The enactment does not also particularly come across as anywhere near the behaviour of the *pusong* in other komedya pieces.

Gracioso, *payaso*, or *hazme reir* (literally, ‘humor me’) in Spanish, the buffoon is more commonly called by the native names *bulbulagaw* and *pusong*. He appears as the prince’s foil and shadow and is given folksy, comic personal names like *Bugagas*, *Colele* or *Talingting*. He is cowardly, lazy, gluttonous, and obscene, but also quick-witted, uninhibited, impudent and irreverent. While the court jester is an old, conventional figure in European theater, the *pusong* resonates with local meanings for an audience steeped in a rich folk tradition of trickster tales.

His role is to invert and ‘confound’ (which is the meaning of *bulbulagaw*) what is represented on stage.... He slips in and out of the play, disengaging himself from time to time to directly address the audience, commenting on the characters and the action. He deflates the claims of hierarchy and ceremony with his base remarks on the play’s noble personages (often in low, unscripted verse) and by uncouth actions and gestures that disrupt the rigid, choreographed movements on stage. He punctures the make-believe of strange and distant kingdoms by intruding with his homely references to actual, local places and personalities (Mojares 2008, 4).

In contrast, the *Gurang/Magurang* is mild-mannered and respectful. But in my conversations with the *maestra* of Bigaa and the *autora* of Baras, they said that the high point of the action is the defiance of the *Gurang/Magurang*. The way other participants told the komedya story also indicated that such defiance provides the excitement in the komedya, and the character thus comes across as though he is as

important as the royal personages Elena and Constantino, if not more so. It is possible that this character was originally intended as an example of how disobedience is punished, but it is equally possible that he came to represent the suppressed voice of the colonized.

The Lagaylay

In the lagaylay, one is shown the various ways one can pray and praise the cross, as Helena and her entourage sing and dance their prayers in front of the newly found cross (Realubit 1976, 23; Mampo 1980, 418). Santa Elena is joined by a pair of spokeswomen called *respondes*, a pair of flag bearers/wavers called *paraduyag*, and four to six pairs of *panamparan* or guards of honor. Praises to the Cross are sung in repeated stanzas; there are sections where the performers, generally called *cantoras* (singers), form themselves into the letters of the word S-T-A-C-R-U-Z and finally into a cross formation; there is a section for flag waving, a section for blessing the Cross with incense carried by the *respondes*, a section for reciting verses, a section for offering flowers; finally, the highlight is a section where Elena offers her crown as empress as a sign of her humility. The *cantoras* dance or kneel or stand as they sing the lines which they have memorized (with no *notador* or prompter). The performance is capped by dancing in the style of the *rigodon de honor*,²² by Elena and the rest of the pilgrims.

²² Jeremy Barns, curator of the Malacanang museum (Malacanang is the Philippine presidential palace), is quoted to describe the *rigodon de honor* as ‘the most refined of the country’s ceremonial dances’. It is a quadrille or square dance believed to have been invented in 17th century France by a dancing master named Rigaud at the court of Louis XIII and introduced to the Philippines by the Spanish in the 19th century. The article quoting Barns in a Philippine newspaper reported about the revival of the *rigodon de honor* at the palace in 2008 in celebration of Philippine Independence Day (see <http://www.gov.ph/news/default.asp?i=21202>).

Table 6. Action Sequence of the Lagaylay

Section	Description
Part One: Entrance	Vexilla Regis (first stanza only) is sung as the girls enter, dancing, forming two lines; Elena is at the center, between the two lines
Part Two: <i>Timbako</i> or Invitation to praise and adore the Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The girls face the altar in two lines, dancing in place b. The girls dance, forming the letters S-T-A-C-R-U-Z (one letter after another) and ends in a cross formation c. In the cross formation they kneel facing the altar with Elena at the very center/intersection of the cross formation d. Starting with Elena, everyone stands, by turns, and recites praises and petitions addressed to the Cross
Part Three: <i>Duyag</i> or Waving of Flags in praise of the Cross	Elena and the two flagbearers (<i>paraduyag</i>) wave the flags symbolizing Christ's victory over sin and death
Part Four: Offering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Elena offers her crown b. The two <i>responde</i> perfume the crown offering with incense c. The two <i>responde</i> crowns Elena (puts back the crown on Elena's head), praising her d. The other girls, in pairs, offer flowers to the Cross e. Everyone showers flowers on the Cross
Part Five: Conclusion: Proclamation of the triumph of the Cross	Everybody dances in celebration

Notes on Textual Sources

The Santa Elena narrative can be traced back to Play Number XXXIII of the codex of ninety-six plays preserved at the Biblioteca Nacional of Spain, written from 1550 to 1575 and edited by Leo Rouanet—*Aucto de quando Sancta Elena hallo la Cruz de Nuestro Señor* (Play on the Finding of the Cross of Our Lord by Saint Helena) (Crawford 1967, 142, 146)—the play staged by the Franciscan friars in Mexico in 1538 (Esquivel and Lamb 1958 cited in Tiongson 1975, xxiii). The Spanish source of the Heraclius narrative is not clear. The earliest extant text available in the Philippines containing the Heraclius narrative is already in the vernacular, printed in 1895, and taken from *Año Cristiano* edited by a Padre

Croisset.²³ The author is identified as a priest: ‘*sarong sacerdote*’ (a priest) but not named.

A significant point about the *dotoc* texts is that most of them relate the pilgrimage of ordinary, unnamed individuals in search of the Cross. The Heraclius story is placed in a ‘narrative-within-a-narrative’ framework, just a story told, not enacted, within the *dotoc*. Although the pilgrims in the *cobacho dotoc* do say that they come from Spain (‘*cami hale sa espanya*’), the storytellers are the protagonists, the unnamed ‘*cami*’ (we), the community performing the *dotoc*. It is an assertion of agency, a stamp of ownership and identity.

It is amazing how the *dotoc* turns out to be very intertextual and with texts and narratives that are so ancient, going back almost 1500 years ago. It is equally amazing that the *paradotoc* or *cantoras* continue the tradition even if they do not understand these texts and stories. The *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt* is in Latin and no one of those I interviewed knew or even cared what the words meant, who composed the hymn and when it was composed. For the performers, it is simply a hymn that honors the Holy Cross. Although the Heraclius story is told in the Bicol language there is hardly any wider or deeper appreciation of Heraclius the historical figure or of the times he lived in. The *paradotoc/cantoras* do not know that the hero they sing about and know as ‘Herachio/Herakyo’ was a real, living person, who in the words of Geoffrey Regan (2003, viii) is ‘one of the great tragic

²³ The full bibliographic entry appears as ‘*Dotoc sa mahal na Santa Cruz [na]Quinatha nin sarong Sacerdote asin guinono sa Año Cristiano ni Padre Croisset. Itinogot nin Poon, Nueva Caceres. Imprenta La Sagrada Familia, 1895. En 16.—Pags.:32.—Todo el texto en verso Bicol. Deducido del “Año Cristiano” del P. Croisset. --Ejemplar num. 1878 de la coleccion de Retana*’ in Retana’s *Aparato* (1964 reprint). Even Retana’s entry therefore identifies a text already in Bicol, ‘*todo el texto en verso Bicol*’, not Spanish. A copy of the 1895 printed booklet is available at the University of the Philippines Diliman Bicol Collections, while *Año Cristiano* (6 volumes in all, printed in 1887 by Madrid Hija de M. Rodriguez, Casa Editorial) by a P. Juan Croisset is being offered for sale in the US by Margolis & Moss—see <http://www.margolisandmoss.com/cgi-bin/margolis/1603>.

figures of history’, and that indeed the playwright Pierre Cornielle wrote a tragedy about him. As Regan asserts, Heraclius was a magnificent commander and leader.²⁴ ‘In the ancient world, only Alexander and Julius Caesar rank with Heraclius in military terms; only Constantine and Charlemagne as emperors’ (viii). The point, however, is that Heraclius is not even the protagonist in the *dotoc* enactment and the greater part of the *dotoc* text is made up of petitions and prayers. As for Helena, Mampo (1980) says she is admired and an object of devotion because she was chosen by Christ to find His Cross; she made the pilgrimage, sought the Cross and found it. She is Helena or Santa Elena of the legends, however —‘pious, chaste and other-worldly’ (Thiede and D’Ancona 2000, 19)— not the ‘low-born’, ‘cantankerous’ and ‘ambitious’ woman who became empress, not the Helena of history ‘who was more robust [than was depicted in the legends], determined that the empire her son had inherited should hold together and that nothing should stand in the way of that goal’ (18-19).

PERFORMANCE SPACES AND DURATION

The performance spaces of the *dotoc* differ from one area to another, although a common space used is the barrio chapel, either as a stage where most of the performance happens or as a representation of one particular place in the narrative, like the *tierra santa* (Holy Land). The difference in space is dictated primarily by practice, but also by the weather or by social exigencies such as the wake for a dead person. The cobacho *dotoc* uses both outdoor and indoor spaces,

²⁴ For a fuller analysis of the life and reign of Heraclius, see Kaegi (2003) whose discussion reveals much about how important for contemporary purposes our understanding of this particular leader and his times, not only because he succeeded in preserving the empire and indeed reclaimed much of its lost territory and glory, but also because he eventually lost all that he gained to Islam. Heraclius was a contemporary of Mohammed, founder and prophet of Islam.

but mostly outdoors: the street or the chapel yard. The dotoc performed as komedya also uses both indoor and outdoor spaces. The lagaylay is mostly indoors, in a roofed structure on the church or chapel yard or, occasionally, inside the chapel. These are all public spaces and we can therefore say that the dotoc is primarily a public event. However, the dotoc may also be performed in the living room of a house or on the front yard—a private dotoc (*padotoc*), organized by a person or family who has a solemn promise (*panuga*) to the Holy Cross.

Table 7. Dotoc Timeline

March			April				May				
2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
Baras	◆—————◆										
				Baao	◆—————◆						
							Tinago	◆—————◆			
					Canaman	◆————◆					

Table 8. Performance Schedules

PLACE	PERFORMANCE SCHEDULES	FIESTA / Katapusan (End)
Baao (Santa Cruz)	Begins on the last week of April and goes on everyday continuously for 8 days, the 8 th falling on the first Saturday of May, followed by an interval of one week, and then the fiesta is celebrated. The ninth night is often held on the eve of the fiesta.	2 nd Saturday of May
Baras, Nabua	Begins on the first Saturday of March after the feast of San Jose (March 19 th) and every Saturday thereafter (9 Saturdays), ending on the fiesta.	May 18/19 or the 3 rd Saturday of May
Tinago, Bigaa	Begins on May 15 th (the date changes) and performed every other day thereafter, ending with the fiesta. The schedule is adjusted to keep the fiesta dates of neighboring barrios (falling within the period) free.	May 31 (whatever the day)
Canaman (town)	May 3 – 11 (fixed dates)	May 11

Duration is dictated by the nine-day cycle of prayers called the *novenario*, but the period of nine days is either continuous from first to ninth or spaced out every two days or every week. Again this is in accordance to what the people of each place have been accustomed to doing. The performance itself lasts for 2 hours if it is the *cobacho dotoc*, but as long as 12 hours if it is the *komedya*, not counting the novena prayers that have varied lengths: from 30 minutes to one hour and a half, longer if the rosary is *cantada* (sung).

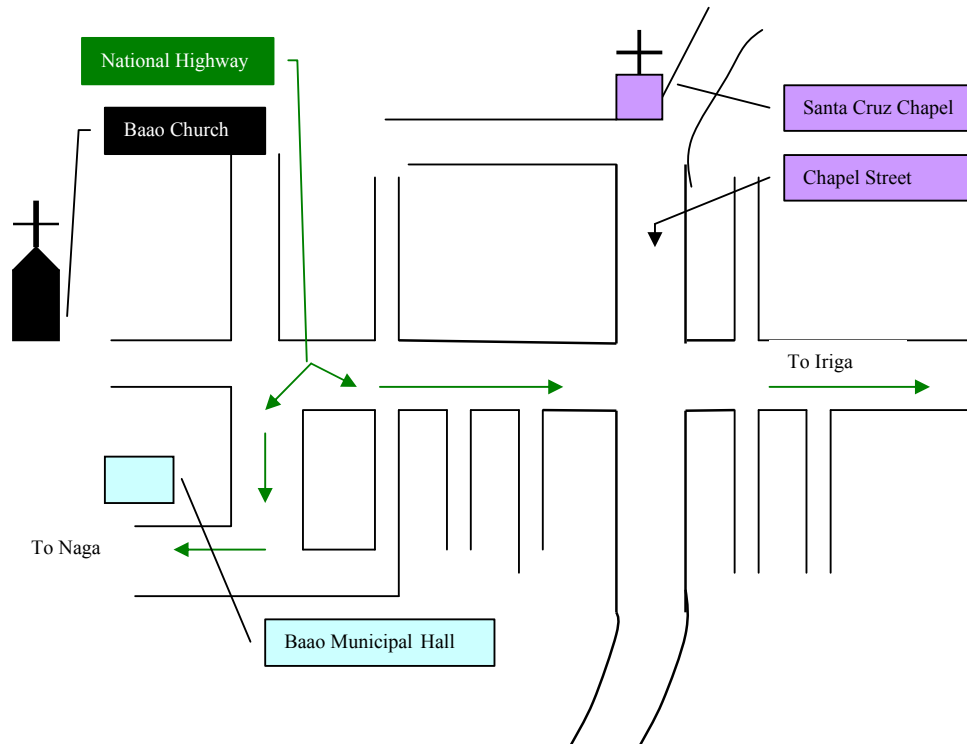
In addition, there's the assembly time and the eating or, occasionally, eating with some dancing and drinking of alcoholic beverages. I should also mention the long hours of preparation and rehearsals that are made for some (not all) of these yearly events. The durational characteristic is obvious, but it is quite normal for people to have just a single, one-time performance either for themselves or for others, in the same place that it is always held, or in another barrio, or another town, or another country. The single, special, performance may also take place at any other time of the year, not just in May or on the feast of a patron saint.

Santa Cruz, Baao

The barrio is spatially organized as a grid of streets, as most of the barrios in the town center are organized, in accordance with colonial design, that is, following the *Leyes de Indias* that contained specific instructions for the building of pueblos in the colonies, such as the locations of the church, the government building or *casa real*, and the configurations of spaces for social, cultural, and economic activities.

Situated half a kilometer east of the Roman Catholic Church in the *poblacion*, Santa Cruz is made up of rows of houses on six streets bisected by the national road and a river, opening out on the southeast to wide expanses of

farmland and bordered by other barrios on the north (Salvacion) and west (Del Rosario and San Ramon). The national road I cite here is described in the Baao web site as ‘the Legazpi, Iriga, Naga, and Daet Growth Corridor in the Bicol Region’, Baao being located between Naga City (30 kms. north) and Iriga (7 kms. south).



Included in the barrios that make up the *poblacion* or town center, Santa Cruz is the site of the central elementary school, the public high school and community college, and two of the town’s three private hospitals. It has been host to a number of big town events such as the provincial *palaro* or athletic meet. It used to be the home base of a district-wide project of the National Irrigation Authority-Bicol River Basin Development Program. This means that the Santa Cruz folk are used to the comings and goings of many people, including strangers or visitors to Baao, within its environs. Most of the inhabitants are farmers who used to be sharecroppers but now own the small parcels of land they till; the

socioeconomic profile of the barrio (and the whole town) has changed much over the last twenty years, however, with many more people engaged in professional trades and many others working abroad or having sons or daughters working abroad.

Santa Cruz is on the fringe of the *poblacion* grid of streets, with the inhabited areas narrowing out to the open farmlands, the rows of houses gradually becoming single structures on both sides of the road. At the center is the chapel, located on one end of the middle street that bisects the national road. For easy reference I call this the ‘chapel street’, a straight line from the national road; beyond the chapel and the barrio social hall, it bends northeast towards the community college and on the south across the national road, it maintains the straight line from the chapel and bends midway southwest towards the rice fields. This is the street with the biggest number of households. It is also where most of the barrio events are held. The corner of the street where the national road bisects it is remembered by older *paradotoc* as the site of elaborately constructed ‘gardens’ used in the *panjardin dotoc*, with real flowing water. It also holds special memories of my childhood, because it used to be where cold sweet stalls selling ice scramble or ice drop would be set up when the *dotoc* season was near, and my playmates and I would go there again and again on hot summer afternoons to get our fill of the iced offerings, quenching our thirst, spending our precious centavos at the risk of incurring the wrath of parents. My maternal grandparents lived on that street, southward, on the house right beside the river. I was born there and my family lived there till I was seven. It was the hub of life in the barrio, and of mine while growing up. We had transferred to a house my father built on the next street, but my playground continued to be this street, which was always well lit and full of

activity on the days of the dotoc leading up to the fiesta. From the gate of my grandparents' house, I could see the chapel and the whole length of the street that becomes the performance space of the dotoc.

There is almost no documentation on Santa Cruz. The 1990 Baaó Fiesta Program offers only a brief account of its history: that the first chapel was built of light materials in 1868 on the same street where the present chapel stands; that a concrete chapel was built in 1967 on a lot donated by Mr. and Mrs. Dominador Esplana.

The present chapel is made of concrete, its shape more square than rectangular; the interior walls are painted a dull pink. The floor is made of smooth wash-out pebbles; there is a wide doorway with a gate of wrought iron rods designed with a simple fleur-de-lis. The altar is made up of a small concrete ledge on the back wall on which the Holy Cross rests and an altar table in front of it, also of concrete. The back wall is bare, plain except for the dull pink color. Wrought iron plant and candle stands flank the altar and a lone glass chandelier graces the ceiling. There are several rows of wooden pews with kneelers and several others made of flat metal bars painted white. These are all improvements from way back when mats were used to sit on or people brought their own chairs or stools. Perhaps the plainness is intended, as though the place is an empty canvass on which artists can be free to add color or do a collage. I have seen how it has been transformed into all sorts of versions of the *tierra santa* during my youth: like a jungle of vegetation of real tree branches and twigs, or bamboos, with the Holy Cross in its midst ablaze with lights, or a riot of flowers both real and faux, the back wall covered by bright fabrics or by a curtain of paper flowers made by the young ladies of the barrio.

The same can be said of the street that is just like other streets. It is paved, has always been as far as I can remember, but now broken in places. On dotoc seasons in the 70s it would look differently each night. The older paradotoc distinctly remember that on some nights there would be decorated arches leading to the chapel, or the whole street would be dressed up to look like a jungle. The festoons and buntings that cover the street like a canopy are standard décor style as much as the strings of incandescent bulbs or fluorescent tubes for lighting. Especially in the days when few of the houses had electrical lighting, the chapel street shone and beckoned amid the surrounding darkness.

Somewhere midway on the left side of the street a *cobacho* would be constructed. The *cobacho* is a small shed or shelter on the road side where people can rest. It is the major set piece of the *cobacho dotoc* in addition to the main altar or *tierra santa*. The most common materials used for the cobacho are whole banana plants, cut close to the base and with all their leaves or fronds intact. These serve as the posts of the structure. Pieces of banana trunks and stalks would be used for the ‘walls’ that are more like fencing than walls really, because the structure is meant to show the people inside. Sometimes bamboo splits would be used or altogether different materials.



Unlike other barrios in Baao, Santa Cruz has not set up a permanent structure for the cobacho, or even a skeletal, mobile one fabricated from metal bars. San Nicolas and San Jose (other barrios of Baao) have this permanent but portable structure, while Buluang has its version in concrete (therefore not portable). San Juan makes its own to last for the whole nine days of the novenario, but following a very traditional design using banana trunks, stalks, and fronds.

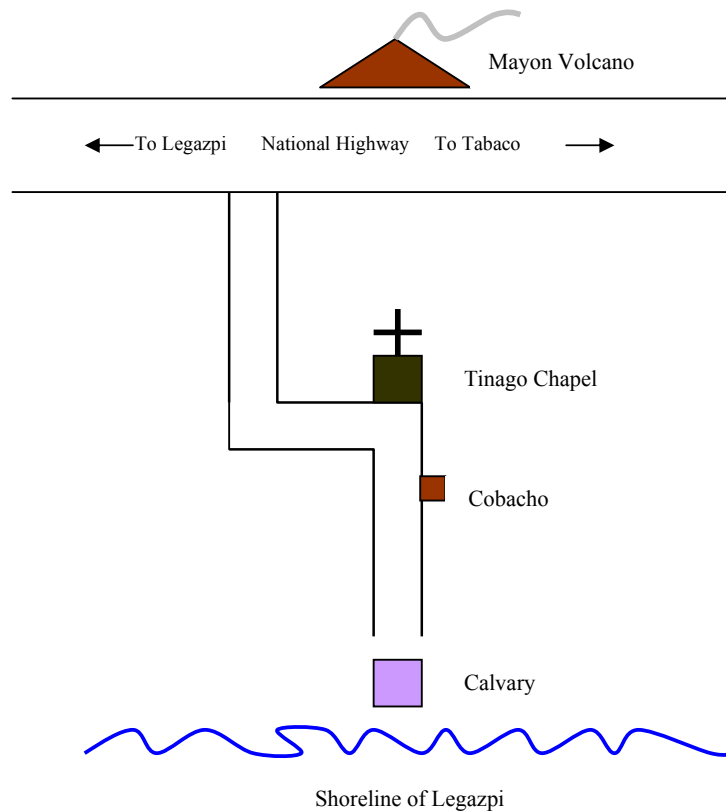
At the intersection a concrete border half-arch now stands, announcing the name of the barrio. This then is the concession to economy and practicality, for then the fiesta sponsors and the youth of the barrio would not need to build a *media talle* (as the border arch is called) each year. I remember the elaborate arches of earlier years, of the 50s and 60s, which I saw only on photographs that my aunts had managed to keep. The memory is hazy but it is precious, because even these photographs have been destroyed by the typhoons and floods that had visited the barrio.

Tinago, Bigaa

Tinago in Barangay Bigaa lies some 12 kilometers north of the city center of Legazpi, along the road to Tabaco and Tiwi. Bigaa is a coastal barangay. One of its zones (called a *sitio*), Tinago, is made up of some 105 households built on opposite sides of one main street from the national highway to the seashore. One reaches the sitio through a road from the national highway and this road goes all the way to the shore, the pavement suddenly becoming sand and dust before turning to the left towards the chapel.

The chapel is located on the corner of the second stretch of the road, marking one end of it. The other end is occupied by the *kalbaryo* (Calvary), the stage of the *dotoc* and *komedya*: a concrete square on concrete stilts rising some

20-25 feet from the ground accessible through a stairway on one corner of the square. This stretch of road marked on one end by the chapel and on the other end by the *kalbaryo* is the main performance venue of the dotoc and komedya, with the *kalbaryo* serving as the ‘mountain’ on which the Holy Cross is found by Helena as well as the ‘Holy Land’ that is the destination of the pilgrims in the dotoc.



With four posts supporting a roofing of GI sheets that covers only a small area of the square, the *kalbaryo* looks like a high veranda with a protective railing of balusters. On the front side, a triangular wooden structure is set up on top of the lintel, making the structure look even taller and more imposing. A wooden raised dais under the covered space is built making two levels, the second level signifying ‘heaven’ as indicated by the curtains. Bouquets of flowers and ribbons of coconut fronds decorated this raised square, the coconut fronds gently swaying with the

breeze from the sea. And on the backdrop, a shock of blue, as the road ended abruptly on the sandy shore, and the blue of the sea stretched to meet with the azure sky on the horizon.



For the komedya, the performance space becomes the pilgrimage route of Helena and her ‘court’ with designated stopping places in between and areas for different sections of the narrative, such as the residence of the *Gurang* (Old Man); the pit into which he is dropped, kept under guard, and starved for three days; the areas where a sick woman is healed and a dead person is brought back to life by the True Cross. The fiesta performance is always well-attended, the narrow street choked with spectators, mostly locals but with a fair number of people from the other sitios of Bigaa or from other barrios. Watchers and watched mingle, and ‘backstage crew’ strive to clear spaces for the unfolding drama, not always quietly.

The spectators follow the performers or go several paces ahead to the next stop. Children cross the road this way and that, or look down onto the poor ‘old man’ dropped into a pit, a real one dug out especially for the performance. The playing space becomes somewhat delineated only when the action begins on the ‘mountain’—the *kalbaryo*, though Helena remains on the ground below.

For the *dotoc*, performed at 7 or 8 in the evening, the street is transformed into the dark path of the pilgrims in search of the Cross. There are no expressed intentions to achieve verisimilitude, but one gets a very real sense of the brightness emanating from the Cross on Calvary that the text talks about, because aside from the *cobacho* it is the only well-lighted area, a beacon for the pilgrims. The street itself is unlit, and one navigates one’s way by means of the light filtering from the houses alongside it, or by the light of the moon, when the lunar cycle favors Tinago on such a night. The young *cantoras* performing the *dotoc* have no difficulty walking the dark road with brisk strides. Some boys hold portable gas-fueled lamps (*petromax*) to light the way. Compared to Helena and Constantine, however, Heraclius who is the hero in the *cobacho dotoc* narrative never steps into the playing space and is thus largely unknown. He is just a tale told in the *dotoc* song.

The *cobacho* is built on one side of this road near the chapel, a permanent structure made of light materials: a small shed made of coco lumber and bamboo splits with a roofing of nipa. During the first to eighth day of the *novenario*, the *cobacho* is not dressed up, just as the actors are not in costume. For the fiesta performance in 2007, it was decorated with bouquets of *anahaw* leaves and ferns; a small bamboo table was placed at the center space and on it some potted plants and the paper half-moons and flags of the pilgrims.

COSTUMING PRACTICES

More than anything else, costume or dress in the dotoc shows the opulent nature of the event for the barrio folk. The dotoc is a spectacle, a visual display. It demonstrates how they imagine and visualize the characters in the stories of the dotoc, what they could have looked like, informed by tradition—‘*su nagimatan*’. For many of the participants, the dotoc/komedyá is one of the very few occasions for which they ‘dress up’. The rich fabrics, feathers, beads and sequins are things that are outside of their normal, everyday existence, just as the stories of the dotoc are far removed from reality. More importantly, however, it embodies their individual participation in an event of faith, in fulfillment of a sacred vow. The rich families think nothing of it, but the poorer ones have to set aside precious earnings to spend on the costumes, when they can very well use the money for their daily needs instead. Spending on the costumes becomes a sacrifice, an offering. Paradoxically, however, or perhaps in a kind of weird logic, they revel in it. Parents would proudly point out to visitors their sons or daughters arrayed as Constantino or Elena or the Pregonero. The Gurang and Obispo (bishop), whose roles were inherited from their parents, would find new ways to clothe the character they played. Older members of the community would tell stories of the costumes they wore when they played roles in the komedyá or sang the dotoc on special events. Baras folk based in San Diego, California would post a video recording of their dotoc in diaspora on youtube, showing recreations of the same, familiar dresses.

Practices differ in the various sites, however. Some have costumes for the entire nine days/nights; others dress up only on the fiesta performance; still others do not wear special dresses at all.

Costuming in the Komedya

In his book on the komedya, Tiongson explains that the komedya costumes used in various parts of the Philippines are closely similar to each other.²⁵ There is in fact a convention observed by komedya troupes in dressing up the various characters in komedya stories, particularly the Moorish characters and the Christian characters, as opposites: Christians are dressed in black or blue, Moors in flaming red. There are conventional ‘cuts’ or styles of trousers, coats and capes for males and gowns for females, as well as of accessories that show rank or degrees of importance like headwear, capes, chest bands, and lanyards.

In the dotoc performed as komedya, the royals are only Elena and Constantino, and the Emperadora in the Baras dotoc. There are Christians and Moors, however, and the distinctive colors associated with them can be seen in the dotoc: the somber colors for the Christians (blue, green, yellow, white) and bright red for the Non-Christians.

In Baras, Nabua the fiesta performance in 2008 had costumes that approached more closely Tiongson’s description. Elena was in a white gown and long blue cape. Three of her minions, called *basallos*, were in identical yellow gowns with light blue sashes or chest bands decorated with sequins in a criss-cross triangular design. A fourth was in a dress of neutral color. Two others were in a short red dress with short red capes. These two were the *embajadoras* or Elena’s ambassadors. Their capes were emblazoned with sequined designs: one had a cross on it, the other had crossed scimitars. The Emperadora was wearing a red gown with a red cape emblazoned with crossed scimitars, a crescent and stars. Her ‘soldiers’ were also dressed in red or dark pink gowns with red sashes, including

²⁵ Tiongson provides detailed description of ‘general’ komedya costuming (1999a, 20-21).

her own two ambassadors clad in short red dresses with capes, the designs of which were also the crossed scimitar and crescent. Constantino, performed by a boy much younger than the rest, was in an orange shirt and baggy trouser ensemble. The trousers reached just past the knees and were narrow at the hemline. High socks and leather shoes, a red cape and chest band of the same criss-cross triangular design, and a crown completed the ensemble. The cape had the crescent, crossed scimitars, cross, and stars in gold sequins on the red fabric. He did not have an *espada* (sword). For the fighting they used wooden sticks instead. In another performance, the Constantino had the same costume as the first one and Elena was wearing a green gown with a light blue cape, but most of the girls were attired in more ‘casual’ dresses and high-heeled sandals (some of them four-inch ones). The Emperadora was in a printed long dress much like her two ‘soldiers’ and so she was distinguishable in her role only because of the crown on her head.

It took some time for me to figure out which of the *cantoras* belonged to which side of the battle, particularly in regard to the *embajadoras* who were all in red and had capes emblazoned with symbols. Tiongson’s explanation did not fit in; Elena’s *embajadoras* were in red, supposed to be the color for the non-Christians, the Christian characters used Moorish symbols like the crescent and the crossed scimitars, and the non-Christians used the cross. Both Elena and Constantino also had the crescent and crossed scimitars on their capes. It appeared then that the symbols were used only as designs for the costumes, neutral designs that did not mean anything both for the performers and the community of Baras. Or it could be that they thought the symbols can be shared, and crossed, for in the end they are all united in the Christian faith anyway? Perhaps this mixing of symbols points up a more important idea about the dotoc: its artifactuality. The costumes are objects

manipulated to serve the ends of performance and the symbols are used not individually but collectively, their symbolic power lodged in the dotoc itself. It is useful to point out here that even in the cobacho dotoc the crescent is used—called paper half-moons but the actual thing always turns out to be crescents. The paper crescents/half-moons are presented as offerings to the Holy Cross by the Christian pilgrims.

In Tinago, Bigaa, there are more numerous character types, although there is no organized opposing force: no Emperadora and no batalla. The Moorish element is reduced to two women in the red Moorish costume who do all the errands for Elena. Their dresses in 2007 were closely similar to the Baras costume of the Moorish embajadoras, with the added matching hat, richly decorated with sequins and long ribbons trailing down the back. A third is the Pregonero, who announces in the public squares Elena's edict to cooperate in the search for the cross. He was attired as a Moorish prince, with a tricorne hat, boots, and richly decorated red shirt and pants (or white shirt, red pants in 2008). Elena's *dama* (lady-in-waiting) was dressed as a princess. Constantino was resplendent in a king's costume, in a white shirt and blue pants, complete with shoulder pads, lanyards, and chest and waist bands; in 2008, he was in a beige shirt and pants ensemble with a rich chest piece sewn with beads and a round mirror-like ornament. His cape was lined with feathers and had a big cross embroidered on it. He carried a red banner emblazoned with the sun symbol. Elena had a scepter and wore a white gown and long, trailing cape, similar to the Elena in the lagaylay. In 2008, she had an ornamental chest piece similar to that of Constantino.

The *Gurang* (Old Man) looked like a hermit with long white hair and beard and goatee made from abaca fiber. He was in soutane in 2008, a more 'appropriate'

costume than the one he wore in 2007: white pants and Barong Tagalog (the Philippine national dress for males). The Bishop wore a soutane and over it a richly embroidered green chasuble, had a miter and carried a crozier. The Angel was in a white gown and had a tiny silver crown, her wings made of cardboard covered with fluffy cotton. The soldiers were striking in their richly decorated pieltro hats with feathers from a rooster. Some had lanyards and all carried *espadas*.



Why do they wear dark glasses during the *sacada*? From the answers given to this question, the nearest ‘true’ explanation is that it has become a practice, because in the 2008 performance, the *sacada* or opening parade was held while heavy rain poured and the sky had darkened—but they still wore the glasses. So it was not worn as protection from the sun’s glare, although that might have been how it started, since the *sacada* is held at high noon. One of the first Elenas who played the role in the 1930s said she fainted from dizziness, because an aunt made her wear someone else’s eyeglasses with bifocal lenses.

Costuming in the Cobacho, Canaman Dotoc and Lagaylay

Nabua's practice for their *walo-walo* or cobacho dotoc is to have a new set of dresses for each night, sometimes according to color: pink gowns for the first night, yellow for another night, and so on; sometimes according to style, like the *baro't saya*, a long flowing skirt and blouse with wide sleeves extending to the wrists, a distinctively Filipino dress. If one is a regular cantora who performs from the first to the night ninth, it is possible that one would have nine different sets of dress to wear for the dotoc.

This was also the practice in Baao perhaps until the 1960s—unfortunately no one can say when the practice changed. The Baao practice is less structured though; the best way to describe the costuming practice is the statement 'Wear your best'—best being Sunday best or dresses worn for church. Older paradotoc also say that often they put on 'special' dresses for performances which were 'commissioned' or organized by individual devotees or their families, especially those held outside Baao, in Naga or Manila. In the 70s when there were still performances in the town center, beautiful *ternos* would be worn.

Any of the different types of what have come to be known as the 'Filipina Dress' could be worn and are preferred in the dotoc: the *kimona*, *baro't saya*, *traje de mestiza* or *Maria Clara*, or the *terno*.

The *baro at saya* are said to have replaced the sleeveless blouses and wraparound skirts that the Filipino women wore at the time of the Spanish conquest, resulting from the vigorous campaign of the friars against the native women's 'indecent' way of dressing. 'A full ankle-length skirt called *saya* took the place of *patadyong* or wraparound skirt. A blouse called *camisa* or *baro* became a part of the Filipina's costume. The complete new attire came to be known as *baro*

at saya (blouse and skirt) and will persist for a long time to serve later as the basis of the national Filipina dress' (Lopez 2006, 394). The baro't saya traditionally consists of four parts — 'the *camisa* (a short blouse with sleeves), the *alampay* or *pañuelo* (a type of shawl worn over the *camisa*), the *saya* (a long skirt) and the *tapis* (a short overskirt wrapped around the *saya*)' (Roces 1978, 2536).²⁶

The Maria Clara, named after the heroine in Jose Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tangere*, has a billowy skirt usually of heavy satin, with alternating panels of contrasting colors, like pink and black (Lopez, 396). It has its rich and poor versions, as did the early baro't saya, since the rich ladies, especially the mestizas (who were half Spanish), did not want to look like the poor country lasses. It is more known, however, as a form of mestiza dress or traje de mestiza.

The *terno* developed from the traje de mestiza. Also known as 'the butterfly dress', it was popularized by Imelda Marcos (who presented herself as the epitome of the Filipina) and became iconized as a 'marker of Filipina identity'. Compared to the rural costumes like the *patadyong* and *balintawak*, which are now worn mostly in Philippine folk dances, the terno has 'svelte sophistication' and '...goes with the stately grace of the *rigodon de honor*, *flores de mayo* processions, coronation nights and the Malacañang Palace' (Roces 1978, 2536).

The *kimona* is identified by some writers as the dress worn by ordinary Filipino women prior to the baro't saya. It has evolved into an elegant blouse with beads and sequins. It is the *kimona* which is in fact the usual special dress worn in the dotoc to this day. Very versatile because it is transparent, made of lace or *piña*

²⁶ The *alampay* and *tapis* were added to the basic blouse and skirt as a result of Mexican influence that came with the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade. The *alampay* was patterned after the Mexican shawl and the *tapis* from the skirts of the Spanish and Mexican women who arrived aboard the ships (Lopez, 394-395). The tight overskirt was later replaced by a more comfortable, 'semi-billowy skirt with kick-back pleats'. This was the *mascota*, 'worn with a loose blouse with wide sleeves that flared with tiny pleats along the shoulders' (Lopez, 395).

(from pineapple fiber), the kimona can be used with an inner camisole of the same or contrasting color and paired with a knee-length or long skirt.

The paradotoc of San Juan, Baa (about three kilometers southeast of Santa Cruz) have two sets of costumes: printed *kimona* with plain colored skirts reaching mid-calf, and a white *mestiza* dress with beads and lace trimmings. They wear the dresses alternately for the whole novenario. In contrast, the *paradotoc* of Santa Cruz tend to dress informally; many of them coming in casual, street clothes, even in denim shorts and tight-fitting sleeveless blouse, particularly the younger paradotoc. But they do wear the *kimona*, when the *cabo* or dotoc sponsor requests for it. A costume item that is rarely worn in present day practice is the white veil or head covering, usually just a handkerchief.

In Bigaa, the *cantoras* of the dotoc wear regular street clothes for the first eight performances and dress up for the ninth night or fiesta performance, in identical white satin dresses, with matching sandals, coiffed hair and make-up.

Costuming in the dotoc of Canaman, what I have seen of it, is just like that of Santa Cruz, Baa in the present day, which is more often none at all; that is, there is no costume and the paradotoc come to the performance in their regular street attire. I have not asked about past practices in Canaman, nor are there available write-ups on it, so it is difficult to say anything about prior practice. Mampo only says that the performers wear no special dress for the dotoc (1980, 62). There seems to be no consideration of the ninth day dotoc as more special than the rest, judging by the way the *cantoras* are dressed. Unlike the lagaylay, the Canaman dotoc is not distinguished by the dresses worn; it is casual, informal, everyday. Even the special padotoc by a family devotee that I saw performed inside a house was the same. The dress just does not seem to matter at all.

In the lagaylay, the girls are required to use identical or similar dresses on the first, eighth, and last nights (Mampo 1980, 121). My informants say that the girls are outfitted with nine different dresses each for the nine nights, of which the last, for the *katapusan*, is the most special: the girls wear white dresses, usually reaching mid-calf. During the first to eighth nights, they wear their fine Sunday dresses, usually of satin, lace or organza, but also of one hue like pink or peach. For footwear they wear high-heeled sandals (even the very young flag bearers). Elena always wears a crown and a long white gown with a cape that is like a bridal train and has a stiff, broad, upright collar that frames her head. The crown has a small cross and glitters with faux *diamantes* or rhinestones. The adult lagaylay troupe I saw perform in Sta. Teresita, Canaman were similarly attired: all in white gowns or long dresses, with the Santa Elena wearing a blue cape.

THE DOTOC SOUNDSCAPE: MURMURS OF A WORLD

The dotoc is not just sight; it is also sound. ‘To live is to echo the vibrancy of things. To be, for material things, is to resonate,’ says Alphonso Lingis (1994, 96), whose chapter title ‘The Murmur of the World’ I am using in the title of this section. The dotoc is a living material world whose ‘murmurs’ deserve, as Conquergood reminded us, an ethnography that must pay attention to what the ears hear and the heart can listen to.

Whether one goes to a cobacho dotoc, a lagaylay, or a komedya, one is bathed in sound—or suffused with it; the ears work as hard as the eyes. The sound dominates the experience, for there is little to watch but much to listen to, because everything is sung. One gets dazzled by the beautiful dresses or the skillful dancing of the performers, but the stronger element that stays long in the memory is the

music. I say the music, not necessarily the singing, because the words sung are often not audible for various reasons. In the komedya, the *dicho* is dominant, but so is the seemingly endless *marchas* that punctuate each segment of the action.

‘Soundscape’ is defined as ‘a mélange of musical and sometimes nonmusical sounds’ (Merriam-Webster Online 2008) suggesting, as explained in Wikipedia, that it includes not just music but all sound elements in a given area.²⁷

Tono and Tugtog

The *dotoc* music in Baao is called *tono* or *tugtog*. *Tono* is the melodic pattern of the *dotoc*, while *tugtog* is the accompaniment or instrumental part. While they are distinct elements, they appear inseparable because even when there is no accompaniment the *paradotoc* hums or vocalizes the instrumental parts. There are many variations of the *tono*. In fact, there are variations for each of the older *dotoc* forms which are now used for the *cobacho dotoc*. There are at least four distinct *tonos*: 1) *sanabuang daan* (old *sanabua*) or the *tono* for the *sa-nabua* text; 2) *sanabuang bago* (new *sanabua*), also called *sinanabua*, or the *tono* for the *panjardin* and later used also for the *cobacho*; 3) *tres marias* which used to be the *tono* for the *tres marias* text but was also adapted later for the other texts such as the *cobacho*; and 4) the *tono* composed for the *cobacho* by Marcial Briones. Undoubtedly, there were other *tonos* used in the past, for instance, for the *calle amargora*, which no one remembers anymore. A clear fact is that the *dotoc*

²⁷ The Oxford English Dictionary defines it only as ‘a piece of music considered in terms of its component sounds’ (OED 2008). Wikipedia describes it as ‘a sound or combination of sounds that forms or arises from an immersive environment’ and refers to both the natural acoustic environment (including human vocalizations and nature sounds) and environmental sounds created by humans (including musical compositions, conversations, and industrial noise). Electronic music composer Pauline Oliveros defines the term as ‘All of the waveforms faithfully transmitted to our audio cortex by the ear and its mechanisms,’ while composer-environmentalist R. Murray Schafer lists three elements of a soundscape: ‘keynote sounds’ created by nature and may not be always heard consciously; ‘sound signals’ that are listened to consciously like warning bells, sirens, etc.; and ‘soundmark,’ which is unique to an area, like ‘landmark’ (Wikipedia 2008, citing Oliveros 2005, 18 and Schafer 1993, np).

practitioners have always been wont to improvise. The improvisations have progressed into distinct melodic patterns that the *paradotoc* may know by heart—they can sing or play it—but which they are not always able to name or identify. I have tried to list them for a clearer picture to emerge, but I always come up against new terms that I cannot place in the list, for instance I have heard of *sa-Irayang tono* (referring to the melody identified with the barrio of *Iraya*, another name for Santa Cruz) and *tonong natural*. The improvisations have led to further variations of the *dotoc tono*, as the other barrios of Baao came up with their own way of singing them, evident most especially in the quality of the vocal production as well as in the syllabication or phrasing, called *pagleletra* (*letra* means letter). And so the *dotoc* of San Juan, or San Roque, or Buluang, sounds differently from that of Santa Cruz.

The melodic structure is based on the text structure: four-line stanzas or quatrains arranged in sets of four, each quatrain sung by a row of cantors one after the other: *primera, segunda, tercera, cuarta*, or: *numero uno, numero dos, numero tres*, and *numero cuatro*. The melody is distinct for each of the quatrains, but repeated, one set after another, from beginning to end. The singing is at intervals of thirds and sixths.²⁸ A few *coros* (chorus) mark major shifts in the action, sung with a melody distinct from the rest. The auxiliary parts (*pasion, Vexilla Regis, adios*) have different melodies as well.

As to the vocal quality of the singing, the high-pitched voice (*'malagting'*) is preferred. The *paradotoc* sing *bel canto* or in the operatic or Italian style, suggesting that they might have received some form of training like the cantors in church. But not all of them are successful or good at singing *bel canto*. If one

²⁸ I am indebted to Elena Rivera Mirano, musicologist and art studies professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman, for the description of the *dotoc* music, specifically that of Baao.

would listen closely, one would detect a ‘peasant type of sound’. The sound has a more forward projection, produced by a flattened upper palate. This is the sound of the *pabasa*, or the Lenten *pasion*.²⁹ The singers are divided into *primera voz* (first voice, *tiple*) and *segunda voz* (second voice, *bajo*), sometimes with a *tercera*. In the current practice, however, younger paradotoc tend to sing in unison all parts of the dotoc.

The paradotoc have to sing louder, because the accompaniment drowns their voice, especially when electronically amplified, as is usually the case. The *tugtog* or accompaniment is provided by orchestral instruments or a band of orchestral instruments, complete with *bajo* (bass), *clarinete* (clarinet), *gitara* (guitar), trombone, saxophone (usually two saxophones: tenor and soprano), and cornet (also called *cornetin*) or trumpet (also two: *primera* and *segunda*). Mirano notes a 19th century idiom in the dotoc music and describes it as generally in duple time, suggesting march and *pasodoble* rhythms. The instrumentation consists of steel string guitars playing conventional Western tonic dominant (I-IV) progressions and there are brass band elements like saxophones or trumpets. The band is a marching ensemble as it accompanies the dotoc. Improvisation *a la jazz* is standard, especially for the saxophone players. There are also elaborate *introduccion* (also called *pasakalye*) for each set of quatrains.

All these elements would have made the dotoc very grand indeed, when they were fully present as late as the 1970s. The practice now is clearly what remains of an earlier bigger practice that might have reached its peak by the late 19th or early 20th century. In current practice, one rarely finds a full set of instruments; very often there is a guitar and a saxophone, or a guitar and a trumpet.

²⁹ Further descriptions by Mirano.

Sometimes there's a *banduria*, or a violin, or a *bajo de arco* (bass). The electronic organ has also already made its appearance, as well as other instruments like the melodion, although the older types of instruments are still preferred.

The music of the corocobacho dotoc still used today was composed by Marcial Briones and used from 1946. It has been the most used tono, because it is easy to learn, has a lively lilt, and it is to an extent already 'modern', having none of the chant-like character of many of the older tono that came from Nabua.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "DOTOC (M. BRIONES)". The score is written on ten staves. The first staff is labeled "ANDANTINO" and "INTRO...". The second staff is labeled "VOZ..." and contains a vocal line with a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff is labeled "MODERATO" and contains a melodic line with a circled "1" above it. The fourth staff contains a melodic line with a circled "2" above it. The fifth staff contains a melodic line with a circled "3" above it and the word "INTRO" below it. The sixth staff is labeled "VOZ..." and contains a vocal line. The seventh staff contains a melodic line with a circled "4" above it and the word "INTRO" below it. The eighth staff contains a melodic line with a circled "5" above it and the word "VOZ..." below it. The ninth staff contains a melodic line. The tenth staff is labeled "INSTRUMENTAL" and "PRESTO" and contains a melodic line with triplets. The score ends with the instruction "REPEAT AS NECESSARY".

That the dotoc is dominantly music and song when considered as form is further shown by the manner in which people relate stories about its development, where the focus is on the training of the cantoras and the role of the *parabalo* (trainer/director).³⁰ Before the practice of having copies of the text (*orihinal*) distributed among the cantoras, the dotoc soundscape definitely included the voice of the parabalo who moved in between the pairs of singers to dictate the lines, as it is still practiced in Canaman. The quality of the music is important and indeed much of the energy of each dotoc performance depends on the presence of good *musikeros*. The cantoras take their cue from them and perform well or badly depending on the music provided. More to the point, it is the music they play that is heard or experienced by the barrio for miles around. A sound system amplifies the performance and barrio folk can hear the music and are able to participate, in a sense, although they are in their houses and far away from the performance venue. The dotoc soundscape reaches outwards to the surrounding areas, keeping one awake or lulling one to sleep.

The sound and music elements in the practices of other areas like Nabua, Canaman, and Bigaa are very similar to those of Baa, although there are many points of difference. The brass band music is key in Nabua and Bigaa. In Nabua, there are usually only two *musikeros*, although there may be more—the ones I saw played a guitar and a banduria. In Bigaa, the fiesta performance is attended by a

³⁰ In Baa, each of the dotoc types is associated with a *parabalo*: Mateo Brillante for *calle amargora*; Apong Imang for *sanabua* and *panjardin*; Candida Mejorado and Sixta Buena for the *tres marias* and *porlaseñal*; Ciriaca (Acay) Esplana and Marcial Briones for the *cobacho dotoc*. Informants say that for the cobacho dotoc, however, more people became involved in crafting the *tono* and *tugtog*, like Pinay (Cristina) Esplana who is credited with having made the words and music of the *corocobacho* ‘more beautiful’ with the help of the *musikeros* Mokoy and Tiburcio; and Sergia Esplana, who taught the *tono* composed by Marcial Briones. The names Mokoy and Tiburcio repeatedly surfaced in the interviews for their skillful playing of the cornet; Jorge Barrameda and his son Patricio who had a band; Ajerico played the banduria, and Sixto Fajardo the saxophone. Salvador Babol, Rustico Sinfuego, Jose Bulalacao, and Jared Bulalacao are some of the more active *musikeros* (musicians) of the present day who continue the tradition.

full band, with percussions; in 2008 there were two saxophones, two trumpets, a trombone, a snare drum, a bass drum, and cymbals. In both areas, they provide the music for the komedya, for the procession, and for the novena. Bigaa's band is especially important for the *sacada*, the opening parade. In addition to the brass and percussion instruments, a guitar accompanies some sung segments of the komedya of Bigaa, like the Angel's solo, and is the lead instrument in the cobacho dotoc. Most of the brass instruments are in fact absent during the first to eighth day performances, while the guitar and the snare drum provide the basic and standard accompaniment.

In Canaman, the performances of both the dotoc and the lagaylay that I watched in the town were accompanied by an electronic organ and nothing else. In Sta. Teresita, Canaman, two guitars provided the music for the dotoc; the adult lagaylay had recorded music played on a portable DVD player, amplified on a karaoke set. I could make out an electronic organ and a guitar in the recorded music. An indoor dotoc I saw at the house of a devotee had two guitars providing the *tugtog*.

The tonos I heard in the course of the 2007-8 fieldwork had striking similarities in the vocal production. The 'peasant type of sound' identified by Mirano in the Baa dotoc was more pronounced in the full-throated singing of the women of Canaman—no *bel canto* singing here. It was also evident in the singing of the cobacho dotoc by the young cantoras of Bigaa, as well as in the sung parts of the komedya of both Nabua and Bigaa. Interestingly, the singing of the women in San Juan, Baa sounded more like this, though the tonos were familiarly of Baa. The sweet voice of the Angel in the Bigaa komedya sounded trained, though also not *bel canto*—more pop, especially Filipino popular music style.



The Vexilla Regis is present in three areas, with a different melody for each. In Baao it is sung upon arrival of the ‘pilgrims’ at the ‘Holy Land’. In Bigaa, it is the processional hymn. In Canaman, it is the entrance song of the lagaylay.³¹ The hymn is absent in the Nabua komedya.

One final note about *tugtog*: The music of the dotoc as komedya is much like the traditional komedya music that easily incorporates popular tunes into the music for the *marchas* and *pasodobles*. Tiongson refers to the ‘standard komedya music’ as ‘the slow and grand *marcha*’ and the ‘catchy *pasodoble*, whose melodies can range from “Bahay Kubo” and “Ang Maya” (Filipino folk songs) to “Roll Out the Barrel” and “River Kwai” (Tiongson 1999a, 20). It also follows the conventional distinctive qualities for the Christians and for the non-Christians in the drama: the slow and grand *marcha* for the Christians and the catchy *pasodoble* for the Non-Christians. Scholars have remarked that such distinctiveness

³¹ The inclusion of the Vexilla Regis in the lagaylay shows that those who initiated it (wrote or crafted the text or script) was/were not aware of or cared about historical chronology of the events, because there is an obvious ‘mistake’ or deliberate constructedness in the inclusion of the hymn in Elena’s praise song for the Cross: Elena found the Cross in 365 AD while the hymn was composed only in 569 AD.

emphasizes a basic message of the komedya: the Christians are serious and noble, the non-Christians of loose or questionable sense of right and morality (—freer?) and therefore it is only right that each story ends with their surrender and conversion.

Dicho

Tiongson describes the *dicho* as ‘the stylized delivery of [the komedya] verses, which generally follows a sing-song pattern, except in verses which express anger or sadness’ (Tiongson 1999a, 19). It is more proper to say, therefore, that the komedya text is recited rather than sung. The *dicho* dominates the komedya soundscape, and for long performances such as that of Nabua, it becomes a strain on one’s hearing, especially if the *personajes* are not skillful or have not trained or rehearsed enough. Many of the *personajes* merely murmur the lines, especially first-time performers who have not learned the art of projecting their voices. There are many masterful performers, however, some of them even sounding the part in the way that acting is understood in realistic theatre. But in saying this, it is useful to remember that one is dealing with a totally different aesthetics here and not repeat Feodor Jagor’s snide comments about the komedya performance he saw in Daraga, Albay.³²

The voice of the director (called *maestra* in Bigaa and *autora* in Nabua³³) who dictates the lines throughout the performance drones on as a component part of the komedya soundscape: soft, muted, almost unobtrusive, but there. I suspect that many of the young performers have memorized the lines, but the dictation made by the director, her active role, visibility, and audibility, are an integral

³² See quote in Chapter 2, page 50.

³³ In other komedya practices, such as those in Laguna and Bulacan, the director is called *apuntador*.

component of the komedya conventions. The made-up, artificial nature of the event is thus all the more emphasized. The visible/audible director also used to be part of the cobacho dotoc, but she has now fully disappeared, replaced by the handy *orihinal* that the *cantoras* carry with them. The eyes now take the cue from the written page, rather than the ears from the speaking voice of the director. In the Canaman dotoc, she is still very much present, her loud dictation in between the sung lines marking a distinctive rhythm: recited line, sung line, recited line, sung line...over and over from start to finish. In direct contrast, the director of the lagaylay stays on one side, unheard by the listening public since the lines have been fully memorized by the performers.

‘Sound Signals’ and Environmental Sounds

The lines in all these types of performances have in fact been memorized by many of the spectators themselves and their participation in the singing or delivery of the *dicho* can be heard occasionally, if one listens hard enough. The majority of the people who watch used to be active performers themselves or, if not so, have memorized the lines out of familiarity, from repeatedly hearing them every year. The lines of the songs or the *dicho* have not changed in at least a hundred years, or from 1920 in Bigaa, and it is perfectly possible for locals who do not leave the place to hear the dotoc music and lines from ‘the womb to the tomb’, as one cliché goes. Part of the environmental sounds that make up the dotoc soundscape are these intermittent noises—spectators suddenly bursting out in song, joining the singing of the *cantoras*, or else tapping the rhythm on their thighs, on their arms, or on the bamboo fence of a nearby house. And then there is the proverbial scene-stealer—the *kwitis* being launched and exploding in the sky or the rapid firing of the *Sinturon ni Judas* (Judas’ Belt), a more powerful kind of

firecracker. The *kwitis*, as it is used in Bigaa in particular, can be considered as a kind of sound signal, because it punctuates the speeches of the komedya performers that conclude the event. Another sound signal very distinct to Bigaa is the use of the whistle by the maestra. Every shift in the action of the komedya, every entrance and exit, every *marcha*, is signaled by the whistle sounded by the maestra. All these movements notably involves the playing of the *marcha* or *pasodoble* music, and one can then say that it is primarily a stop-and-start signal for the musikeros.

But while this is happening, and the performance is going on, there is also the buzz of conversations, chatter, bursts of laughter coming from the surrounding households that are entertaining visitors, the *tagay* or shot glass being passed around by men drinking gin or brandy, passing traffic, dogs barking, faucets running, utensils being washed, glasses clinking...or the sounds of sautéing, vegetables being chopped, meat being grilled, the sounds of eating and drinking, and of children running, crying, playing—sounds of life and celebration: glorious fiesta sounds.

TRANSMISSION AND CONTINUITY

The *Cuaderno* of Nabua mentions a performance of the *comedia ki Sta. Elena* in 1836; the earliest mention of a komedya performance is for the year 1701. In Baa, available information about the founding of barrio Santa Cruz mentions only that the first chapel was built in 1868, and ‘[s]ince the founding of this barangay (the barrio as a political entity), the residents [have celebrated their] annual novena pompously with a “dotoc”’ (Short History 1990). It is very probable that the practice began much earlier, because the parish was established in 1590

and Santa Cruz was one of its first barrios. In Canaman, the lagaylay is believed to have started in 1858, because the old cross that stands to this day at the center of the patio grounds has an inscription on its base: '1858'. My informants said, however, that the actual inscription was '1853' and that the mistake was 'probably' due to the repeated repainting of the cross over the years. The komedya in Tinago, Bigaa was started only in 1920, through the efforts of a person who got the *libro*, the text of the komedya, from a certain Mauricio who had a devotion to the Santo Cristo. Except for Canaman, where there are clear accounts of a period of interruption of the lagaylay performances, all other areas have had the traditions continuously from when they started, interrupted only by the wars or natural calamities—at least this is what the oral accounts say: that they have had it for as long as they could remember.

It is possible that when Santa Cruz was constituted as a barrio and the Holy Cross named as its titular patron saint, the people looked to Nabua for the manner by which the proper veneration of their patron would be carried out. Nabua had become the Holy Cross Parish and served as the *cabecera* or the base from where the Spaniards administered nearby or contiguous missions like those of Baa after 1578, when the Franciscans arrived and unified the *rancherias* of Lupa, Antacudos, Caobnan, Binoyoan, Sabang, and Bua to become Nabua. The Augustinians who first arrived in 1571³⁴ had planted a cross at Antacudos and set

³⁴ Mariano Goyena del Prado dates the very first expedition to Bicol to have occurred in 1567, 'several years before Manila was colonized,' under Captain Martin de Goiti and the aide-de-camp Mateo del Saz who was named by Philip II as successor to Miguel Lopez de Legazpi. See Chapters 2 and 3 of del Prado's *Ibalon: Ethnohistory of the Bikol Region* (Legazpi, 1938), English translation by Maria Lilia F. Realubit (1981, 3-11). If this is considered the first expedition, then Luis de Guzman's expedition (1569) would be the second, Andres de Ibarra's (1570-71) would be the third, and Juan de Salcedo's (1571 and 1573) would be the fourth. Domingo Abella in *Bikol Annals*, however, does not mention Goiti and Saz and dates the first expedition to the peninsula at 1569 also, with Luis de Guzman and Fray Jimenez. It is also clear in his account that the expeditions under Luis de Guzman and under Andres de Ibarra came to the peninsula by the sea from the south, while those of Juan de Salcedo, the first and second expeditions, came by land from the north,

up a chapel there, but it was the Franciscans who built the church and continued the work of conversion. This area is known today as the Rinconada District of Camarines Sur, composed of the municipalities of Bato, Nabua, Bula, Baa, Buhi and the city of Iriga.

My informants from Baa said that the *dotoc* they learned, even the music, came originally from Nabua. As to when the *dotoc* began in Nabua, and how, or who composed the texts—even which text was used originally—there is no clear evidence in what little documentary materials are available. It is significant that in Bicol, at least in Camarines Sur, the towns of Baa, Nabua, and Canaman are known to many as the most active in staging the *dotoc* in May. All three are old towns of Camarines Sur, Canaman being almost as old as Nabua. Canaman was reached by the Franciscans also in 1578 but it became a barrio of Naga and was separated to become a parish only in 1599. The big wooden cross at the patio, now badly scarred, is believed to have been brought by the early missionaries, an evangelization cross just like the one in Antacudos.

The friars were most probably the first teachers and directors of the *dotoc* in its various forms, as well as the writers of the first texts, dissemination of which was made possible by the printing technology already in use in the colony as early as the 17th century. The earliest known printed form of the *cobacho dotoc* is dated 1895, printed by the Imprenta La Sagrada Familia in Nueva Caceres, the author of which is identified as a *sacerdote*, a priest. This text carries an imprimatur from the diocese of Nueva Caceres. Did the priest write it or did he ask a native to write it in

dispatched by Legazpi from Manila. The first Salcedo expedition reached Parakale, the second as far as Lake Bato on the banks of which Salcedo established the Spanish settlement Villa Santiago de Libong (now Libon, Albay). On the return voyage, Salcedo established an occupation garrison in Naga, and left it in the care of Captain Pedro de Chaves. It was then Pedro de Chaves who founded the City of Caceres, which later became the seat of the See of Caceres under whose jurisdiction the parishes of Baa, Bula, Canaman, and Nabua eventually belonged. See Domingo Abella's *Bikol Annals, Volume 1* (1954), 3-6.

the vernacular? It is possible that he did, because the friars had been writing and publishing dictionaries and grammar books on the local languages as early as 1647.³⁵ How and when the dotoc changed hands from the clergy to the laity is not known and may be impossible to account now. The stories about training and the activities of the parabalo, the lay director of the dotoc in Baa, go back only as far as the early 1900s. The komedya as a distinct text and performance practice may have had a separate history in Bicol, as it has in Manila and other provinces. Tiongson states that the works of native writers of comedia, the *comedia tagala*, rose to popularity in Manila in the 18th century (Tiongson 1999a, 3).

I do not aim to present a full history of the traditions, but it is necessary to start with ‘the beginning’ (or beginnings) or an approximation of it from historical documents or oral accounts, in order to talk about transmission or continuity. These traditions have their specific histories; they are tied to a past and this is the very reason why they can claim such an appellation: ‘tradition’—‘*su nagimatan*’.³⁶ Transmission also presupposes passage, movement in time, an awareness of a continuum whose beginning and end one may not know or are impossible to know; but it always works from the present, and is bent to move forward to a future, the very aim of transmission being to pass on something which must continue.

The processes of transmission occupy a central place in my enquiry into the dotoc as an appropriation of the colonial project of conversion. It has been

³⁵ In Bicol, Fray Andres de San Agustin wrote and published in 1647 a grammar book of the Bicol language entitled *Arte de la Lengua Bicol* (referred to by some authors as *Arte del Idioma Bicol*) which was added to and edited by Fr. Manuel M. Crespo in 1879. Even earlier, Fray Marcos de Lisboa wrote a Bicol dictionary entitled *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol*, written sometime between 1590 and 1620 but printed only in 1754. The same Fray San Agustin also wrote *Explicacion de la Doctrina Cristiana* printed in Manila also in 1647), a translation of *the Doctrina Cristiana* of Cardinal Belarmino (Blair and Robertson 1973, 311).

³⁶ From *gimata* which means “awake,” “to become aware of,” “to awaken,” “to realize.” The term also describes the five or six days period of the new moon (Gimata Newsletter 2007, available at <http://www.aq.edu.ph/index.php?p=main&s=acad&taskId=pubgimata>). ‘Su nagimatan’ thus refers to that (su) which was there when one was born or knew when one became old enough to be aware of it.

impossible to include the full and comprehensive historical account for all the four areas, given the limited time for the field work and archival research. Only Santa Cruz, Baaó (my main field site) is given the fuller treatment and extensive quotes from Mampo's work on the Canaman dotoc and lagaylay are included.

The Paradotoc and Their Training

The term *paradotoc* is used specifically in Baaó, although the term *cantora*, used in all the other three areas, is also used to refer to the singers of the dotoc. The paradotoc/cantora are married or single women, or girls, although there has never been a prohibition for the participation of the menfolk. The last *panjardin dotoc* held in the town in the 70s had couples (women and men) as paradotoc and recent performances in 2008 have included boys and a gay person. One informant said that there is an aesthetic reason for having young women as paradotoc: the dotoc looked grander with the women dressed in their fine clothes. In fact, as one informant told me, the selection of the paradotoc in the past observed a preference for beautiful or good-looking maidens.³⁷

The paradotoc were trained by a director, called *parabalo*. The training aimed at developing not the 'acting' skill but the ability to sing the parts well in harmony with the music and to master the conventions observed in the performance. The rehearsals were organized by the parabalo and held at his/her house. The paradotoc were taught the *tonos* and were made to sing solo, so that the parabalo would be able to ensure correctness and mastery, especially among those assigned to sing the *segunda* (second voice). The parabalo selected the paradotoc she would teach; most were in their early teens, fifteen years old or younger. Many

³⁷ In chapter 6 I probe deeper into the 'authority' of women to perform the dotoc on behalf of the community, suggesting that this taps into more ancient systems of relatedness and notions of gender and power.

of the trainees chosen were related to the parabalo, the family providing natural links that nurtured the dotoc. For instance, Martiniana Brillante and Lazara Brillante trained under their uncle Mateo Brillante (Palango). Tiyang Acay and Tiyang Pinay were sisters and Cecilia Reyes-Bernas, a noted soloist, was the daughter of Pinay. Sixta Buena learned the dotoc from her aunt Candida.

Table 9 shows the chronology of parabalo and paradotoc from Palango to Marcial Briones; it is not complete, put together only from what my informants remember, but it provides a clear picture of the dotoc training in Santa Cruz, Baao.

Inferring from the accounts, one could say that the development and transmission of the dotoc in Santa Cruz, Baao hinged on the coming and going of a parabalo. A man called ‘Palango’—Mateo Brillante, was the parabalo when Lolang Yayo, my oldest source born in 1914, was growing up. He was a *parapa-Jesus*, or a kind of lay minister who administered the last rites for a dying person, in place of a priest. This is significant because one of the 1885 dotoc texts was intended for the dying, and the *parapa-Jesus* is said to administer the rites in a horrifying, chant-like manner, with all the histrionics one can imagine. Palango was already an old man when Lolang Yayo was just a child, so (based on some simple calculations) he could have been born in the 1870s and could have been an active parabalo by the turn of the century. He was the director of the *calle amargora*, the earliest dotoc form remembered in Baao, as well as the *panjardin*. The first, ‘new’ dotoc that Lolang Yayo and her contemporaries learned, however, was the *sanabua* (a coinage from *dotoc sa Nabua*, or dotoc from Nabua). The parabalo of the *sanabua* was Apong Imang (Maxima), a big, buxom woman who was a midwife in the community. When she died, Ciriaca Esplana (Tiyang Acay) took over. Acay Esplana had been active in performances of the *calle amargora*

Table 9. Chronology of Dotoc Training (Baao)

	c. 1920-1930	c. 1925-1938	c. 1938-1946	c. 1946-1950s	c. 1950s-1960s
Parabalo	MATEO BRILLANTE Also called "Palango"	APONG IMANG	ACAY ESPLANA PINAY ESPLANA	MARCIAL BRIONES SERGIA ESPLANA	SIXTA BUENA
Musikero		Pio Ballesteros	Tiburcio, Mokoy	Marcial Briones Jose Fajardo Ajerico Barrameda Pedro Buena	Pedro Buena
Paradotoc	Matea Esplana Martiniana Brillante Lazara Brillante Martina Dato	FIRST GROUP: Pechay Ballesteros Elpidia Brigola Juliana Biando Primitiva Dato Isabel Esplana Sergia Esplana Felisa Brigola SECOND GROUP: Rosario Balindan (Lolang Yayo) Evergista Beldua Sergia Esplana Benita Balindan Juliana Biando Vivita Imperial	Cecilia Reyes Lily Brigola (Fajardo) Felicitas Tataro Naty Barrameda Juanita Brigola Eustaquia Barrameda Lucia Brigola	FIRST GROUP: Felicidad Balindan Lourdes Ballesteros Benita Britanico Felicitas Tataro Gonzal a Fajardo Lucia Tataro Soledad Brusas Dominga Brigola Edmunda Brusas Helen Barrameda Amparo Buena Titay Barrameda Remedios Botor SECOND GROUP: Isa Lanuzo Leoncia Guevarra Remy Esplana Maning Guevarra Irma Imperial Lydia Burgos Lourdes Baliilla	Ciriaca Robosa Soledad Brusas Edmunda Brusas

and the panjardin and had learned the sanabua. She started teaching the cobacho dotoc using the tono of the sanabua with the help of her sister Pinay. Pinay Esplana is said to have improved the tono of the sanabua, and changed the ‘wording’ (the phrasing) of the cobacho dotoc accordingly. Apparently, the Baaoños' musical sensibility did not fully take to the tono of the dotoc from Nabua.

And then came Marcial Briones. Born in 1910, he was already recognized as a musician and composer by the 1930s, who sought to preserve the musical heritage of the region amidst the growing influence of American music at the time (Gerona 1988, 169). Tiyong Marcial composed a new tono for the *cobacho* dotoc and collaborated with Tiyang Siring (Sergia Esplana), in teaching the new tono to a mixed group of girls from Santa Cruz and other barrios. By the late 1940s, Tiyong Marcial’s music had become a favorite among the paradotoc because it was more suitable for lower register voices.

Informants from other barrios of Baao acknowledge that the Santa Cruz folk are the *aficionados* (experts) of the dotoc, supporting the view that the dotoc started in Santa Cruz but spread later among the other barrios of Baao. In the neighboring barrio of Del Rosario, a contemporary of Acay Esplana, Candida Mejorado, also taught the dotoc. Her niece, Sixta Buena, would later become a parabalo herself, teaching two other dotoc forms: the *tres marias* and *porlaseñal dotoc*.

The dotoc flourished even during the Japanese occupation. Forced by the war to stay together, the people also had *haranas* (serenades), *karantahan* (singing sessions) and other forms of community interaction. After the war Fr. Demetrio Martirez, who came to Baao in 1941, stayed as parish priest until 1970 and he kept alive the *dotoc sa banwaan* (at the town-level). When Msgr. Rafael Imperial

became parish priest in 1972, he continued the town-level tradition until ‘it died a natural death’ during the 70s when it had to compete for the people's attention with the town-level basketball tournament at the nearby plaza. The last remembered dotoc *sa banwaan* was a *panjardin* in 1973. I mention these two priests because they represented institutional support for the dotoc, which was critical. In the absence of such support, or when the priest gave up, because the audience had thinned out, the town level performances stopped completely. In contrast, the dotoc in the barrios continued, even when the parabalo were not active anymore.

But the days of the ‘professional’ parabalo are over and there is hardly any training done at present. There are attempts by some senior paradotoc who are concerned about the waning interest in the tradition, but the response especially from the teen-age girls has been very poor. Invitations to rehearsals are accepted mostly by the very young—twelve years old and below. Those who do join in the performances nowadays are invariably married women in their early forties or older ones who do not rehearse any more. As a result the ‘craft’ of the paradotoc has been steadily losing polish and the old dotoc ‘art’, as it were, now seems to be just a tradition that the older barrio folk feel compelled to continue against very strong odds.

Outside of the more or less structured system of the parabalo, the simpler but equally devoted dotoc of various neighbourhoods in the *calles* of Sta. Cruz provided another avenue for transmission. In these dotoc, the children learned the tonos in their young age, even if they were not chosen to train with a parabalo. Some of these devotions have continued to this day. It is interesting to note that present day performances at the barrio level are turning out to be much like the neighbourhood dotoc of my childhood, during the 70s: informal, small, spare, but

alive with the participation of children. The youth are conspicuously absent. But perhaps this is peculiar to Santa Cruz. In other parts of Baao like Buluang, in 2007 I watched a performance by the barrio youth who were the sponsors of the day. The youth president who was male even sang a solo part. Also, in all the other areas, in Nabua, Bigaa, and Canaman, the performers are mostly young people.

Musikeros

Musikeros usually apprenticed under respected maestros and fathers normally passed on the skill and their instruments to their sons. If the singing is a domain for women, primarily, the accompaniment is the domain of men. As mentioned previously, however, these musikeros worked closely with the parabalo and most of the parabalo, like Tiyang Acay, knew how to play the guitar. Tiyang Acay worked with Tiburcio and Mokoy and then later with her sister Pinay who was also a *guitarista*. Apong Imang worked with Pio Ballesteros, the oldest of the dotoc musikeros, and Palango most likely worked with Matea Esplana, also a *guitarista*. Sixta Buena had her brother Pedro Buena as accompanist, and the cousins Marcial Briones and Sergia Esplana collaborated in teaching the new tono that Marcial composed.

Marcial Briones was the great *maestro* fondly remembered by the Baaofenos. He organized the Kins' Orchestra, partnering with Jose Fajardo, another famous musikero, noted for his composition of the *soledad*³⁸ music for Good Friday. Their band played both religious and secular music in Baao, in other Bicol towns and cities, and even in Manila. Briones was hailed at the peak of his career as the best trumpeter in Manila; the famous Anastacio Mamaril was only second to

³⁸ The *soledad* is a late night procession on Good Friday, enacting the Virgin Mary's search for the burial ground of Jesus. The *soledad* in Baao is noted not just for the processional music of the *estudiantinas* (the musikeros of the soledad), the music composed by Jose Fajardo, but also for the tradition of having a cantor in each stopping place sing Latin arias to Mary in the operatic style.

him.³⁹ He is recognized until today as one of the ‘luminaries in Bicol music’, having composed, with Luis Dato,⁴⁰ the Bicol love song ‘*Nagdudusa*’ and, with Pedro Beldua, another popular love song ‘*Isipon Mo Sana*’ (Gerona 1988, 169).

To this day, the older musikers still proudly claim that they trained under Tiyong Marcial. The history of the dotoc music in Baao seemed to have stopped with him, however, because the ones who came after him merely continued what he started and did not produce new compositions. Marcial’s own sons became musikers themselves, but are now engaged in other trades. The remaining dotoc musikers are very few and many of the new ones are mostly self-taught and lack the confidence to innovate. As Sixta Buena said in 1998, she decided to stop being a parabalo because none of the new musikers could play as she required. But here we see the classic transition from old to new, the passing of an age. There is hope that the old musical tradition will continue, since there are still some good ones actively carrying on, but contemporary influences are already evident, for instance in the use of electronic instruments. The same old music are still played, however, and the concern is not so much that the *tono* or *tugtog* have changed—they have not suddenly become rap or reggae⁴¹—but that the quality of the playing, the instrumental accompaniment, and the singing has diminished.

Outside of the dotoc, Marcial’s legacy of hard work and commitment to excellence has been carried on by other musicians, notably in the field of choral music, a different tradition. While many are school based, several trainers and conductors have successfully built professional careers in choral training and a few

³⁹ I interviewed Amelito Briones, son of Marcial Briones, 11 July 1998. Anastacio Mamaril became a celebrity, however, because he recorded his music; Marcial Briones did not do so.

⁴⁰ Luis Dato was a poet laureate, the first Filipino to publish an anthology of poems in English. He was from Santa Cruz, Baao.

⁴¹ The Lenten *pasion* has not been so lucky; there are areas in Bicol and other parts of the Philippines where the *pabasa*, the chanting of the passion and death of Christ, is already in rap form.

have even extensively performed abroad as members of internationally renowned Filipino choirs. Some have returned to Baa0 to train local choirs; some have remained in Baa0 but ventured out to join and win competitions in Manila or in Asia or Europe. Several have pursued formal university degrees in music. I mention this in order to show an ‘other’ side of the dotoc tradition in Baa0: the elite or ‘high brow’ that has had a dominant influence in the musical traditions of the town, the dotoc included. The *bel canto* singing of some of the older paradotoc came from the elite training for cantors in church that is also evident in the *soledad*, and the *flores de mayo*⁴² at the town level. Marcial Briones was part of that elite circle and so are many of the musicians I have discussed in this section. Their music is noticeably not ‘folk’ nor the ‘peasant type of sound’ identified by Mirano⁴³ that can be heard in the chanting of the Lenten *pasion*. And it is their kind of music that has been taught in the schools and valued as good. The training of the paradotoc aspired to this kind of quality and was successful to a certain extent.

But one does not have to get far away from the town center to hear a different quality of playing the dotoc music or of the vocal production. One can easily hear that in the dotoc of the *calles* as much as in the dotoc of some barrios far from town.

The Parapanganam, the Cobacho Makers, Cabos and Pudientes

Many other people are involved in continuing the dotoc tradition aside from the paradotoc and the musikeros: the *parapanganam* or prayer leader, the cobacho makers, and the dotoc sponsors.

⁴² The flores de mayo is another Maytime tradition that honors Mary, observed almost throughout the country. Hymns are sung and flowers offered also for nine days. In Baa0 most of the hymns are either Latin or Spanish.

⁴³ From a personal conversation, 1999. Mirano has written on a different devotion to the Holy Cross in Bauan, Batangas called *subli* (Mirano 1997) that also has strong elements of music and dance; *subli* is in fact considered as one of the Filipino folk dances.

The *parapanganam* leads the novena prayers. She is an important person because the novena prayers cannot go on without her. And in Baa the dotoc does not happen by itself; it is always performed after the novena prayers. She is usually female and an older person, and she is expected to be the ‘expert’ on how to pray the novena, composed of the rosary and the prayer for the patron saint (the novena proper)—the novena in Bikol; the rosary in both Bikol and Spanish, with a few Latin prayers. How does she learn to be a *parapanganam*? There are no schools for this occupation nor is there a *parabalo* who trains a *parapanganam*. Again, the mode of transmission is informal, in the home. Tiyang Provi (Providencia Benosa) learned all the prayers at home, for she grew up in a family that faithfully observed prayer times such as the Angelus at six o’clock in the evenings and Matins at three o’clock in the mornings. They, the children, would be pinched if they complained. She was able to memorize all the prayers through this kind of ‘training’. In addition, she is a *paradotoc*, a cantora. She is not from Santa Cruz, though, and so she waits to be invited to either join the dotoc or be the *parapanganam*.

The heavy manual work of preparing the performance venue is the responsibility of the male members of the community, the **cobacho makers**. They set up the lighting and decorate the chapel. They procure the materials for the cobacho and build it. For the fiesta, they construct the *media talle*.⁴⁴ It has been customary for the chapel décor and the cobacho to be changed daily, and the cobacho makers are expected to be creative with the task. Different groups are

⁴⁴ The *media talle* is an arch made of light materials constructed at the entrance to the street leading to the chapel that functions as a decorative and festive marker during the fiesta. I remember the elaborate arches of the 70s, tall imposing ones made of bamboo and intricately decorated with leaves of *anahaw* and other palm fronds. The *media talle* was always a favorite backdrop for pictures, making a kind of frame for the *solteros* (male youth) of the barrio in their Elvis Presley-like get up with pomaded hair and the *raragas* (young ladies) in flouncy dresses or the later fashion of mini skirts and beautifully coiffed hairstyles. Now, there is no need to construct the *media talle* at fiesta time, because a permanent concrete arch has been built. Needless to say, the responsibilities of the men folk have been greatly diminished.

assigned, as each day is given to a *cabo* (sponsor) who heads a group of households (*purok*) in the barrio. Here, again, people learn by observing and participating: sons with fathers, or younger brothers or cousins with older ones, new members of the youth organization with senior members, and so on. It is a system of informal apprenticeship within families and family groups, held together by invisible but strong bonds of kinship, obligation and responsibility, but oftentimes also of friendship. One is expected to carry out a family commitment, but it is an obligation that becomes enjoyable when shared among peers, and then it is no longer a task but a contribution to a community endeavor.

The **cabo** is the dotoc sponsor for the first eight nights; the **cabo mayor** is the chief sponsor who takes care of the ninth night of novena and dotoc and other fiesta expenses. The **pudiente** co-sponsors the fiesta with the cabo mayor by contributing money and helping out with the different tasks. How does one become a cabo or pudiente? One volunteers or gets his/her turn in the rota. It is the responsibility of the cabo to hire the musikeros, invite or mobilize the paradotoc, set up the cobacho and decorate the chapel, and cook and serve the food for the dotoc participants. There are always people waiting to help, with cash or other forms of contributions (e.g., so many kilos of sticky rice), with hands to cook and serve the food, wash up, or distribute the candles, fire the *kwitis*, etcetera. Of course a lot depends on how neighborhoods operate as a social group, and one can always have the food service catered if one can afford it. The point is that this is passed on from parents to children, or children who have set up their own households are added to the rota. The responsibility of being *cabo* or primary sponsor is passed on from one household or family to another. All families in the

barrio become co-responsible for at least one night, either one of the first eight nights or the ninth, the *kafiestahan*.

At the barrio level, a Pastoral Council plans and manages the annual events. The council calls for a meeting of the barrio elders to agree on the assignments for the novenario. Very often the meeting is just a matter of formalizing previously agreed arrangements. But the Pastoral Council is a fairly recent formation. According to Felicidad Baracena, who served for two terms as treasurer of this body, the Council was formed only in 1994 on orders by the Archdiocese of Caceres. Apparently, the formation of Pastoral Councils was meant to tighten church supervision of religious activities in the barrios. Before 1994, the barrio captain was the one who called for the meeting of elders.

Revival and Continuity in Canaman

The people of Canaman decided not to have the lagaylay in 1952 and did not have it again until 1963. Mampo says it could have been because of the bad economic conditions in 1952, and then perhaps the people thought they were fine enough without it and so it continued for the ten year period (Mampo 1980, 119). Why then did they decide to have the annual performances again? Her informants told the same story and it is also the story I heard when I visited Canaman.

They took it up again in 1963 because of two bizarre occurrences which the people considered as miracles. One happened in the late afternoon of May 11, 1962. Four elderly women, who were decorating the old cross in the patio for a novena, saw the cross swaying from side to side amidst the still surroundings. The other miracle was a vision of lights in a cross formation, which was seen for a number of nights. Many people witnessed this dazzling light coming from the direction of Santa Cruz, a barrio of Canaman which is believed to have the other half of the cross standing in the town proper. The people interpreted these events as a plea for the revival of the *lagaylay* (Mampo 1980, 119).

And so from 1963 to this day, the town has had the lagaylay every year without fail, just as they did for almost a hundred years (from 1858), perhaps longer, before they succumbed to economic difficulties and stopped the tradition in 1952.

The force of belief thus tops the list of reasons why the tradition has continued and any discussion about transmission for Canaman will have to take this into account first and foremost. One could perhaps say that it is not so much belief but the fear of bad consequences, of ill events coming to pass, that made the town decide to restore the lagaylay and ensure that it continues. The experience of the *hermana* of Santa Cruz provides an example. She did not want to accept the responsibility of being *hermana*, because she was not financially prepared and had many concerns to attend to. But when the great typhoon of November 2006 came, she thought they would all die; the water was rising, the wind was ripping her house apart, and she got separated from her children. She felt it was a punishment for her hesitation to serve as *hermana* and so she made a solemn promise, a bargain, that she would be *hermana* if the Holy Cross would save her and her children from the violent typhoon. In 2008 when we met in Sta. Teresita, she had organized a troupe of adult women from different barrios of Canaman and the troupe was touring its performance of the lagaylay.

One may ask, however, whose belief is it that carries on the tradition? The performers of the lagaylay in the town center are young people aged seven to fifteen, with just one or two approaching twenty. They are perhaps too young to harbour such strong faith or even to imagine the workings of evil in their life whether from natural calamities or other causes. One can therefore easily think that it is the older folk, their parents, who make them join the lagaylay or the dotoc.

In Canaman, there is a well-established system for the lagaylay, the dotoc, the aurora and santacruzán,⁴⁵ as well as other events related to worship. Key to this system is the *hermana* and *hermano mayores*, who are chosen or who volunteer ‘to organize, supervise, and finance all religious activities for a period of one year’ (Mampo 1980, 136). Each barrio has its *hermana* and *hermano* and from among them are chosen the *hermana* and *hermano mayor* at the parish or town level. The selection is approved by a council composed of former *hermanas* and *hermanos*. Being *hermana* or *hermano* is a *panata* (vow) for most Canaman residents and there is usually no dearth of individuals for these roles.

For the lagaylay, it is the task of the *hermano* and *hermana* to finance and build the *engramada* or *bilada*, also called *lagaylayan*, the roofed structure on the church patio where the lagaylay and dotoc are performed for a period of nine days, from May 3 to 11. They decorate and provide lights for it and rent the sound system. They also hire the musicians and prepare food for the lagaylay participants. Help is mobilized from the townspeople through a general meeting for all Canaman residents held by mid-April. In the meeting they decide on the contribution of each family, group the different barrios into nine to take care of decorating the *engramada*, and assign which families or groups of families would provide food for the lagaylay participants and musicians from first to ninth night (Mampo, 142). Nevertheless, most of the expenses are shouldered by the *hermano* and *hermana*. In 2007 and 2008 I understood from conversations with the *hermana* that she takes care of the expenses for the decorations, the cost of rehearsals, and

⁴⁵ The aurora and santacruzán are two other Maytime traditions that are observed in Canaman, as well as in many other towns and barrios of the Philippines. The santacruzán in particular has various forms and the santacruzán in Canaman is distinct from either the lagaylay or the dotoc, whereas in Bigaa, to cite just one example, the dotoc and komedya together are considered their santacruzán tradition. See Mampo’s thesis (1980), Tiongson’s *Kasaysayan at estetika ng sinakulo at ibang dulang panrelihiyon sa Malolos* (1975) and Florendo and Austria’s *Sagala: The queen of Philippine festivals* (2006).

even the dresses of the participants, while the hermano foots the bill for the engramada and supervises its construction and maintenance over the nine-day period.

The dotoc for each day of the novenario is assigned to different barrios. The hermana/hermano of the assigned barrios coordinates with the *maestra* who chooses the cantora and conducts rehearsals if needed.

There is no formal casting for a role. In a small place such as a barrio in Canaman, everybody knows who can sing the *Dotoc*. The participants are always found in pairs so there is always a balance between those who can sing the first voice and those of the second voice. The *Dotoc* singers have no need for rehearsals, unless children are invited to join the group. If children are included, they usually rehearse during the day of the performance with the *maestra* and the *notador*⁴⁶ in attendance. It may be noted that the *notador* may be chosen on the spot for her clear and carrying voice which is needed when she dictates the lines of a stanza (Mampo 1980, 139).

While majority of the dotoc cantora are adult women, children and teenage girls are almost always present, as well as male youths. Very often the male members of the youth organization join in the dotoc or assist in the conduct of the event. Male children from the families assigned for the night's performance also participate.

Compared to the town dotoc where there is almost always no audience, the barrio dotoc has the attention of everyone. In 2007 the engramada in front of the chapel was full of people, seated on all three sides surrounding the cantora who stood or sat on a mat at the center. More spectators stood outside the makeshift waist-high walls and by the entrance, peering into the performance. Even on the next year that I visited, when the weather was so bad they decided to hold the dotoc inside the barrio chapel, people came to watch the performance. And they

⁴⁶ Mampo distinguishes between the *maestra* and the *notador*: the *maestra* is the director while the *notador* is the person who dictates the lines during the performance. In the performances I witnessed, the *maestra* was also the *notador*.

did not just watch; I could see them singing, or mumbling the lines dictated by the maestra. Many children were present, not playing or fooling around, but seated on the tiled floor of the chapel, or as part of the group of cantoras.

The lagaylay is mainly a town event, because most barrios are not able to organize their own troupe. When there are active troupes like the one organized by the hermana of Santa Cruz, these are usually touring troupes and the barrios would usually host them on the *katapusan* or ninth day. The town troupe may also be invited by the barrios or by other towns or by a family or individual outside Canaman.

The hermana mayor at the town level organizes ‘an informal committee of elderly parishioners’ Mampo, 140) to plan the lagaylay as early as December. They start scouting for the girls who would compose the year’s troupe. Girls who have won in singing contests or are active in this or that town event become prospective participants. Some parents would often volunteer their daughters because of ‘personal devotion, thanksgiving, or supplication’. By the second week of March a minimum of thirteen girls should have been recruited and by the third week of March, the lagaylay director casts the girls into pairs of first and second voices and starts rehearsals. These go on almost nightly and songs must have been memorized by the second week of April. ‘Blocking’ follows and the girls practice the dance steps and movement sequences. They start rehearsing with music two weeks before the first night. A day before the first performance, on May 2, a trial run is held far from the town center (141-143).

Mampo wonders at how the Canaman people have faithfully kept these traditions, saying that it is the religious function of these traditions that has ensured its survival. ‘The Santa Cruz plays are communal prayers offered by the whole

community, whose religious elements undoubtedly attract the people' (148).

Transmission and continuity is thus a matter of devotion.

...[N]ot to participate means lack of devotion since the plays declare their thanksgiving for graces received. Non-participation also means giving up the chance to merit indulgences since the plays express their petitions for the continuance of favors received and for the answers to some other favors asked. As prayers, the plays express the immediate concerns of the people (Mampo, 148-149).

But there is also the social function. The 'plays' thrive because 'they are essentially cooperative ventures of the whole community, whether of a town or of a barrio' (145). '[T]he zealous efforts of the entire community of Canaman...[make] the total Santa Cruz affair...a success' (146). At the macro level, the traditions keep the community together. At the micro level, they provide opportunities for being socialized—for the girls to 'come out' into society, for the boys to 'see' the girls, for the residents in general to build networks of friends and support systems, for everyone to have fun and play at summertime, and so on.

The elders express concern, however, that the religious element of the traditions may eventually disappear, that the social element would predominate and people would forget their primary intent. They feel the need to preserve these traditions and the parish priest fully agrees and supports their efforts.

Aside from the barrio and town level performances, there are family devotions. I was fortunate to be invited to a dotoc in a family home. The devotion was inherited by the mother from her parents, and by her parents from theirs, together with a big Santa Cruz, a wooden cross that looked exactly like the cross on the patio and the cross in Sta. Teresita. The cross has been in the family since 1806. Every year they observe the devotion, praying several novenas (to the Holy Cross, the Virgin of Peñafrancia, St. Benedict, and several others) and singing the dotoc. And the children and their families come to the old family home and have a

simple feast afterwards. The youngest daughter works in the next province, two hours away by bus, but took a leave of absence from work to be there that day. All of them have at one time or another been active in the town dotoc or lagaylay, or still are, like Manoy Walter who is a musikero. He played the music with his nephew, who is finishing a bachelor's program in music at a local university. By all indications, the devotion will continue for the next hundred years and beyond.

Chapter Four

Postcolonial Cultural Politics

How am I looking? Obviously the ‘borrowed lenses’ in my opening verses of chapter 2 are Western ones, for I too have obeyed the ‘command’. I too did not have a choice. There is a longing for home that is almost a physical pain, and there is great hope, but while on the road the return is always a ‘not-yet’ and the end of the journey indiscernible in the hazy surroundings. This chapter lays out the landscape of that journey, provisioned with *anduyog* as conviction and the sense memory of the dotoc ‘on [my] pulses’.

THE POSTCOLONIAL PREDICAMENT

How does one shake off ways of thinking ingrained by education? Renato Constantino says the most effective means of subjugation used by the Americans was the establishment of the public education system that ‘captured the minds’ of the Filipinos (R. Constantino 1982). In 1901, they accomplished this with their coup de grace in the colonizing mission: the Thomasites, an army of teachers brought to the islands on the ship *Thomas* and dispersed all over the archipelago. ‘The teachers’ task was “to carry on the education that shall fit the Filipinos for their new citizenship” and make them understand and appreciate ‘the underlying principles of our civilization’. The work of the Thomasites was meant ‘to restore the fabric of U.S. national exceptionalism’ (Kramer 2006, 169) among the Filipinos who were still reeling from the death blows of the violent war of 1898-1901 that destroyed the fragile First Philippine Republic under Emilio Aguinaldo,

decimated whole towns and villages, displaced tens of thousands of inhabitants, and caused havoc on the economy (170). Physical violence inflicted by the war was replaced by another kind of violence in a way more insidious because it was masked. Letizia Constantino remarks that the Americans valued their work in education so much that positions in the Department of Education were not relinquished by the Americans 'up to the eve of the Commonwealth' (L. Constantino 1982, 22). By the time independence 'was granted' in 1946, the entire Philippine education system had been set in place, with universities that trained leaders from the coopted elite to man government posts, the military, businesses, schools. Philippine society had become thoroughly 'Americanized', to use Gloria Cano's description.

The 'master stroke' in the use of education for the colonizing process was, according to Renato Constantino, 'the decision to use English as the medium of instruction'. The use of the foreign language introduced Filipinos to another world virtually experienced through the books they read, the subjects taken up in the schools that were all taught in the foreign tongue. 'English became the wedge that separated the Filipinos from their past and later was to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen (sic).... This was the beginning of their education. At the same time, it was the beginning of their miseducation, for they learned no longer as Filipinos but as colonials' (R. Constantino, 6).

And this hardly changed even after 1946. 'The national consciousness was shaped to accept economic dependency on the United States' (L. Constantino, 22) even as 'national development goals' mouthed by the government gave the illusion of sovereignty. The education system fed and nurtured both the dependency and the illusion of independence made possible by a thorough-going operation to

accomplish such, from curriculum design to the writing of textbooks and the training of teachers, to the policies and structures governing all aspects.

My own itinerary has been through the course set down by this kind of education. By a quirk of fate, however, it was interrupted by involvement in the radical student movement of the 1980s that started me on a different course and forever changed my orientation. I journeyed to the big city to attend university, the premier University of the Philippines that the Americans had set up in 1908 and through the years had produced (and continues to produce) most of the leaders of the nation as well as their radical opponents. I was sixteen when I was recruited into the underground youth movement. I suppose it was fated because I entered the UP as a freshman in 1980 very much ripe for the picking, in a manner of speaking. Time, place and personal circumstances converged and there was no chance that I would escape from the net of activism enveloping the entire campus and indeed the entire country at that time. Marcos had been dictator for eight years and the country was near to bursting in full revolutionary fury as he continued to rule under martial law. Except that the bursting happened more like a continued seepage, a leak that developed into a major flow and a huge but differently unstoppable flood later on with the death of Ninoy Aquino. My involvement made me ‘see’ different realities from those taken up in the school curricula, ones I would not have known about in the way that I did had I not been snatched from the comfort of ‘normal’ student life and taken to the picket lines and slums of Manila, the agrarian communities of Tarlac¹—to the life of the underground activists and revolutionaries. And that was just the beginning.

¹ Tarlac is a province north of Manila that has had a rich history of revolt. It was one of the first eight provinces that rose in arms against the Spanish and became the seat of the then newly born Philippine Republic in 1899 when it had to flee from its original base in Malolos, Bulacan because of increased hostilities. During and after World War II it was home to the Hukbong Bayan Laban sa

This story is however too complicated to tell here. I am mentioning this to emphasize precisely the complexity of what others have called the development of postcolonial subjectivity. It is never straightforward or solid. There are always cracks and crevices where new or other experiences, ideas, hopes and passions might germinate and thrive and eventually burst it apart. But part of the story has been a return, a going back or an attempt to 'start again' when the situation called for it. Years later I went back to school to get a proper degree for that was the only way I knew to start again and stay alive. Or perhaps I just did not have courage enough to take up the great challenge and task of the revolution. The life lived after that became one of recuperation, perhaps a search for a justification of other ways of carrying on the struggle. And now I am seeking to prove myself worthy of the highest academic degree in a university in the West, provided for by American funds.

Ironically, even the straightforward Marxist-Leninist view of the Philippine post-/neo-colonial situation, the loud voice of reason from my dark past, is still very much part of Western theorizing.² Rustom Bharucha calls this the postcolonials' 'historicist burden, which compels them to trace the genealogies of their primary concepts back to their origins in Europe' (Bharucha 2004, 8). I have been hurled this way and that by storms and winds in my intellectual journey, but have kept to one path. How credible is this? The 'command', such as it is, has been compelling indeed, a force outside one's control. Be that as it may, such a way of

Hapon (People's Army Against the Japanese) or Hukbalahap, or Huks, the army formed by the Communist Party that did not disband after the war to continue the armed struggle against a different enemy. It was also in Tarlac that the present Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group, the New People's Army were founded in 1968 and 1969 respectively.

² This is not surprising at all, since even the leaders of the radical groups are products of the educational institutions set up by the Americans. Benedict Anderson comments in his essay of 1988 that the top leadership of the New People's Army 'appears still to think in English, to judge from the fact that many key party documents have no Tagalog versions' (Anderson 1988, n62, 19).

looking with the borrowed lenses may have one running in circles or forever trying to untangle oneself from the many snags one gets into. It would then be very easy to forget the small villages in the rural region of Bicol, Philippines, where one may find, possibly, Spivak's 'poorest woman of the South' among the singers of the dotoc.³

It is therefore by thinking and 'seeing' ethnographically that one may find a possible way out of the epistemological bind and from there move towards some clear direction of a cultural politics, one that is always reflected upon, repeatedly interrogated, revised, developed, in-process. Perhaps with *anduyog* as ethnographic co-performance, I can avoid the pitfall of committing epistemic violence through this work.

But here's the rub. In the Biblical story of Lot, the mother's love for her children made her, Lot's wife, look back at the burning city of Sodom and she was turned into a pillar of salt. *I am my mother looking back*. There is someone looking and that someone (me) wants to be in the picture, for she is in it but also outside it. And that desire which is also simultaneously a pulling back, a distancing, is her undoing. That ambiguous gaze is potentially immobilizing for both the subject and the object of the gaze, because the subject is simultaneously also the object. In a totally different story, this gaze is like the Greek Medusa's that can turn humans into stone. Such precisely is the 'museum effect' discussed by Barbara

³ I have to mention as a relevant aside that in one of the barrios I visited in Baa I met two women who once did the laundry for my sister, when the flood of 2007 immersed all their clothes in mud. These women were twins, in their twenties, who earned their living as washerwomen (they do it by hand and with great dexterity and speed, I was told.) We thought from their features that they belonged to or were descended from the *Agta* (or *Aeta*), the indigenous people inhabiting the upland barrios of the town who prefer to call themselves '*Itom*' (Bicol for 'black', because of their dark skin) and the lowlanders '*Unat*' (Bicol for 'straight', referring to the lowlanders' [predominantly] straight hair compared to the kinky hair of the *Itom*). They were singing the dotoc, costumed as were the rest of the participants. They hailed my brother-in-law who was with me then, and my brother-in-law introduced us.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett about ethnographic artifacts (1998a, 52). Professing *anduyog* is easier said than done, especially at the writing stage.

How do I present the dotoc tradition? (How do I write it for the archive?) Certainly in doing so I will be clearing a space for it to ‘enter into representation’⁴ as Stuart Hall says, and I am going to do so with full awareness of the power and responsibility I am taking on. That is the reason for my vulnerability—or half of the reason. The other half is that I still grapple with the epistemological issues. I grapple with the ethical issues. I grapple with the political issues. What authority do I claim to even begin to represent the dotoc? I can take a fully outsider position and say I am just like any other intellectual working on a research (if that can be said at all), but of course this is not true because of my own personal history which necessarily muddles the issue. I can also take a fully insider view and say I can speak for the people who practise the dotoc for I am one of them, but this too is not strictly true because my educational background and training taints me as other. Why did I choose this topic instead of another? I already said that it was out of practicality that I did, but my own practice would prove this to be a lame reason and reveal that I am indeed part of a movement that celebrates and asserts the local and confronts the threats of the global to gobble up all forms of vernacular identities. I am engaged in precisely the ‘search for roots’ and the construction of a

⁴ Stuart Hall’s sharing about the experience of ‘searching for an identity’ in the face of having been ‘blocked out of any access to an English or British identity’ is very much instructive for this discussion: ‘In the course of a search for roots, one discovered not only where one came from, one began to speak the language of that which is home in the genuine sense, that other crucial moment which is the recovery of lost histories. The histories that have never been told about ourselves that we could not learn in schools, that were not in any books, and that we had to recover.

‘This is an enormous act of what I want to call imaginary political re-identification, re-territorialization and re-identification, without which a counter-politics could not have been constructed. I do not know an example of any group or category of the people of the margins, of the locals, who have been able to mobilize themselves, socially, culturally, economically, politically in the last twenty or twenty-five years who have not gone through some such series of moments in order to resist their exclusion, their marginalization. That is how and where the margins begin to speak. The margins begin to contest, the locals begin to come to representation’ (Hall 2007b, 52-53).

‘counter-politics’ that Stuart Hall is talking about. I find myself therefore bound up in the debates on identities, subjectivities, and essentialisms. And it does not help that the dotoc communities are not just any rural community with its quaint lifeways and folklore (if indeed there can be such a place)—they are in a region that has always been considered in the Philippines and elsewhere as a rebel territory that nurtures the forces of the national democratic revolution in its midst, professing the continuing existence of neocolonialism in collusion with a local comprador and landlord elite. And I am afraid this view might still be largely correct in its analysis and perhaps about how the big social evils of ‘imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism’ are to be confronted and fought. On the other hand I am bedazzled by the new ideas. Considering the violent twists and turns in the forty-year history of the national liberation movement in the Philippines, there is truth to the danger of totalitarianisms.⁵ And so I am caught in between two opposing positions: one rejecting all absolutisms, espousing only what seems like an endless series of signification and ambiguous play; another professing a clear agenda for political action that can dangerously become just like any of the absolutisms experienced in the past and feared to happen again.

There is a middle ground here. There has to be. Because if some Western intellectuals can afford to stay detached at the cost only of some sentimental feeling of benevolence towards the oppressed others, and if some non-Western ones can do the same only with a desensitized, inured, mocked up sense of flamboyance and cosmopolitanism—many others, both Western and non-Western, would do so only at the cost of their self-respect, for surely this is tied to their living a life not purely for self-advancement. As if that were possible. According to

⁵ In the history of the Communist party and its armed forces, alleged errors in judgment caused the lives of many innocent members during the years of violent internal conflicts and purgings in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s—fatal errors that continue to haunt the group.

Stuart Hall, 'intellectual labour is always political' and 'there is all the difference in the world between understanding the politics of intellectual work and substituting intellectual work for politics' (Hall 1992 cited in Rojek 2003, 3). The challenge is to be like Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' who 'recognize a determinate class affiliation' (Rojek 2003, 77).

But what or where is the middle ground and is it the 'right' one to take?—'right' being the responsive and responsible answer to a particular call for action given specific places, situations, or historical conditions. On the ground even the organic intellectual gropes for answers. The call is surely for a radical position, and there should not be room for any hesitation. Time does not stop to wait for me and the good fight continues to be fought outside the universities. The bare-bone-and-flesh learning happens on the streets, in the fields, at the picket lines, and in the many communities unsung or unwritten about. The people who are cited to legitimate all kinds of statements from the left, right or centre of the political spectrum will continue to live their daily life and tackle their daily struggles whatever the intellectuals and artists say or do, and whether or not they get their space in journals, conferences, exhibitions, or performances.⁶

Talking about a 'performance of possibilities [that gives] voice to the silenced', D. Soyini Madison cautions against an arrogance in thinking that this is the intellectual's exclusive preserve, 'for we understand they speak and have been speaking in spaces and places often foreign to us...they [have been] intervening [upon injustice] through various forms all the time' (Madison 2003, 482).

⁶ At least this is true most of the time. When we start talking about emancipatory movements, the situation changes. Gramsci talks about the 'extreme dependence of the peasantry on [the rural intellectuals]: "Every organic development of the peasant masses, up to a certain point, is linked to and depends on movements among the intellectuals"' (Gramsci 1971, 15 quoted in San Juan 2008, 15).

Spivak does not think so, if we go by her essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ For her the silenced subaltern cannot speak (Spivak 1988, 307).⁷ But if that were so, what would be the point? Would not all arguments for and against be like nothing? A waste of time and energy—Spivak’s included? But then Spivak paradoxically provides a way out.

In an interview, Spivak responds to Ron Aronson who argues that it is all very well to worry about the dangers and limits of the old grand narratives, but that there are grave threats for which ‘we need modes of thought which are equal to those threats’ (Spivak 1990, 24). ‘I think that the greatest problem with theoretical production has been its sense of being right,’ says Spivak (45), and remarks that the challenge for intellectuals is to ‘try to behave as if you are part of the margin, try to unlearn your privilege’ (30). She does not relent on the value or primary place of deconstruction for her enterprise, but clarifies that what it does is really to show us the limits of knowledge.

Deconstruction cannot be a positive science, [but] what it produces is a kind of critical ballast to that which the philosopher, or the critic, or the political person, or the theorist, must engage in. Deconstruction says to us over and over again that it is not possible to have positive sciences—on the other hand, it is always abundantly possible! *Since one cannot not be an essentialist, why not look at the ways in which one is essentialist, carve out a representative essentialist position, and then do politics according to the old rules whilst remembering the dangers in this?* That’s the thing that deconstruction gives us; an awareness that what we are obliged to do, and must do scrupulously, in the long run is not OK. But this is not, and could not be, a political theory. So I don’t see this as a dilemma. Or, if it is a dilemma, it’s the dilemma that also gives you a solution (45, emphasis mine).

⁷ The essay clearly foregrounds woman as subaltern and the discussion proceeds using the practice of widow-burning or widow sacrifice in India (sati or suttee) as context—thus the term ‘sexed subaltern.’ Many have read the essay to mean, however, all subaltern and have expressed contrary views, for instance, Coronil who is cited later. Chrisman notes that Spivak has published a clarification of her statement in *The Spivak Reader* edited by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (1996, 287-290) as well as in an interview: Meyda Yegenoglu and Mahmut Mutman (2001), Mapping the Present, Interview with Gayatri Spivak, *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 45, 9-23 (Chrisman 2003, note #2, 143).

I understand this to be an explanation of her ‘strategic essentialism’— that has provided a strategy for oppressed or subaltern groups to make a clear stand for their agendas of identity and emancipation.⁸ Strategic essentialism is further explained as a position that one inevitably takes as a subject. One takes a perspective that must be articulated; one has ‘to clear a representative space for [oneself], because there is no way that [one] can, in fact, not speak from a place’ (46). It cannot be a case of continuous ‘free play’ all the time, ‘[f]or even as we are supposed to be “freely playing,” we are finalizing the situation out of which we are speaking’ (46). Spivak says that ‘deconstruction does present final and total positions, because it is not possible to avoid presenting final and total positions’ (45).

Reading Stuart Hall, I find a similar view articulated:

We have...to go on thinking beyond *that mere playfulness* into the really hard game which the play of difference actually means to us historically. For if signification depends upon the endless repositioning of its differential terms, meaning in any specific instance depends on the contingent and arbitrary stop, the necessary break.... [E]ach stop is not a natural break.... It understands that it is contingent. It is a positioning. It is the cut of ideology which, across the semiosis of language, constitutes meaning. But you have to get into that game or you will never say anything at all.... Meaning is in that sense a wager. You take a bet. Not a bet on truth, but a bet on saying something. *You have to be positioned somewhere in order to speak* (Hall 2007b, 50-51, emphasis mine).

⁸ An article in Wikipedia says, ‘Spivak has said since first introducing the term that she is unhappy with the ways it has been taken up and used. In interviews, she has disavowed the term, although she has not completely deserted the concept itself’ (in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_essentialism, retrieved 24 January 2009). Indeed I could not find in any of the literature the exact time and place or circumstance where the term was uttered or ‘coined’ by Spivak, although it is mentioned by the editors of *The Spivak Reader* in the introduction to the 1985 essay ‘Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography’. The passage reads: ‘Spivak sees their (referring to the Subaltern Studies group) positing of a theoretically and historically possible, if finally irrecoverable, subaltern consciousness as a form of “strategic essentialism”. Particularly because the group write as if aware of their complicity with subaltern insurgency—they do not only work *on* it—Spivak praises their “*strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (Landry and Maclean 1996, 204-205, emphasis in original).

While Spivak upholds deconstruction, saying that the awareness of essentialism as always possible is brought by deconstruction, Hall assails it, declaring that Derrida's politics is 'uncoupled' at the moment that 'the notion of differance [is taken]...right out of the tension between the textual connotations, "defer" and "differ", and [lodged] only in the endless play of difference' (50). Chris Rojek writes that Hall 'demolished essentialism at the level of theory, politics, and identity' but '[smuggled] in what he *unwisely* calls "a little 'strategic essentialism'" at the level of politics'⁹ (Rojek 2003, 7, emphasis mine). Exactly what is meant by 'unwisely' becomes clear in Rojek's book as soon as he begins to talk about what he calls the 'problem of slippage' in the theoretical positions taken by Hall, not least being this double position of 'simultaneously [defending] and [repudiating] essentialism' (7).

Spivak elaborates that practice 'norms' theory—the 'radical interruption of practice by theory and of theory by practice'—an interruption that '[puts] a monkey wrench in the whole thing...' (Spivak 1990, 44). The kind of practice she talks about is what she calls 'practical politics of the open end' that does not seek 'drastic change' or is a 'massive ideological act', just 'daily maintenance politics'—or these two together but in such a way that they '[bring each other] to productive crisis...' (105).¹⁰

To be sure, the ambivalence is mind-boggling, to say the least. To Filipino critics—like San Juan who has taken a clearly militant place to speak from—it is utterly futile.

⁹ Rojek is referring to Hall's remark in an interview by Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal (1997) featured in *Radical Philosophy* [no. 86, 24-41].

¹⁰ A misunderstanding of this idea, she says, causes, for instance 'the fights that arise' in considering the relationship between Marxism and feminism, both of which she professes. 'Feminism sees itself as one kind of practical politics wanting, also, to be the other kind. That's just divisiveness...' (1990, 105).

The ‘postcolonial picture’ as provided by Homi Bhabha or Gayatri Spivak fails to take into account [the Philippine] material conditions.... Postcolonial theory does not deal with the concrete lived experience of pain, denials, and ordeals of servitude that Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, and many others have undergone. Aren’t [these] ‘postcolonial’ states... still haunted by imperialism and neocolonialism? ...[D]o we still need to generate those tell-tale symptoms of ambivalence, displacements, dislocations, transcultural negotiations, and diasporic exchanges? In many societies shaped by colonial conquest and imperial domination, uneven and combined development is discernible in the co-presence of modern and traditional sectors. In my view, the historical conjuncture of uneven and combined development can only be grasped by a dialectical assessment of imperialism such as those propounded by Gramsci, C.L.R. James, W.E.B. DuBois, Paulo Freire, and others in the Leninist tradition (San Juan 2008, 53-54).

San Juan deplors as ‘fatal’ the postcolonial scholars’ rejection of foundations (San Juan 1999, 8). Mustering arguments from such known anti-postcolonial writers as Callinicos, Parry, Amin, Ahmad, and many others, San Juan launches a caustic critique of postcolonial discourse, focusing his most barbed attacks on Bhabha, Said, and Spivak. ‘Of primary importance [in the debate] on the politics of difference and identity is the salient question of agency, the intentionality of transformative practice, enunciated in concrete historical conjunctures’—and the postcolonial critics choose to focus on the ‘difference’ between the colonizer and the colonized and the resultant ‘hybridity’ that comes out of the encounter. That exploitation and political economy are reduced to discourse and intertextuality has erased the possibility of intervention (7). Citing Ahmad (1995), he accuses postcolonial politics as ‘complicit with late capitalism’s drive to maintain its ruthless hegemony over the world’s multitudes, chiefly working people of colour’ (6).

The validity of San Juan’s critique of Spivak and postcolonial theory, it seems to me, is cast in doubt only (however) by the very polemical tone taken and with it the seeming overweening confidence in the rightness of the argument—one

suspects that something is not quite right. But perhaps this is an illustration of how one can take a specific place from which to speak, as advocated both by Spivak and Hall. San Juan's position against postcolonial theory and for a historical-materialist social analysis and, as I understand it, the pursuit of a 'national-popular' struggle in the Fanonian mode, is certainly one of the major options for political action in the Philippine case.

In the book *Absolutely Postcolonial* (2001a), Peter Hallward supports the Marxist critique of postcolonial theory already essayed by San Juan, Parry, Ahmad and others. '[Postcolonial theory],' he says, 'could only develop and grow in the place left empty by the demise of organized radical politics and the defeat or perversion of national liberation movements in exploited countries all over the world.' He supports the view that hybridization 'releases reflection and engagement from the boundaries of nation, community, ethnicity, or class'—'into something like thin air' (xiv). He launches an incisive discussion of Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the 'ambivalent' postcolonial 'enunciation' that comes out of the hybrid condition and constitutes the subject, suggesting that Bhabha's assertion that 'the subject of politics...is a discursive event' ends there; nothing else can be expected of it. Bhabha forgets, he says, 'Brathwaite's simple point—that "it is not language but people who make revolutions"' (27). He critiques Spivak's 'indeterminacy' and avers that Spivak has a 'peculiarly postcolonial agenda' of an 'impossible social justice' (34)—impossible because she abandons all claims to political agency; saying that any such claim is a 'catachresis' (or a concept that lacks any adequate referent) and sets the unattainable goal of an 'ethical singularity' with the poorest woman of the South who personifies her

figure of the subaltern, an ethics that cannot be practised even by subaltern leaders (32-33).

One can argue that the fact that Spivak shares her vulnerability or alludes to a certain complicity, that she confesses to have abandoned an earlier ‘I’m going to save the world’ kind of position—that these might potentially point to her sharing much of what critics like San Juan advocate, but is too far gone in the game or is too constrained by present institutional affiliations to admit to. In *A Critique of Post-colonial Reason*, she launches precisely a critique that approaches San Juan’s polemics and confesses to a continued connection—or impulse to connect—to the legacies of the past that postcolonial discourse rejects. In response to a criticism by Parry,¹¹ Spivak has this now famous rejoinder: ‘When Benita Parry takes us to task for not being able to listen to the natives, or to let the natives speak, she forgets that the three of us, postcolonials, are “native” too’ (Spivak 1991, 172).¹² Laura Chrisman points out Spivak’s ‘defensiveness’ that has recourse to an ‘ethnic identitarianism’, one which Spivak has always been known to oppose (Chrisman 2003, 138). ‘Spivak’s self-representation as a “postcolonial native” in response to Parry, is perhaps an example of the “strategic essentialism” which is part of her theoretical arsenal’ (139).

In any case, despite the grave tension surrounding the use of the concept of ‘strategic essentialism’ it appears that it is quite useful for my argument here as much as the clarity of the need ‘to speak from a place’. I can say, like Spivak, that I

¹¹ See Benita Parry (1987), Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse in *Oxford Literary Review* 9/1-2, 27-58.

¹² The three are Spivak, Bhabha, and Jan Mohamed. The criticism refers to Spivak’s assertion in the essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ that the subaltern cannot speak. Robert Young (1996, cited in Chrisman 2003, 138) criticizes Parry in turn and it is on this criticism that Chrisman (2003) puzzles over, commenting on the ‘ironic authority’ in Young’s critique. Chrisman points out that ‘[q]uite possibly both Parry and Spivak have misread one another’ (139) adding in a note that Spivak’s position has changed since she wrote the essay (see Chrisman’s note #2, 143).

am a postcolonial native and this is the place I speak from and none other. I have to say, though, that I will have to depart from Spivak's strategic essentialism that posits the subaltern as beyond any possibility of agency.

SUBALTERN SPEECH

After having clarified that she did not mean to silence the natives but only to counter notions of romanticised political subjectivity, Spivak suggested using the term 'subaltern' to refer to 'everything that is different from organized resistance' (Coronil 2000, 42). Coronil finds this 'disconcerting' for then Spivak 'has in effect homogenized and pushed the subaltern out of the realm of political exchange,' like saying therefore that the subaltern is 'mute by definition' and that 'subalternity cannot include such active agents as the "organized resister" or "me"' (43). Coronil argues that Spivak's position is constrained by the humanist or structuralist versus poststructuralist binary. Instead he proposes to overcome the polarization of terms by seeing subalternity as 'a relational and relative concept'. The subaltern is neither a 'sovereign-subject' nor a 'vassal-subject'. The subaltern is 'an agent of identity construction that participates, under determinate conditions within a field of power relations, in the organization of its multiple positionality and subjectivity.... Dominance and subalternity are not inherent, but relational characterizations. Subalternity defines not the being of a subject, but a subjected state of being' (44).

But perhaps what Spivak really means is that the subaltern should not exist as a category and that the objective of even talking about it is for it to eventually

disappear¹³—in short, that there should come a time when there would be no one who can be called subaltern—perhaps the closest we can identify as Spivak’s utopian vision.

I find merit in the idea that there are indeed people who can be grouped neither with the oppressor nor with the ‘organized resister’ fighting the oppressor. These are the *masa* or mass that the resisters must listen to. These are the people who are reached out to, cajoled, persuaded, serenaded, entertained, bribed with money or promises by the politicians come election time. And these are the people whose lives are wasted both by wars of aggression by external invaders or state-organized ‘total wars’ and by wars of resistance launched by organized resisters. It is in fact among them that the battle for ‘hearts and minds’ between opposing forces begin and end. And indeed among these people are Spivak’s poorest woman of the South and those that indeed cannot speak either because they do not realize they are oppressed or because even if they do they have no means to have their voice heard, or they have been muzzled forever by fear or just by the daily toil to

¹³ San Juan provides a lengthy discussion of subalternity as understood from Gramsci. The subaltern in Gramsci is clearly the peasant who is unable to speak and has to depend on intellectuals to speak for him. The peasant’s subaltern condition is due to a lack of a ‘historicist mentality’ or a ‘knowledge of the institutions of the modern state, the citizen’s habit of solidarity’. The lack is a result of ‘absence from public life’, since his material conditions confine him to the land—‘the institutions and mental habits of feudalism’ constraining him to understand ‘the needs of the collectivity’ and his ‘corresponding duty’ (San Juan 1999, 88). What is not so clear in San Juan’s discussion is how his view differs from that of Spivak or of the Indian Subaltern Studies Group, since this is almost only glossed over (86), suggesting that the latter resists ‘objective’ analysis and that Spivak prefigures ‘an international division of labour...antecedent to the situation of subalterns’. One gets a sense reading through his text that he does agree to the idea that the subaltern cannot speak and indeed later goes on to consider the ethics of speaking for others—‘[i]f these others (usually the alien, foreigner, pariah) cannot speak for themselves, dare we speak for them?’ (101). Granting that he says ‘others’ rather than ‘the subaltern’ or the ‘peasants’, the effect is the same as if he referred to the latter, the peasant subaltern, who in his discussion can speak and act only through the interpellation of the organic intellectual. ‘The condition of subalternity can be surpassed through the mediation of the organic intellectual and the communist political party...’ (97) that he noticeably does not interrogate. Granting, further, that his analysis, following Gramsci’s, considers the ‘social totality and the relations of forces in [the] given historical conjuncture’ of the subaltern, while Spivak’s ‘occludes the constitutive nature of “complex social relations” in articulating identity’ (97), I see his view of subalternity as coinciding with Spivak’s in regard to the subaltern’s inability to speak as explained by Gramsci—‘the subaltern condition... [is] the terminal point before the beginning of self awareness...’ (97).

stay alive that has inured them to the abject misery. But I argue that they do speak in ways that we have to learn to listen to, as Madison suggests. Perhaps then even the organized radical resisters may come to know that, very often, they do emerge triumphant and their legacy of unacknowledged resistances and victories pass through the ages into the future, subtly but surely changing places and situations and engaging the labour of experts who try endlessly to crack the mystery of what makes this mass of humanity tick, or what is good (or bad) for them, or how to harness their collective power. This is not to say that the masses are in any way homogeneous or have one ontological and practical reality either in their collective configurations or in the ways that they collectively or individually resist or struggle—to do so would be to romanticize and therefore relegate them to the realm of fiction and thus effectively erase any possibility of real agency. However, neither am I saying that they do not share common causes for revolt, or that they are incapable of collective action. The case of the Black Nazarene procession that was successfully redirected towards the old route despite the will, intricate planning, and preparation of the authorities is a case in point.¹⁴ This is ‘people power’ in another guise and the action was not even remotely political in the understanding of the common people.

There is no lack of examples from recent Philippine experience. The world knows about EDSA 1 in 1986, the ‘original’ people power revolution that ousted Marcos and installed the widow of the martyred hero Ninoy Aquino as president of

¹⁴ For the procession on 9th January 2009 of the Black Nazarene of Quiapo, the caretakers of the image at the Minor Basilica in Quiapo decided to follow a different processional route that would pass through the major, therefore wider, thoroughfares of Manila in order to minimize injuries usually caused by overcrowding of the narrow streets of Quiapo. The revised route would however take the procession far away from the traditional route and many of the local devotees did not like the idea. During the actual procession, the pilgrims succeeded in directing the procession towards the old route; the police and marshals gave in and the church authorities could not do anything.

the republic. It can be cited as an example of the power of the collective action of the ‘masses’ but it is quite complicated to elucidate here. Although it was far from being ‘unorganized’ in that there were vanguard groups that initiated and sustained it, not least of which was the military top brass, many analysts and the Filipinos themselves believe it was the spontaneous outpouring of response from the unorganized sectors that finally booted out the dictator without a drop of blood being shed. EDSA 2 in 2001 is another possible example, but again too complex, perhaps more so than EDSA 1, because it was a more pronounced political contest among elite groups that tapped into ‘people power’ to oust yet another president, Joseph Estrada. EDSA 3 that happened right on the tail of EDSA 2 is another matter altogether, because it was a movement of the ‘underclass’—not the students from the elite schools of Manila or the ‘yuppies’ (young professionals) from Makati, not even the radical workers’ and women’s groups. According to Rustom Bharucha (who was in Manila around that time), the demonstrators of EDSA 3 were ‘the outcasts of society, not dignified enough to be called “the wretched of the earth” but more likely the down-and-out scum, scavenging in garbage and living off refuse in the jungle-city of Manila’ (Bharucha 2006, 219). These protesters ‘broke all norms of civic protest’, earning outrage from the ‘bourgeois media’ who reported that they placed ‘deposits of urine and shit’ in front of a shrine of the Virgin Mary (220). Their action was purportedly in support of Joseph Estrada and a response to EDSA 2. Accused of plunder and a string of immoral conduct shameful to the nation, Estrada ‘the master crook...was the people’s saint’ (219).¹⁵ The media reported that the EDSA 3 protesters were paid by the Estrada camp for their efforts.

¹⁵ A few years later, they appeared to have been vindicated when the president Gloria Macapagal

A pertinent question to ask here is: who are the masses anyway? In each of the four examples given there is a different face revealed and all four faces multiply in seeming infinity the more one looks at them. There is nothing simple here that one can easily understand. If by ‘masses’ we mean the greater majority of people, then we get closer to the reality of the EDSA 3 mass or, at the very least, the Black Nazarene procession mass, the majority of the downtrodden and dispossessed. And it is easier to speak of the masses as a ‘mass’—in the abstract. One has only to live among them in real day-to-day existence to know that what stands out is not just their complexity, but also the singular truth of their being separate from or independent of major ideological camps. The EDSA 3 ‘scum’ who took money to ‘stage’ their support for Estrada did not necessarily believe in him, and those who did believe in him would have had a hundred and one reasons for their loyalty and probably still took the offered money, because it put food on the table or bought them whatever goods they would have been unable to afford otherwise. Any activist or revolutionary finds that romantic notions about the masses are quite surely shredded to pieces by the encounter with life among them, on the ground, in the quick, deep and fast among the exchanges of breath, bread, and belief. As Spivak says, ‘[even] the real illiterate...are still possessed of a great deal of political sophistication, and are certainly not against learning a few things’ (1990, 57)...and so, ‘how about attempting to learn to speak in such a way that the masses will not regard as bullshit[?]’ (56). But, also, in the face-to-face encounters, one may find hope and joy and an uncommon wisdom, from their cultural

Arroyo, who was first catapulted to power through EDSA 2, was accused of cheating in the presidential election of 2004 in what became known as the ‘Hello Garci’ controversy. She apologized to the nation on national television for speaking to an election officer in Mindanao (Garcellano or ‘Garci’) while votes were being counted; this was interpreted by her many detractors as an admission of guilt.

performances, for instance, in and through which they seem to live life to the fullest, victorious and celebratory.

But there is a nagging unease in the thought of the masses as subaltern being outside organized collective agency and of their triumphs as such in the many ways that they do contest and resist oppression. EDSA 3 was a failure and, in the eyes of the 'ordinary' Filipino who watched or read about the scathing media representations of the protesters, it will always remain a searing, shameful, reminder of how 'low' people will go to get a few pesos (unless this ordinary Filipino was him/herself part of the protesters). But it was not the first one and perhaps not the last either. There have been others in the past, like the millenarian movements written about by Ileo in *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979), such as the *Lapiang Malaya* (Freedom Party) led by the Bicolano Valentin de los Santos. In May 1967, members of this group 'erupted along a section of Taft Avenue' and fought with constabulary forces '[a]rmed only with sacred bolos, *anting-anting* (amulets) and bullet-defying uniforms... enthusiastically [meeting] the challenge of automatic weapons fire..., yielding only when scores of their comrades lay dead on the street' (Ileo 1979, 1). Ileo reports that Valentin de los Santos, eighty-six years old at the time of the uprising, had built up the militant religiopolitical group from the late 1940s, driven by the goal of attaining 'true justice, true equality, and true freedom of the country' (1). These two examples differ, I should qualify, in the degree of 'organization', because there were named leaders of the group, the *Lapiang Malaya* having had a history of almost twenty years. Obviously, however, both were 'outside organized collective agency' if seen against Gramsci's or even the Philippine Left's concept of a Party-led movement or action. Both are gripping examples of what I understand as subaltern performances. Both were failures. But

from another point of view, they were not—in the words of Salud Algabre, leader of the Sakdal rebellion of 1935, ‘No uprising fails. Each one is a step in the right direction’ (quoted in San Juan 1999, 18-19).¹⁶

Algabre’s words are worth remembering, because they speak of hope and the determination to keep going in the midst of seemingly insurmountable odds. Stories of triumphs of truly unorganized individual or communal efforts are poignant in their minuscule effect if seen against the odds. The dotoc performances can in fact be seen in this way, if you will, like the fiestas that mark another year of life preserved or extended despite economic strife but do not change the conditions in which such life is lived—the harvest is not increased, or one continues to subsist on meagre earnings as a washerwoman, and the rich lady beside whom one sang the dotoc the previous night is still one’s *amo* (mistress) for whose comfort one toils. There is food everywhere for everyone on the day of the fiesta, but not afterwards, and even the eating differs in the houses of the rich and in the houses of the poor. The land is still owned by the *cabo mayor* (chief sponsor of the dotoc). The women of the village are still leaving to work as maids in the towns, sometimes succumbing to the evil enticements of pimps and sexual traffickers. Families are being separated because parents have to work as contract workers in Hong Kong or Dubai or the United Kingdom. And so on. These are in fact the reasons that anti-colonial struggles continue to have their force, why, in the case of the Philippines, modern history has been nothing but a continuing story of revolution from the Spanish period to the present. That the struggle has lasted this long is a mark of victory, but then again it speaks of a difficulty or continuing

¹⁶ Both Iletto and San Juan draw from the work of David Sturvenant: Iletto from *Agrarian Unrest in the Philippines* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1969) and San Juan from *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines 1840-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

inability of leaders and intellectuals to *pay attention* to the unorganized masses, to their subaltern speech.

Be that as it may, the small stories of triumphs keep people going, all the more significant because they are moments of independent speaking. The dotoc performances are instances of this telling and speaking of stories, and in their multiplicity perhaps there is no need to see a 'bigger picture'. Perhaps there is not one single story, but multiple stories many of which overlap or share common elements, and perhaps there is no point to seeking coherence, a pattern, an overarching narrative. These stories count. They are performances of identity and the communities involved have persevered in the practice for their integral self-knowledge and survival—in the words of Amilcar Cabral (cited in San Juan 2008, 41): 'the masses keep intact the sense of their individual and collective dignity'—and not so that they can 'enter into representation', as though representation only happens in the mainstream, at the centre.

The performers of the dotoc do what they do without thought that they are doing it in the periphery—their performances are carried out in fact at the centre of their lived universe: their home, even when that home is relocated somewhere else. Of course recognition by various Others is always sweet and they enjoy it. And they are pleased that I am doing this research and that I have been talking about the dotoc in many foreign places. But that is beside the point. My feeling is that I have more at stake here than they would ever have.

IDENTITY AND COSMOPOLITICS

The performance of identity is a complicated matter, but it seems to me that it becomes more so when it is taken up by academics (as I am doing here?). The

performers in the dotoc are not bothered by the fact that the dotoc is a colonial legacy; some would even proudly say that they inherited it from the *Castila*. And they intone *Dios te salve* in the novena, sing a full-length litany to the Virgin Mary in Spanish and the *Vexilla Regis* in Latin. Most of these they do not understand, but as I have said what seems important is not the text itself but their performance of it. And in the performance, they use whatever resources are available to them, mostly without much thought or deliberation, freely experimenting, for instance in the costuming or in the music of the *marchas* in the komedya—with the result that the performances are heavily of the *present*. They do not worry that Elena's footwear are strappy sandals made in China or that the music played on the *banduria* is a '70s pop tune rendered as *marcha*.

Cultural identity is such a difficult concept because it is never fixed. It is always in flux because it is always performed and therefore constantly being reconfigured, constantly created and, according to Peggy Phelan, forever disappearing.

Stuart Hall rejects essentialism but seems to be always pulled back to confront or dodge it in his writings on identity (Hammond 1999). Though taking an anti-essentialist view, Hall recognizes the role of an 'imaginative rediscovery' of identities in inaugurating 'the most important social movements of our time – feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist' (Hammond 1999, 4). As Hammond asserts, Hall's contribution to the debate on identity is his view of identity 'not as a hidden essence to be uncovered, but as an active process of representation or discursive construction'. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Hall explains that identity is one example of a concept that is 'under erasure'—it has to be thought about in its 'detotalized' or 'deconstructed' form in the way that Derrida has described as

‘thinking in the limit...thinking in the interval, a sort of double writing.... Identity is such a concept—operating “under erasure” in the interval between reversal and emergence; an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all’ (Hall 1996, 1-2).

Globalization further complicates the matter. As John Tomlinson puts it, ‘Globalization...has swept like a flood tide through the world’s diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven, “branded” homogenization of cultural experience, thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities’ (Tomlinson 2003, 269). Citing Manuel Castells (1997), however, Tomlinson points out that identity is not ‘the fragile flower’ trampled upon by globalization; it is instead the ‘upsurging power of local culture that offers *resistance*...to the centrifugal force of capitalist globalization’ though this resistance is ‘multi-form, disorganized and sometimes politically reactionary’ (270).

But what precisely *is* the local that ‘offers resistance’ when we speak about a formerly colonized nation such as the Philippines? For the Bicolanos and the Filipinos in general, cultural identity is a greatly vexed issue. San Juan says that ‘by grace of over 400 years of colonization, the Philippines [islands] have acquired an identity, a society and a culture, not totally of their own making’, and that we have been ‘constructed by others’ (1998, 2). What or where is the ‘local’? Is it among the indigenous peoples who, despite enormous threats, have ‘preserved’ their own manner of dress, their songs and dances, their rituals and ceremonies? Is the search for an identity more relevant for people from the lowlands, because all overt traces of the pre-colonial culture have disappeared and everything they do have, like the dotoc, can be attributed to the colonial heritage? Are we looking for

a 'pure' identity that lowland, Christian Filipinos do not have since theirs has been 'corrupted' by the colonial experience? For Nick Joaquin (2004), Filipino national artist, it is pointless and absurd to deplore the colonial heritage and insist on going back to an imagined pre-colonial self that is 'Asian'. We are who we are because of how we have responded to the challenges of history, especially to the history of colonial presence.¹⁷

So, then, what identity does the *dotoc* perform? If Bicolanos cannot even identify as 'Asian',¹⁸ are they able to identify as 'Filipino'? The term was used originally for Spaniards born in the Philippines during the colonial period and subsequently adopted by the *ilustrados* or local elite, while the Spanish called the local people 'Indios', a name that always seemed to sound as if it was spat out with a curse when said. Now, everyone who claims to be Filipino proudly answers to that name, Bicolanos included, although in truth he/she may be many other things besides, claiming more autochthonous identities rooted in the archipelago's 7100 islands and speaking any two or three or more of 171 languages. Now, there is a Filipino nation, although it is one that is still struggling to get its bearings as an 'imagined community', to use Benedict Anderson's famous concept. For E. San

¹⁷ Joaquin's trenchant discussion proceeds to say that there was nothing 'Asian' in us to begin with, except for the fact that we were in Asia, because our great, civilized Asian neighbours did not deign to share their techniques, their crafts, their religion and philosophy with us before the coming of the Europeans. This explains why we are so different from our neighbours—we were not Hindu-ized or Buddhicized, or Shintocized, and the Arabs were slow in Islamizing us; interaction with the great Asian civilizations could be said to have been so little that we did not even learn how to use chopsticks! Ironically, the process of 'Asianizing' came about as 'a twin movement of Westernization' (Joaquin 2004, 46) brought about by colonization. 'The development of the Asian in us was part of our colonial or Creole culture' (42). For only when the Spanish had gained foothold in the islands did we become attractive enough for our Asian neighbors to trade with (occasioned in large part by the Galleon Trade), to migrate to and settle in. (45).

¹⁸ Philippine scholar Marian Roces asserts that "'Asia'...is a sign of a virtual reality' and that '[it] is hardly a meaningful construct in the daily lives of most of the billions of people who live in that landmass and its fringe islands' (Roces 2006, 38-39). Lee reminds us that the identity 'Asia' was 'imposed from without'—by Europe who named Asia as the 'negative other'—and adds that the pursuit of such identity, presumably by Asians, is 'intrinsically futile at best, misleading at worst...' (Lee 2006, 3).

Juan Jr. this Filipino nation is ‘not just being imagined but constructed and shaped by the sweat, tears, and sacrifices of millions of people in myriad acts of revolt...’ (San Juan 2008, 129).

Surely imagining the nation matters, whatever the complexities that entails? Surely the shaping of a shared cultural identity becomes imperative in the forging of communities and critical in the formation of an individual’s self-concept? And surely it is significant that dotoc communities do express their practice as showing ‘who they are’?

For a poor region like Bicol, the struggle for a better life has had a huge cultural dimension. The Bicolanos can be cited as an example of what Terry Eagleton has called ‘history’s most contaminated products...bearing the most livid marks of its brutality’ (qtd in San Juan 2008, 129). Stereotyped even in history books as either *putas* (whores) if female or, if male, priests or their opposite: libidinous profligates (*mga maorag*¹⁹)...or, generally as Indios, lazy and good for nothing, the Bicolanos are marked deep in the bone. To my mind it is important, therefore, first of all, for the Bicolanos to believe in their capacity for active, positive change, as individuals and with the rest of the community with whom they share a home, a space, a place, surely a very concrete point of origin and the locus of their very being. They have to overcome or seek to erase the burden of centuries of subalternity and develop a strong sense of their own agency. They must and can construct their own creative selves. Only in doing so can they begin to also take in hand their own development and not become passive beneficiaries of trickle-down

¹⁹ *Orag*, *maorag*, or *oragon* are Bicol terms popularly understood to mean libidinal or having great sexual prowess. There has been an ongoing debate on the provenance of the term and what it meant for the ancient Bicolos due mainly to a strong contemporary movement among the educated sectors to reinvent the term. Indeed a reinvented meaning has been slowly gaining popular adherence: to say that the Bicolano, woman or man, is *oragon* is to say she/he is good, outstanding, and capable of great deeds of sacrifice and heroism.

development programs engineered by foreign Others in collusion with local comprador interests.

The discourse of community identity needs to be thought out some more, however, especially when viewed against what Lawrence Grossberg (1996, 88) calls 'models of oppression' referring to both 'the "colonial model" of oppressor and oppressed and the "transgression model" of oppression and resistance'. Grossberg urges for 'rearticulating the question of identity into a question about the possibility of constructing historical agency, and giving up notions of resistance' by a subject autonomous of established power structures. He explains that his intention is not to decry or reject 'a concept which has proved to be empowering for various subaltern populations...but to find more powerful theoretical tools which may open up more effective forms and sites of struggle' (n1, 105). He proposes to think of otherness instead of difference for difference is itself a product of the workings of power while otherness recognizes the existence of the other independent of any relations; the other is positive, just as the one is also positive. He asks where and how agency is located and suggests a logic of productivity whereby agents are engaged in relations of participation and access and can move to claim sites of activity and power. This is an alternative to the logic of individuality that stops at the individual and does not see her/him as taking part in social power that either inhibits or enhances the capacity to exercise such individual power. He advocates for a 'spatial logic' of identity as opposed to temporality, saying that place and the relations of spaces and places and the power of mobility enables agency—'subjectivity as spatial...people experience the world

from a particular position...in space rather than (or at least as much as) in time' (100).²⁰

There is another place that I can take to speak from, which in fact I have already identified at the outset: that of the postcolonial traveller. Cosmopolitics or cosmopolitanism is the name of this place of the traveller. 'Cosmopolitics is a neologism of recent invention...what a number of liberal thinkers now advocate: a freely created, cosmopolitan cultural identity based on notions of "global" citizenship...and may express itself through voluntary exile from one's homeland [or] may construe the act of travel itself as a socially emancipatory project....' (Chrisman 2003, 157). Chrisman cites Kwame Anthony Appiah as one of its 'best known proponents' with his essay 'Cosmopolitan Patriots'²¹ where he celebrates global mobility. For Appiah it is global mobility that brings about the 'freedom for self-creation...[which] lies at the heart of cosmopolitanism'.²²

In *Performance and Cosmopolitics*, Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo (2007) provide a survey of so-called 'new cosmopolitanisms' of which Appiah's is just one instance among recent works, identifying three 'conceptually overlapping' categories: moral/ethical, political, and cultural. Scholarly attention to the idea of cosmopolitanism, the authors say, has enjoyed a resurgence since the early 1990s,

²⁰ I do not see this as necessarily contradicting Conquergood's call for an ethnography that thinks time instead of space, because he means (Fabian's) coeval time. Conquergood's perspective is that of an outsider working at being an insider who shares both the time and space of the other instead of just peering in and staying out, 'like some overseer or spy'. Grossberg's view locates identity or the speaking of an identity from a place, or from places and spaces that have certain meaningful relations; to my mind, this view is that of an insider: speaking my identity from my space wherever it is or from spaces and places where I move. Notice that Grossberg does not fully privilege space over time: 'space...as much as...time'. I have always felt that they go together: one can only be fully present both in time and in space even when it is virtual time and virtual space that is at issue.

²¹ The essay appears in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds.) (1998), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

²² 'Quite tellingly,' says Chrisman, 'Appiah suggests that it is the "modern market economy that has provided the material conditions that have enabled this exploration for a larger and larger proportion of people" (p. 98)' (157). I mention this because it sounds very much like the argument that it was imperialism and colonialism that have *enabled* intellectuals like Spivak to do the work that they now do as postcolonial critics.

mainly in the United States, ‘characterized by an effort to dislodge the concept from its traditional associations with privilege and with impartiality to the demands of the local’ (4). The survey cites Rabinow’s ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ (1986), James Clifford’s ‘discrepant cosmopolitanism’ (1992), Mitchell Cohen’s ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ (1992), Benita Parry’s ‘postcolonial cosmopolitanism’ (1992), and Pnina Werbner’s ‘working-class cosmopolitanism’ (1999). Most of these concepts espouse a ‘revisionist’ and ‘new leftist politics’—ones that seek ‘middle-path alternatives between ethnocentric nationalism and particularistic multiculturalism’ and enable a ‘recuperation’ of ‘cosmopolitans from below’. Cosmopolitanism is thus ‘defined along class and racial lines and encompassing refugees, migrants and itinerant workers’ as well as ‘accounting for the recent emergence of a new meritocratic ruling class of transnationals, variously called “cosmocrats” and “technocrats”’ (4-5).²³

Among recent works, the first category: moral/ethical cosmopolitanism is described as ‘fundamentally concerned with the individual’s “loyalties to humanity as a whole”,²⁴ which entails an obligation to help fellow human beings to the best of one’s abilities’ (5). Gilbert and Lo see the major influence as coming from Immanuel Kant though the authors are wary of the Kantian universals ‘associated with Enlightenment epistemology and its attendant history of colonial

²³ Cited sources are Rabinow, P. (1986), *Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Postmodernity in Anthropology*, in ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California), 234-61; Clifford, J. (1992), *Travelling Cultures*, in ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler, *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge), 96-116; Cohen, M. (1992), *Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Thoughts on the Left, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism* in *Dissent* 39: 478-83; Parry, B. (1992), *Overlapping Territories and Intertwined Histories: Edward Said’s Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism*, in ed. Michael Sprinker, *Edward Said: A Reader* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell), 18-47; Werbner, P. (1997), *Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity*, in ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, *Debating Cultural Identity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (London: Zed Books), 1-26; and Vertovec, S. and Cohen, R. (Eds.) (2002), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

²⁴ See Harvey, D. (2000), *Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographical Evils*, in *Public Culture* 12/2: 529-64.

expansionism’ and thus define their positions in terms that ‘particularize and pluralize’ such loyalty to ‘the abstract category of the human’. Appiah’s is categorized as one of these (6).

Political cosmopolitanism, the second category, ‘is typified by efforts to establish legal and political frameworks and institutions that set forth universal rights and duties that bridge or override the conventional political structures of nation-state systems’.²⁵ The objective is ‘to regulate and optimize the conditions’ for the coming to birth of what, in the Kantian philosophy, has been called by Walter Mignolo²⁶ as ‘planetary conviviality’ (6)—where the regulations and controls happen at a transnational level, carried out by elite governance bodies like the United Nations, while a second level is made up of ‘grassroots’ groups advocating human rights, labour conditions and refugee settlements within the nation-state systems.²⁷ In this kind of cosmopolitanism, individuals have multiple allegiances, or, as Arjun Appadurai (1996)²⁸ would have it, ‘alternative forms of belonging’ that arise from transnational social relations due to globalization have superseded loyalties to a homeland or nationalism. Others like Benedict Anderson (1998), Timothy Brennan (1997), and Pheng Cheah (1998)²⁹ continue to see ‘the centrality of the nation in cosmopolitan formations’ (7).

The third category, cultural cosmopolitanism, is described as ‘an attitude or disposition characterized by openness to divergent cultural influences, *as well as a*

²⁵ See Vertovec, S. and Cohen, R. 2002, 11.

²⁶ See Mignolo, W. (2000), The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism, in *Public Culture* 12/3: 721-48.

²⁷ See Held, D. (2003), Cosmopolitanism: Globalisation Tamed? in *Review of International Studies* 29/4: 465-80 and Goodman, J. (2004), Refugee Solidarity: Dilemmas of Transnational Mobilisation in *Education Links* 68: 11-16.

²⁸ See Appadurai, A. (1996), *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

²⁹ These are Anderson, B. (1998), Nationalism, Identity, and the World-in-Motion: On the Logics of Seriality, in Cheah and Robbins, 117-33; Brennan, T. (1997), *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); and Cheah, P. (1998) in Cheah and Robbins 1998.

practice of navigating across cultural boundaries' (8, emphasis in original). Gilbert and Lo name two types of this third category: thin and thick. The thin type is a kind of shallow or 'populist' 'mix and match' fusion like those that are commonly found in the tourism industry—the cosmopolitan city offered to the tourists is not so much one inhabited by cosmopolitan subjects as 'a space occupied by an array of highly ethnicized individuals and groups whose differences are visibly embodied in physical attributes and/or particular cultural practices... [and] whose cultural specificities add variety to the urban landscape'. Associated with the thin type of cosmopolitanism are the 'exoticism and commoditization' in aesthetics that is described by Anthony D. Smith (1995)³⁰ as 'a form of naïve cosmopolitanism... characterized by pastiche and consumerism'. In any of these, there is a lack of attention to 'the hierarchies of power subtending cross-cultural engagement or the economic and material conditions that enable it' (9). In contrast, 'thick' cultural cosmopolitanism which Gilbert and Lo say is the methodology used in the book 'endeavours to locate cross-cultural encounters within relevant sociopolitical and historical contexts and reflexive interpretive frameworks'. With a postcolonial orientation, this type of cosmopolitanism professes to unveil or expose the way cosmopolitanism has figured in historical expansionism or how it has served 'imperial privilege'. It is a critical cosmopolitanism that keeps in mind that 'the terms of cross-cultural engagement are rarely free of power, but rather embedded in asymmetrical relationships dominated by the forces of commerce, imperialism and/or militarism' (10). Gilbert and Lo thus adopt Ulf Hannerz's description of cosmopolitanism 'as "an intellectual and esthetic openness toward divergent cultural practices," which generally entails sufficient reflexive cultural

³⁰ See Smith, A.D. (1995), *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity), 20.

competencies to enable manoeuvrability within new meaning systems'.³¹ They aver that 'the central contention' of their book is 'that there is, inevitably, a politics to the practice of cosmopolitanism—a *cosmopolitics* that is caught up in hybrid spaces, entangled histories and complex human corporeographies' (11, emphasis in original).

Cosmopolitics could be a place for speaking about the dotoc and its context in the Philippines, specifically if it is the 'thick' cultural cosmopolitanism that Gilbert and Lo themselves deploy in the book. It could be that 'middle path' that will avoid the extremes of relativism and essentialism and enable agency and voice to those who have been deprived of it in violent ways. But going back to Laura Chrisman's essay on Chinua Achebe's critique of cosmopolitics, I get another splash of cold water. Achebe, in Chrisman's view, completely overturns Appiah's favouring of a line from Gertrude Stein: 'I am an American and Paris is my hometown'. While this can be said by privileged people of colour just as much as by Western people, the poor who travel outside their country cannot. The class lines are clearly drawn. 'The market economy that makes freedom possible for Appiah's cosmopolitan subject does not empower Achebe's Third-World subject' (158). Only 'different slaveries: ideological and economic' await Third-World peoples who relocate to the big imperial centres like London—and that, sadly, includes people like me who travelled to study. Chrisman quotes a section from Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977, 94-95)³² that Achebe himself approvingly quotes, and which I, too, quote here because of its special relevance

³¹ See Hannerz, U. (1996), *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (Routledge), 103.

³² See Aidoo, A.A. (1977), *Our Sister Killjoy* (London: Longman).

for my project. The lines describe African students sent to London to study in the '70s:

They work hard for the
Doctorates –
They work too hard,
Giving away
Not only themselves, but
All of us –
The price is high,
My brother,
Otherwise the story is as old as empires.

Oppressed multitudes from the provinces rush to the imperial seat because that is where they know all salvation comes from. But as other imperial subjects in other times and other places have discovered, for the slave there is nothing at the centre but worse slavery (161).

What can I say? This is precisely the point I have attempted to articulate in the earlier discussion on receiving colonial education. This is also what Spivak refers to as the privilege enabled by imperialism that she negotiates and exploits or uses to the fullest for her critical work. The price is just too high....

Chrisman explains:

All of this might suggest that Achebe sees global power and ideology in strictly Manichean terms. And this is, I think, correct: he follows a Fanonian conception of anti-colonial struggle, one which is not diminished by Achebe's decision to make words rather than arms his weapon of choice. And like Fanon his goal is, ultimately, the creation of the conditions for a new and properly global humanity. *Cosmopolitics inhibits that creation by masking the inequality that structures contemporary globalisation* (161, emphasis added).

For the postcolonial intellectual, travel in the West may well be a journey to 'the belly of the beast'³³ that brings untold anguish, but it might also be just a poor excuse to pursue individual freedom and a way of being in the world. The destination of this weary traveller, therefore, must and can only be home—and (taking the cue from Badiou) to the singularity of the political act that '[counts] as

³³ 'In the belly of the beast' is how this is commonly said: for instance, see Hall 1990, 223; also see Kear 2001, 192 for a perspective different from Hall in that the speaker of the essay aptly called 'Speak Whiteness' is white.

one that which is not even counted' (Badiou 2005, 150), in this case the paradotoc and their communities. In doing so, such act cuts off the seeming infinity of the colonial experience in the imagination of the present, and makes possible the practice of freedom as exhibited in the dotoc performances.

AGAINST POSTALITY: NEOCOLONIAL SINGULARITIES

In his critique of postcolonial theory, Peter Hallward explains that postcolonial theory has moved towards gaining ground for the local, particular, and specific, a liberation from the old generalizing, constricting and death-dealing singularities, but in the process developed into its own kind of singularity (Hallward 2001a, 20). The problem, he says, lies in its postmodern premises of 'placelessness, a disembodied abstraction uncomfortably close to an ideological reflection of prevailing modes of production in the West'.

The postmodern version of fragmentation was supposed to lead...to a newly sensitive attention to context, understood as the conditions governing the 'construction of a plurality of subject positions,' multiple, specific and heterogeneous ways of life,' the rhythms of popular culture, the texture of the particular and the everyday and so on (20-21).

Critics soon realized, however, that the movement was only towards 'a new, sophisticated economy of "sameness"' that engendered 'a homogenizing pluralism' (21). Postcolonial theory has followed this same trajectory. In emphasizing ambivalence, contingency, in-betweenness, hybridity, displacement, it 'can only be read as making a still more emphatic claim to the paradoxical place of placelessness itself...' (22). This does not mean that Hallward does not see the wide cracks and divides among theorists professing a postcolonial orientation. He in fact looks both at what he terms the 'homogeneously postcolonial' (those who are associated with 'the fantasy of a powerless utopia of difference') and the

‘heterogeneously postcolonial’ (those who call for a greater emphasis on specific and particular contexts) between whom debate has raged. ‘[The] insistence on particularity, on the “ways in which the meaning of the term [postcolonial] shifts across different locations”’ (which I understand is brought into the debate by the heterogeneously postcolonial) may however be seen as ‘little more than a compensatory strategy’ (36).

Postcolonial theory as a singularity is uncomfortably coincident with another singularity: global capitalism—‘no doubt the most aggressively singularizing force the world has ever seen’ and which has succeeded in its operations more than ever before. ‘Segregation by poverty, insecurity and lack of opportunity—both internationally and intra-nationally—is probably more severe today than ever before’ (62-63). Hallward enumerates dizzyingly grim statistics of how most of the world’s peoples have been ‘peripheralised’—‘In 1999, the total income of the 582 million people in all the so-called “developing” countries (\$146 billion) amounted to just over 10 per cent of the combined wealth of the world’s 200 richest individuals (\$1,135 billion)’ (63).³⁴ At the centre of this enterprise are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, familiar culprits in the story of Filipino pauperization tied to the wars and American colonization. Hallward points to the emergence of postcolonial theory as ‘the dominant paradigm for understanding collective “struggle” over the same years that witnessed the massive and sustained asset-stripping of the third world’ and rightly asks therefore about the ‘properly political value’ of its response to this situation (64). In this light, we

³⁴ Hallward wrote this prior to 2001, before 9-11, and the second war on Iraq, and the Asian economic crisis...and so on...and the global financial crisis that started in 2008. Is it too much to hope that the situation has changed for the better?

may then also understand why there has been vehement opposition to postcolonial theory from the radical left, exemplified by Ahmad, Parry, and San Juan.

Hallward confesses to a bias for the Marxist critiques but does not spare them from criticism. The attacks against textuality which is always opposed to history is 'overblown' and Hallward thinks Spivak, for instance, may not be deserving of much of the acerbic comments thrown her way (42). The Marxist critics tend to 'lump quite distinct positions in a single basket called "theory" to which the inflated charge of textualism is supposed to apply more or less indifferently' (43). There is an equally strong tendency to be prescriptive about criteria for 'legitimate writing [or creative/artistic] work on colonized terrain' (45), suggesting 'that only *one* theory [Marxist] can have any general legitimacy' (46). These critics thus risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater, so to speak: 'reversing the only truly critical movement any general theory of human action can prescribe: the movement from specified to specific' (44). Hallward singles out Ahmad, saying the latter does not acknowledge how many of the ideas he has been attacking have come about as a rejection of the way the Marxist ideal itself has been corrupted in the course of history. He points out how a revolutionary actuality is still far from being a reality or even a coherent conception. '[E]ven a thinker so vehemently opposed to the post-Marxist trend as Alain Badiou accepts that the "age of revolutions is over"' (47).

Hallward's own proposal thus consists in this: the movement from the *specified* to the *specific* 'without yielding to the temptation of the singular' (48). The singular and the specific are 'general logics of individuation' (2) and can be understood as opposites in that the singular is non-relational—it is sufficient to and by itself (2), while the specific is relational (4). The specified is determined by a

singularity—that is, that one is specified by a singular specification. Hallward explains that the theory of the specific is a movement away from two singularities: on the one hand, nativism, or what Ahmad calls ‘cultural differentialism’; on the other hand, hybridity, contingency, or what Hallward himself calls the ‘absolutely postcolonial’. The first defines a situation in which there is no chance of any kind of substantial relation or dialogue, because cultures or individuals are so different there are no common points of possible connection between or among them; the second results in or leads to the same situation, because it is free-floating and there is no definable place from which to establish relations. Between these two, ‘there has sometimes seemed to be no real alternative position available’ (48).

The concept of the specific offers great promise for such an alternative—perhaps, at last, the ‘middle ground’ I have been insisting must exist. Hallward notes with approval the work of critics like Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, among others, where one can discern a perspective ‘to demolish notions of human behaviour as specified by an intrinsic essence (class, race, gender or nation), so as to privilege the relations that make different groups specific to each other and to the situation in which they come to exist’ (48). Hallward suggests that the contributions of thinkers like Lacan, Althusser and Foucault might be seen along this line—‘not so much [the] *elimination* of the category of the subject as its radical *de-specification*’ and as ‘nothing other than the thoroughly *contemporary* redeployment of a quite ancient philosophical insight...perfectly familiar to Plato, Spinoza or Kant—that the process of gaining freedom from determination, of learning how to think, or of becoming a subject in the true sense of the word (for these all amount to the same

thing) is always the *result* of a difficult labour of emancipation and critique' (48-49, emphasis in original).

To become specific is to become a subject, not an object—to break free of 'objectivation'—to learn how to think and 'not merely recognize or represent', to be 'capable of making your own history' (48). The key idea is 'to become' or 'becoming' which is the process itself, the process of de-specification (49). But the specific is distinct from the 'positively specified', that is, in terms of the 'objectified characteristics' (racial, sexual, cultural, physical, etcetera). 'The specific is always specific-to, in the constrained freedom opened by *a distance from (rather than absence of) the object*' (49, emphasis mine). It is to be specific to a situation but not specified by it. The specific subject is therefore not the singular Cartesian or phenomenological subject but someone who is always 'both with-others *and* against-others' and therefore a subject who '*[takes] sides*, in the most active and deliberate sense' —that is, takes, not adopts or inherits, sides (50). The orientation is not towards 'fundamental consensus' (as espoused by Habermas), or 'absorption in a third and higher term' (Hegel), or reduction to 'the status of a contingent construct awaiting imminent deconstruction' (Derrida, Bhabha, Spivak). 'The specific sustains itself *as ongoing relation*, i.e., as an ongoing taking of sides' (51, emphasis in original).

Hallward names Edward Said as the most likely theorist who can be associated with this concept of the specific, because of his militant taking of sides and position against specification: his critique of 'murderous essentialisations', the attempt 'to freeze the Other in a kind of basic objecthood or specified identity' (like Orientalism). He suggests that Said's position is 'consistent with Badiou's: [that] every political process of liberation proceeds through the evacuation or

subtraction of specifically cultural issues' (54) –consistent, that is, with the view that 'the politics of liberation must never be confused with the consolidation or affirmation of merely cultural identity' (53). This is a major point in the book: that '[t]he idea of a "cultural politics" is a disastrous confusion of spheres' (xix).

But Said's 'consistency' comes under question, when one delves into his position on the Palestinian issue, because he 'grounds [the Palestinian demand for a sovereign state] in broadly cultural terms' (54). While Said is 'out of synch' with many postcolonial critics 'in his firm dissociation of politics from culture', his position is rendered shaky by his actual engagement with the Palestinian sovereignty demand. Said proves to be as 'vulnerable' as Spivak, and his response to such vulnerability is to detach himself and take the position of the Deleuzian nomad, the migrant, the place of no-placeness: 'There is no such thing as partial independence or limited autonomy. You are either politically independent or you are not' (55)—but also: 'I certainly believe in self-determination, so if people want to do that they should be able to do it: but I myself don't see any need to participate in it' (57).

FIDELITY AND THE POLITICS OF THE SITUATION

The search for a cultural politics with which to make sense of the dotoc as social and cultural practice may be futile. For Hallward, drawing on Badiou, there is no point to mixing or confusing culture with politics and vice versa. Claims of cultural particularity, while necessary especially in the context of colonial experience, can only be considered as having a 'syndical status' or being a desire to belong or be integrated in an existing order, or, at most, a 'turning upside down' of categories that were named or established by the oppressors in the first place

(Badiou 2001, 109). By this reckoning, to say that the dotoc is a performance of cultural identity is problematic. To say that it is a political act requires careful elucidation because it is potentially scandalous for the dotoc practitioners. I can only speak of specific sites or specific communities and even then must keep close to specific encounters. That is what *anduyog* as co-performance requires. Anything else is potentially ‘rude’.

I have in mind Alain Badiou’s injunction to be faithful to the event, which I find as strikingly congruent to Conquergood’s co-performative ethnographic practice. Co-performance surely requires that I locate myself in the situation of the dotoc and be attentive to its logics. I also heed Geraldine Harris’s disturbing thought about her writing on a production by Quarantine and Company Fierce (2008)—that ‘*[it] seemed rude, as in impolite, to Susan and Darren (the performers whose names are used in the title of the show)*’ for her to analyse the performance using her ‘usual’ categories of race, sexuality, gender, age, and class, or in relation to the politics of identity (Harris 2008, 4, emphasis added). Instead, she ends up writing about her self-reflexive experience of the performance, referencing Rancière and Badiou, and including a running counterpoint of ‘corrections’ by Quarantine about her observations of details of the performance. Writing about ‘the appearance of authenticity’, she concludes that the show’s apparent authenticity comes ‘paradoxically’ from its ‘focus on surface, “show” or appearances (the spectacle itself [!]) rather than what is “behind” them...’ (14). It may well be that I have nothing else to go by but the *appearances* of the dotoc as I *encountered* them and the challenge is how to stay *faithful* to those encounters.³⁵

³⁵ The italicized terms are all drawn from and elaborated in Badiou’s philosophy, which I take up in the subsequent parts.

Badiou's separation of culture and politics is a key idea in his philosophy that posits a mathematical ontology and an 'ethic of truths'. After knowing about all the objections to the existence of universals, and the haunting angst of writers mired in epistemological predicaments, one gets a refreshing knock in the head reading Badiou. As Eagleton observes, 'scarcely any other moral thinker of our day is as politically clear-sighted and courageously polemical [as Badiou], so prepared to put notions of truth and universality back on the agenda...' (Eagleton 2001, 160).

I have to admit that in my thinking of the dotoc I search for the universal—or the 'universalizable'—but with a wariness ingrained by all the attacks against totalisms and swayed to a certain degree by the postcolonial critic's refusal of neat and conclusive explanations. Heeding Stuart Hall, I wish to 'make a bet on saying something', but, yes, contra-Hall, it *is* a 'bet on truth'. Hallward points a way forward with his theory of the specific, but Badiou provides me with a pivot that changes the entire journey. I find that Hallward's call to be specific to a situation finds its full elaboration in Badiou's concept of being-in-a-situation, a being-there that is always experienced *locally*, that is, the way that it appears at a site—'All being is a being-there; this is the essence of appearance. Appearance is the site, the "there" of being-multiple when the latter is thought in its being' (Badiou 2006, 175). It is therefore through Badiou's philosophy that I approach this 'betting on truth', because it provides the theoretical tools with which I can co-performatively write an ethnography of the dotoc, that is, paying due attention to its truth/s. It is in fact only in the 'seizing of a truth' that one becomes a subject and not just a human animal or a victim of oppressions. And so there is hope that indeed Spivak's poorest woman of the South who could be a paradotoc in Baao can think and speak

the truth and be sustained by her fidelity to it. Have I not said in the introduction that the paradotoc is *not* a wailing victim? Is it any wonder that her speaking in the specific instance of the dotoc is celebratory and occasioned by feasting and revelry?

My first difficulty with Badiou's thought, however, is the very foundation of his philosophy: the idea that 'there is no Whole' or that 'the One does not exist'. Badiou is not only an atheist, but one who strongly professes why he is not with his philosophy. It is paradoxical that I should find in his thought a way to sift through my research 'data' and find the kernel of truth about a tradition of worship that proclaims an abiding belief in God. But my task is not really to make the same proclamation or to affirm the paradotoc's belief—that is beside the point; it is, rather, to make my own declarations about my encounters of the dotoc and the communities who persist in its continuation. One of Badiou's powerful figures of the faithful militant of truth is Saint Paul—proof that this thoroughly secular thinking can be deployed in thinking religion, faith in the divine and its practice and does in fact passionately announce that we can think truths, that truth exists. Nevertheless, such rejection of the idea of God and the 'sacralisation' of any name—even that of Nation—proved to be the very first obstacles to an understanding of a Badiourian framework for this thesis.

Brassier and Toscano (2006, 262-263) describe Badiou's thought as 'axiomatic-theorematic' and an 'aleatory rationalism' that does not rest on some 'putative sovereignty' like 'God' or 'the Whole'—'it is always a decision on an undecidable'.

Mallarme states: 'All thought begets a throw of the dice.' It seems to me that this enigmatic formula also designates philosophy, because philosophy proposes to think of the universal—that which is true for all thinking—yet it does so *on the basis of a commitment* in which chance always plays a

role, *a commitment which is also a risk or a wager* (Badiou qtd by Brassier and Toscano 2006, 260, emphasis added).

A risk, a wager—as Hall puts it: ‘a bet’ on speaking. It may well be that Hall’s kind of ‘strategic essentialism’ or the more famous one of Spivak are gestures towards this risk, except that they clearly decide not to take the plunge; there is no *commitment*. Of course, both Hall’s and Spivak’s positions can be considered as being on the opposite shore of the contemporary philosophical divide, the side of ‘sophistry’ as Badiou calls it: the postmodern position that there is no truth, just discourse or language games (Badiou 1992, 116-124). We also know that if strategic essentialism is a gesture towards the universal it is one that is tied to identitarian discourses and therefore does not, in its basic intent and operation, cohere with Badiou’s thinking.

For Badiou, there is no God, no Whole or One from which (we traditionally think) we came and would return, or that encompasses totality. Existence is ‘a decision of thought’ (Badiou 2006, 185) and, since the Whole or Totality or the idea of a being that enfolds all (God) is not thinkable, therefore it cannot be thought to exist. This is not to say that beings cannot exist outside of thought; there is a Real, but this real is multiple, and it is for this reason that it can be thought. ‘What there is exposes itself to the thinkable in terms of multiples of multiples’—multiplicities which are ‘radically without-oneness’ (2006, 47) and, thereby, inconsistent multiplicities, but, also, generic multiplicities devoid of any predicates (of race, gender, or class or even by a hybrid postcoloniality). Badiou provides a clear explanation for his ‘decision’ in *Theoretical Writings*: ‘[A]t the core of my thinking lies a rational denial of finitude, and the conviction that thinking, our thinking, is essentially tied to the infinite’ (2006, xvi). Positing that ‘the One exists’ would constitute an acceptance of finitude and therefore of the idea, to be

found in Heidegger, that being is always a 'being-for-death'. Badiou's thought is a 'resistance' to the 'normative power of the one', a 'subtraction from it' (2006, 42).

For Badiou, the human person is capable of being an 'Immortal', defined as one who rises above an animal nature and becomes capable of a 'stubborn determination to remain what he (sic) is—that is to say, precisely something other than a victim, other than a being-for-death, and thus: *something other than a mortal being*' (Badiou 2001, 11-12, emphasis in original). Such is how the human becomes a subject, the process of 'subjectivation', which is 'what makes Man' (sic). But this process is set on course only when the human, as animal species capable of being immortal, is struck by a truth and becomes and remains faithful and committed to that truth—a truth that is recognizable as such by everyone else and is therefore universal. Badiou calls this process a 'truth-procedure' whereby, in a specific *situation*, an *event* happens at the site of the *void of the situation*, that changes the situation and makes visible what used to be void or invisible, or makes what used to be uncounted count for something in the situation. The *ethic of truths* that makes the subject of the situation is the subject's fidelity to this truth that is inaugurated by this event. *Truths* for Badiou is plural for there is not just one truth, but possibly as many as there are subjects. Badiou's concept of truth is 'compatible' with the idea of being as 'irreducible multiplicity': 'A truth can only be the singular production of a multiple' (Badiou 1992, 104). To unravel this complex statement, let me use another quote:

Given a multiple..., how can the being of what makes truth of such a multiple be thought? That is the crux of the matter. Inasmuch as the unfathomable depths of what is present is inconsistency, a truth will be that which, from inside the presented, as part of this presented, makes the inconsistency...come into the light of day (1992, 106).

The truth is *immanent* to the multiple, which means that it is part of the multiple but is or ‘will have been indiscernible’ prior to its appearing (106). That it sheds light on the inconsistency means only that there is consistency in the situation in which the truth comes out, a consistency wrought by knowledge, and it is this consistency—this knowledge—that is pierced by the truth. However, ‘every truth is always post-eventful’ (107) or it is grasped only by the ‘subtractive’³⁶ operation of singular procedures, ‘truth-procedures’, in which an *event* happens that sets on course the production of the truth.

The subtractive operations whereby philosophy grasps truths ‘outside of sense’ fall under four modalities: the undecidable, which relates to the event (a truth is not, it comes forth [*advient*]); the indiscernible, which relates to freedom (the trajectory of a truth is not constrained but hazardous); the generic, which relates to being (the being of a truth is made of an infinite set that is subtracted from knowledge predicates); and the unnameable, which relates to the Good (forcing the naming of an unnameable engenders disaster) (2008, 24; 1992, 143).

There are only four truth-procedures: science, art, love, and politics and Badiou calls these the ‘conditions of philosophy’, that is to say: the conditions of thought that operate to produce truths, and he maintains that these conditions are (and should be) ‘compossible *in the eventful form prescribing the truths of the time*’ (61, emphasis in original).³⁷

My engagement with Badiou, in truth, is limited. This thesis does not aspire to be an exegetical work on his philosophy, but rather attempts to navigate a route

³⁶ Why subtractive? Badiou explains that it is because the production of truths ‘makes holes in sense’ (Badiou 2008, 24). In *Manifesto*, the line reads: ‘Philosophy is subtractive in that it makes a hole in sense, or makes an interruption in the circulation of sense, for truths to all be said together’ (1992, 142). This is the same translation that appears in *Conditions* (2008) but is obviously somewhat modified.

³⁷ A ‘blockage’ of such ‘compossibility’ would lead to a ‘suppression’ of thought or a ‘suspension’ of philosophy, thereby hindering it from being able to declare truths in the way that it should. Such a situation of blockage comes about when philosophy is ‘sutured’ to any one of the four conditions, that is to say its function is ‘delegated’ to just one of the four, for instance to science during the nineteenth century, engendering positivism, or to the political like what happened with classical Marxism. See ‘Sutures’ in Badiou 1992, 61-67.

towards an ethics of practice in performance research that his ideas and the critical response to those ideas bring to light. Specifically, struck by the impact of Badiou's philosophy, I am thinking the dotoc vis-à-vis some of the major issues in Badiou:

1. The dotoc as fidelity to an event: What has kept it going all these years and why? Can we speak of the dotoc as a post-evental act? What is the event in the dotoc? Or what could be gained to think of the dotoc itself as event?
2. The burden of history and its undoing: Why was a colonial imposition embraced by the colonized? What traces remain of such a history and how are these traces manifest and active in the present? Can we speak of a practice that is entirely cut off from its historical beginnings and thus of *situations* of practice which are totally shorn of history? What would be the value of such an inquiry?
3. The dotoc as appearance and its 'world': What constitute appearance and which elements have maximal or minimal intensities? If as performed event the dotoc consists in the repetition year in and year out of the same texts, the same enactments and musics and costumes, even the same dishes served in the feasts, what constitute *interruptions* that momentarily stop the endless cycle and bring forth a new element? How small or big or how extended can the dotoc 'world' be conceived? When does the local spill over to embrace or become the global?
4. Identity and difference: Can it be said of the dotoc that its time of 'turning things upside down' (see below) in a post- and neocolonial situation is not over yet? Can we say of its appearances that they constitute an identity or identities that can be and are asserted vis-à-vis an 'other'? Who are the 'others'? Are these questions necessary?
5. Truth, knowledge and the state of the situation in the dotoc: What would constitute opinion/knowledge and what, truth? How is knowledge circulation authorized and sustained? What truth procedures operate and how do these contest, undermine or shatter such authority? Do these procedures make space for the coming into visibility and speaking of the weak, the subaltern?

The answers to the foregoing are explored and tested in the succeeding chapters. The questions are more of prompts, however, stimuli to thinking, and are difficult to answer categorically. Before attempting any sort of answer, in the remaining parts of this section I first grapple with the complexity of Badiou's thought and the way it has been received by performance scholars, who have raised

some major critical issues. It will have been obvious in the foregoing parts that, however limited, I engage with the major themes in Badiou's philosophy: being, truth, and the subject, but focus on his ontology and ethics.

Let me begin with ethics, for that is my primary concern in professing an ethnographic co-performance. In the book *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (2001), Badiou explains that the usual conception of a general ethics is false, because there cannot be such an ethics in general, only an ethic of truths in the plural. The currency and following of a 'general ethics' can be seen in the belief in human rights and parliamentary democracy that, for Badiou, serves the interests of global capitalism in the name of which atrocious crimes can be/are in fact justified, such as the invasion of countries deemed as 'human rights violators' and/or 'authoritarian' by the criteria of the vanguards of 'democracy' and 'human rights' (as the U.S. likes to call itself, for instance). Ethics is based on economic necessity as an a priori good and 'accepts the play of necessity as the objective basis for all judgments of value' (32). Ethics is nihilistic, positing Evil as existing a priori and Good as the prevention of or intervention against Evil and thus as derived from Evil, thereby consigning the human to the status of victim, a 'being-for-death'. With the reign of such an ethics, reality is described by Badiou as 'characterized...by the unrestrained pursuit of self-interest, the disappearance or extreme fragility of emancipatory politics, the multiplication of "ethnic" conflicts, and the universality of unbridled competition' (10), all of which, one may say, becomes healthy ground for the further thriving and justification of what nurtures such 'evils' in the first place: capital and the belief in an equality for all that does not exist. This brings us to Badiou's rejection of ideas that valorise 'the Other' and promote the co-existence or toleration of differences. For Badiou, what exists as

inevitable fact is difference or the differences between singular entities. One should work not towards the preservation of such differences between the One and the Other but for ‘recognizing the Same’ (25). Hallward quotes from Badiou’s *L’Etre et l’événement* (1988): ‘All ethical predication based on recognition of the other should be purely and simply abandoned’ and explains that the ‘level of legitimacy’ of all statements, the ‘ought-to-be’, can only be that which is indifferent to differences: ‘Differences *are*; the Same is what may *come to be* through the disciplined adherence to a universal truth’ (Hallward 2001b, xv, emphasis in original). Badiou denounces contemporary calls to respect differences as a mask for ‘the final imperative of a conquering civilization’, whose advocates are really ‘horrified by any vigorously sustained difference’ and whose condition for the bestowing of ‘respect for difference’ is to become like they! –indeed the ultimate mark of conquest (Badiou 2001, 24-25).

Surely the concept and practice of *anduyog* as total unity with the other cancels out the one and the other precisely in recognition of the same. In Bicol, there is recognition of the two (one and other) as basically singular but multiple, which is my understanding of Badiou’s ‘Same’—this is shown by the words used for fellow or colleague designated by the prefix *ka*: *kahimanwa* (of the same *banwa* or town/city); *kabarangay* (of the same *barangay* or village); *kaiba* (companion, where *ka* is grafted to *iba* which means ‘other’).

Badiou does not mean that people are the same or that he is advocating for uniformity. Differences exist for the very reason that every singular being is a being-there; that it is thinkable only as situated, as appearance in the way that it appears. But being-there is not the same as being itself, as ‘being qua being’, and this is the first mark of difference—‘it is different from itself’. The second mark of

difference is that between this being and ‘other beings from the same world’. Saying that both are ontologically the Same (being qua being) does not abolish differentiation. In other words, ‘worldly’ beings or *beings*-there, even when they, ‘in an identical manner, are of the same world’, differ in being of that world: ‘differences (and identities) in appearance are a question of more or less (or varying intensities)’ (Badiou 2006, 202) and ‘if [a being] differs from an other, even if only by a single element among an infinity of others, it differs absolutely.... This is to say that the ontological determination of beings and the logic of being-there (of being in situation, or of appearing-in-a-world) are profoundly distinct’ (203). The same applies to ‘sexuation’ or differences between male and female, or the masculine and feminine that Badiou recognizes as existent and which, in fact, in situations of love, become the ground of truth. Badiou calls this a truth of the disjunction of the sexes.³⁸

In contrast to a general ethics, an ethic of truths pays attention to concrete, particular situations. ‘It is the principle that enables the continuation of a truth-process..., *that which lends consistency to the presence of some-one in the composition of a subject induced by the process of this truth*’ (44, emphasis in original). The ‘some-one’ here is the particular being, *this* body of the animal species, who is ‘seized’ by a truth of the particular situation he/she is in and becomes faithful to that truth, assuming that an event has occurred that breaks or ‘ruptures’ the state of the situation. Badiou calls this way of being seized by a truth as equivalent to the Christian idea of *grace* and admits to the possibility of something that exceeds human understanding, such as the divine: ‘If every grace is a divine gift, we cannot absolutely avoid the idea of an ultimate, divine calculation,

³⁸ Badiou provides a riveting discussion of love as truth procedure and its implications for sexuated difference/s in *Conditions* (2008, 179-198).

even if that calculation exceeds our understanding' (122). Badiou's grace is 'laicized grace', however, and therefore different from the religious conception of the term—

Fundamentally, what I call laicized grace describes the fact that, in so far as we are given a chance of truth, a chance of being a little bit more than living individuals, pursuing our ordinary interests, this chance is always given to us through an event. This eventual giving, based absolutely on chance, and beyond any principle of the management or calculation of existence—why not call it grace? Simply, it is a grace that requires no all-powerful, no divine transcendence (123).

It is instructive for my reflections on the dotoc, nevertheless, that one prime example that Badiou uses is Saint Paul, a classic case of the experience of Christian grace. In Saint Paul one sees *a fidelity to a fidelity*—the truth-process being itself a fidelity (47). The 'becoming of a truth' and indeed the process of subjectivation *exceeds one's understanding*, and that a truth always only becomes after the fact of one's having been struck by it through 'a pure event'—that in the case of Paul was Christ's resurrection. It is not planned or pre-conceived. And once seized by such a truth, one is capable of remaining faithful to it.

Subjective consistency to a truth can be described by the injunction 'Keep going!' (from Lacan's 'do not give up on your desire' [*ne pas céder sur son désir*]³⁹) and ethical consistency can be seen as 'disinterested-interest', because the subject does not pursue the fidelity for self-interest. Instead, the subject 'exceeds' him/herself, 'has poured out [all his/her capacity for interest] in the consequences

³⁹ Lacan is identified as 'the major and immediate inspiration for Badiou's ethics', specifically on the idea of desire in relation to the real and the persistence of this desire articulated in the phrase 'Keep going' (Hallward 2001b, xvi). Nevertheless, there is a vital difference between Lacan and Badiou: Lacan is 'anti-philosophical' while Badiou is not, and such difference stems from their opposing views of the 'abject'. As Hallward puts it, 'confrontation with Lacan's Real...amounts to an experience of the abject, inarticulable realm of the *corpse* as such' (xviii), while Badiou has 'subtracted the operation of truth from any redemption of the abject [and is] a matter of absolute *indifference*' (xix). In the appendix of *Ethics*, Badiou acknowledges his 'debt' to Lacan. He explains that it is precisely Lacan's idea of the real as the point of impossibility that makes a situation thinkable, 'according to its real' (121) and that Lacan's declared anti-philosophical stance made him think that 'philosophy should always think as closely as possible to anti-philosophy' (122).

of what he/she is committed to'. The subjects of a truth can thus be considered as the militants of the cause they believe in; fidelity to a fidelity can be combative and militant.

In *Saint Paul* (2003), Badiou presents Paul as a militant *par excellence*. He is Badiou's illustration or extended example of all that he says in his philosophical writings: of being, of truth, and the subject. It is in reading *Saint Paul* that I understood why Badiou insists that truth is for all, that as universal singularity it is addressed to all and can be accessed by anyone, be he/she Greek or Jew, Christian or Gentile, slave or citizen, and that predication limits and excludes and thus shatters or negates universality. *Paul* thus provides me with a model to think the dotoc as fidelity and ground *my* political take on it in the situations within which I encountered it. The connections are uncannily strong: Paul was always outside the 'law' or authority—he was never part of the anointed group, the twelve apostles and their immediate circle of friends who formed the core of the early Christian church; the dotoc has also largely been a secular undertaking, outside the church's initiative or program, and it is 'of the masses', that is to say, not that the elite do not participate in it but that it is outside of what is considered as 'refined' preoccupations or 'high' culture. Paul was focused on only one thing: the event of Christ's resurrection and he believed in its singular truth outside of what can be considered its history: Jesus' life and works—as Badiou puts it, Paul's was 'a discourse without proof, without miracles, without convincing signs' (Badiou 2003, 53); the dotoc is *pagsa-Dios*, an act of faith—everything else is mere detail subordinated to this one truth. Beyond these immediate striking links between Paul and the dotoc, other ideas in Badiou's writing on Saint Paul resonate powerfully or else present further challenges to thinking about the dotoc and the Bicolanos' lived

experience and practice of Catholicism: Paul's texts as 'interventions' (31); Paul's 'militant discourse of weakness' (53); the 'antidialectic of death and resurrection' where death is not negated by resurrection but is its affirmative ground (73); the opposition of law and grace and grace as *kharisma* or gift (75-85); the linking of love and faith and love as 'universal power' (86-92); hope as the 'subjectivity of a victorious fidelity' (95).

On reading *Saint Paul*, I obtained affirmation of many of my initial declarations about the dotoc: for instance, that the dotoc is a song of triumph sung in hope. But my struggle with methodology has not suddenly ended. Some of the snags become evident on close reading of my list of questions and these have to do with cultural-political issues or with the dotoc and the political: identity and nationalism, indigeneity, community, the local versus the global. The snags are real and potentially fatal. I grapple with the 'evils'.

For Badiou, the very nature of the truth-process makes possible the existence of evil. For the militant of a truth can surrender to the pressures of self-interest, or start thinking that such truth is total, or it might happen that he/she has all along been subject of what appears only as truth but is not in reality. The evils that Badiou names as deriving from the Good of the truth-process—the 'underside' of the existence of these very truths (Badiou 2001, 91)—are *Betrayal*, the *Simulacrum*, and *Disaster*. First, for whatever reason, but generally when 'disinterested-interest' turns to be the ordinary interest of the human animal, the subject of a truth may give up and thus *betray* the fidelity. Second, a false event may appear as a pure event; it is thus a *simulacrum* that has all the signs of a true event—that 'mimics an actual truth-process' (75)—and may gain a big following. Badiou cites as an example of this evil Nazism and, by extension, what he

describes as the adherence to a ‘closed set, the substance of a situation, the community’—

Every invocation of blood and soil, of race, of custom, of community, works directly against truths; and it is this very collection that is named as the enemy in the ethic of truths (76).

Nationalism and the assertion of a Bicol identity for the dotoc, by this reckoning, is therefore a form of evil, a simulacrum, and is anathema to the ethic of truths. Fidelity to such a simulacrum is a form of *terror* (77). The third form of evil manifests when the subject begins thinking that what he/she believes is capable of explaining *everything* that, for Badiou, is not possible: there is always something that exceeds any explanation, that cannot be named—the Unnameable. *Disaster* arises when the subject assumes ‘the *total* power of a truth’—‘to name the whole of the real, and thus to change the world’ (83). For Badiou, the subject language is always limited and thus incapable of such a total power of naming. ‘Every attempt to impose the total power of a truth ruins that truth’s very foundation’ (84). Badiou suggests that such is the explanation ‘why Nietzsche went mad’ or why the Chinese Red Guards of the Maoist revolution, ‘after inflicting immense harm, were imprisoned or shot, or betrayed by their own fidelity,’ or why the Romantics ‘were to see their “literary absolutes” engender monsters in the form of “aestheticised politics”’ (84).

That said, I come face to face with perhaps the most difficult challenge presented by Badiou’s thought to performance studies: the separation of aesthetics and politics, because mixing the two can only lead to bad art or to an ineffective or meaningless politics. How then explain the work and commitment of many artists to a political cause?

Janelle Reinelt (2004) points out that Badiou strikes against the very idea of political theatre and that there are many incompatibilities between Badiou's view of art and the investments theatre artists have made and pursued, ones that cannot be readily bridged or eliminated. First of all, she objects to the use of terms like 'universal' and 'truth', which can mask or cover up limitations and exclusions, and whose 'historical legacy' is 'precisely a narrow, Western, Europeanized, white and male notion of "Great Art",' one *they* cannot easily overlook: '*For many of us, nevermore will theatre be confused with the universal. If Badiou insists, we will resist*' (Reinelt 2004, 87, emphasis added). She also voices in an almost scandalized tone an objection to Badiou's thesis that art proceeds as a 'progressive purification of [an impure form]' (Badiou 2004, 86). 'They' (or people committed to political theatre) 'have fought too long to acknowledge the body, the impure, the always concrete gestures of performers *en situ*. The theatre is always particular, always for the moment, always embodied, always corrupt. This is its strength as well as its weakness' (Reinelt 2004, 88).

There is value in seeing theatre as an *event* in Badiou's terms, however, and seeing the possibilities for artists and spectators to be struck by an *evental* happening, by a 'laicized grace' that does not always happen but can and does, if only rarely, and for them to then have a fidelity to the truth event. While Reinelt objects to Badiou's theses on contemporary art and to some of his fundamental principles, she explores how 'theatre performances take place in a Situation' and how, therefore, 'to the extent that these performances are performative (in an Austinian sense), they are potential Events that can lead to Truth Processes and constitute Subjects' (88). (Clearly this gesture is in keeping with what she suggests is the fidelity of 'those committed to a political project...to be vigilant and ready in

order not to miss the opportunity that could turn into a larger intervention’ (92). Badiou’s philosophy provides such an opportunity.) Reinelt then concludes that ‘a theatrical event [can be treated] as a hybrid of politics and art’ and that *evental* performances ‘demonstrate radical fraternity and give rise to novel presentations of reality’ (89). Here, Reinelt once again comes up against Badiou’s warnings concerning the idea of ‘community’ (however ‘radical’) and asks, quoting Herbert Blau, if indeed the idea of theatre as a community or as building community is not its very ‘primary illusion’.

Reinelt points out that the theatrical event’s ephemerality cannot possibly bind people who are of various radical orientations, however ‘aligned’ they may be ‘in terms of culture, values, and/or “good intentions”’. Badiou’s view is that radical fraternity does not represent itself: ‘...a political sequence, or an artistic creation seized in the violence of its gesture, can in no way be represented’ and ‘only “moments” of fraternity truly exist’ (Reinelt 2004 quoting Badiou, 90).⁴⁰ The key idea therefore is the quick passing away of its existence, one that the subject grasps and decides to hold on to beyond its passing, ‘never [forgetting] what [he/she has] encountered’. It is through understanding this that one understands Badiou’s ‘insistence on the primacy of the will in constructing time’ or the idea that ‘the real of time’ is constructed and that the ‘construction depends on the care taken in becoming the agent of the procedures of truth’ (Reinelt 2004 quoting Badiou, 90). After presenting an example (the Dixie Chicks), Reinelt proceeds to her conclusion calling for going beyond Badiou’s examples of ‘huge historical events’ and ‘geniuses’ and applying Badiou’s thought ‘to everyone—in the name of the

⁴⁰ I find here a resonance of Turner’s *communitas* that can also be described in Badiou’s terms as a form of ‘radical fraternity’ and which Turner describes as temporary—‘spontaneous communitas’ becomes ‘ideological communitas’ the moment it begins to be claimed as continuing beyond the moment of its appearance and short existence (Turner 1982, 48).

Universal address which he himself desires'. She avers 'that the artistic or political act will in fact be "the expression of a particularity", but that its truth is addressed to everyone' (94).

Alan Filewod (2004) mounts an objection similar to Reinelt's against the idea of purity and abstraction, saying that the field of the particular, of popular and politically interventionist theatre, is precisely the field of postcolonial cultural practice and it is a practice that 'refuses the universal and the abstract, and which critiques the universal as another manifestation of the pure' (Filewod 2004, 97). But as most of this chapter shows, the concept of a postcolonial cultural politics is problematic. The postcolonial is a no-place, as Hallward suggests, and one cannot launch a genuinely political action in or from such placelessness. My positing of a postcolonial analysis would be absolutely external to or *out-of-place* in any engagement I have had or could possibly have with practitioners of the dotoc. It will constitute not just 'rudeness' towards the paradotoc, but possibly a betrayal of my co-performative commitment. If, by chance, I begin to sound 'postcolonial' then it would only be due to the fact that my sites of engagement and the stories of the dotoc communities in those sites are indeed enmeshed in the history of colonialism and imperialism and the ways that people have thought and acted through, around, or against such situations—including 'turning things upside down'—

[T]he moment of turning things upside down is inevitable. And obviously, for example, the questions of language, of history, of national singularity, are genuinely political questions for countries which are struggling against a colonizer, or countries which have recently emerged from colonization. But we have to recognize that they are ultimately political only because the historical movement for popular and national liberation against imperialism carried a certain universality (Badiou 2001, 111).

What is difficult is that Badiou is unremittingly thorough in thrusting back into active circulation what the postmodern critics have sent to the death chambers and which, like ghosts, have remained to haunt us. Badiou's aesthetics incarnates them in full polemical glory: not just the 'universal' but the 'pure' and the 'abstract'. The message is bombastic: it is an either/or choice. There is no space for compromise. So, yes, I share the question about what he means by 'non-imperial art [as] necessarily abstract art' (Badiou 2004, 86). Non-figurative? Non-representational? Or does he mean simply what he says: that 'it abstracts itself from all particularity and formalizes this gesture of abstraction'? It becomes abstract *form* by abstracting from all particularity, but not 'abstract art' as form in its technical sense, for instance in the sense of being that genre of abstract art in the visual arts? If this were the case, it would be too prescriptive, too esoteric and exclusionist and, in a sense, imperial.

As explained by Adrian Kear (2004, 99), however, we must see in Badiou's aesthetics how theatre is able to be or 'to facilitate' the 'interruption' or disruption of the state of the situation that theatre inevitably *is* to begin with. And it is 'Theatre with a capital "T"' that makes visible that which is repressed or excluded in the situation—'rendering "in-existence" visible' (100). This happens, however, not by putting together art and politics (as manifested by 'politically motivated dramatic agendas'), but by 'an opening out of the domain of *ethics*' since it is ethics (that is, the 'ethic of truths') that guides all practical activity (100). Kear observes that Badiou's ethic of truths is a relentless 'ethics of making' because it brings about the new by its 'thoroughly disinterested labour of production'. Thinking about theatre in this way—theatre as an ethic of making—reveals theatre as an 'event of thought' (in the sense of Badiou's *event*) capable of piercing 'holes

in knowledge' and thus becoming an 'ethic of interruption' (in the sense of Walter Benjamin's 'interruptive moment that reveals the dialectic at a standstill'). What is interrupted is the state of the situation as it is represented/or the state of theatre as representation. What interrupts is the act of theatre or theatre that 'thinks its own ideas' or performance that 'delinks' presentation from representation. The result is a severing of theatre's ties to the State and the exposure of the gap between representation and reality that the state of the situation (or what is known in another terminology as ideology) masks. The result is the emergence of a truth and time stopping: '[t]he act of artistic creation is...to be understood as the material incarnation of temporal suspension—time's interruption—that also brings about eternity's instantiation' (104). Theatre or performance as such thereby acts as the supplementation to, the evental experience of, theatre as representation. And as with the event, this comes about on pure chance. As Kear explains, 'it retains...the element of haphazardness as its "evental" supplement and conditions creativity as effective fidelity to the very logic of the chance occurrence it seeks to sustain, elaborate and partially regulate' (102). And in its haphazardness, the performance becomes a 'vehicle for re-acquainting us with the "void" of the situation' (103). A theatrical practice that is faithful to Theatre as *event* is therefore one that Kear describes as 'a principled amateurism suitably disarticulated from the inertia of the self-reproducing "profession" and its salaried cynicism' (105-106).

Further objections to and affirmations of Badiou's thought are worth citing here. Hallward's are one of these. In his translator's introduction of *Ethics*, Hallward suggests that Badiou's description of the Situation as '*immeasurably* infinite multiplicities (and thus as bundles of pure and immeasurable "differences")' is not sufficient and therefore cannot account for the specificity of

situations; it is too simplistic and reductive and one is left only with ‘generic human stuff’ (Hallward 2001b, xxxii, emphasis in original). Hallward also asks how one can distinguish between the subjective process of a truth procedure and mere ‘ideological opposition’—in other words, how can one tell if it is a genuine subjective experience of a truth? And can there be a way to inaugurate the emancipatory project in terms that are more *relational*, rather than in terms of ‘*rupture* and *soustraction*’? ‘If every subject is a “subject given over to the anguish of non-relation,” might the relations at work in the very process of *dé-liaison* itself be accounted for in a philosophy orientated to the *constitutively situated* dimension of all being?’ (xxxiv-xxxv, emphasis in original). Badiou, in Hallward’s view, lacks an explanation for the relational quality of human transactions; it is not enough to profess a relation of non-relation and leave it at that.

Hallward’s critique holds even with Badiou’s revision of his ontology in a later work, *Logics of Worlds* (*Logiques des mondes. L’Etre et l’évènement*, vol. 2, Paris 2006), where he extends his theory of being to include phenomenology and logic, talking now not just about *being* but its *appearing* in a world. Badiou now recognizes that any ‘being’ is a ‘being-there’: ‘[A]ny being always *is* in a specific location. The process whereby a being comes to be located “there” or “somewhere” is one that Badiou equates with the “appearing” or “existence” of that being’ (Hallward 2008, 104). A being comes to be part of a particular ‘world’, according to the intensity or degree with which it appears to have the properties identified as belonging to that world. ‘Something *is* if it belongs to a situation, but it *exists* (in a world that manifests something of that situation) always more or less, depending on how intensely or distinctively it appears in that world’ (109). But *to exist* is not the same as *to live*, for to live entails an entirely different process:

among others, it is ‘to commit oneself to the disruptive implications of an event which allows that which has hitherto “inexisted” as minimally apparent to appear instead as maximally intense’ (109). The event is still that which changes the quality or intensity of appearing. ‘Roughly speaking, an event triggers a process whereby what once appeared as nothing comes to appear as everything—the process whereby, paradigmatically, the wretched of the earth might come to inherit it’ (106). On the basis of this, Hallward observes that in *Logics*, Badiou seems ‘to be more willing to accept that the critical analysis of ideology and hegemony may have something to contribute to the pursuit of justice or equality’ (107).

The problem is that Badiou is not any closer to explaining what comes between a being and its appearance—its mediation, in materialist terms (119). What other philosophers might explain in any number of ways Badiou ‘[consigns] to contingency’. He invokes, instead, a pure ‘postulate of materialism’ that assumes how ‘specific ontological elements of a world’ are correlated to the objects that appear in that world in a ‘range of existential intensities’ (113). The explanation is thus even more abstract and reductive and it is hard to see how the theory is materialist and ‘objective’. As Hallward comments, ‘[t]he upshot is that “inappearance” comes to serve as a de facto criterion of commitment and truth. In a world structured by compromise and betrayal, Badiou’s motto has in effect become: trust only in what you cannot see’ (121).

One is inexorably thrust back to the implications of Badiou’s philosophy on theatre and performance practice. As Kear (2008a, 1) points out in ‘On Appearance’, ‘appearance matters, and matters as the very “stuff” that provides the species “theatre and performance” with its substance, specificity and specialness’. The incongruity is obvious, and it even seems that Badiou’s view of appearance

is diametrically opposed to the nature of theatre and performance and sounds only very much like Plato's.⁴¹ Appearance is that which we see as cohesive (or 'consistent') according to its specific structure or 'logic' of appearing: 'nothing but the logic of a situation' (Badiou 2004 qtd in Kear 2008b, 22). Appearance 'codifies both the organizing logic of the situation and the specific forms of its manifestation.' (Kear 2008b, 23). Put more simply, appearance is the representation perceived as cohesive. But while the elements of a situation (the ontological components, that is, beings) are non-relational, their appearances are related by the intensities of their appearing. Therefore, 'the essence of appearing is the relation' and 'appearance grounds [the relationship] in the structure of representation through creating localized "consistency" in the relational intensities through which they are presented' (23). Kear suggests, using the powerful example of Phil Collins' photograph of Abbas Amini (2003, in Kear 2008b, 18), that for Badiou, genuine politics comes about when a creative work (like Collins') becomes 'a disjunctive *theatrical* experience of the relation of non-relation' (23, emphasis in original).

Thus, Hallward's critique of the non-relation of beings in *Being and Event*, *Part I* would still hold true: that the definition of a situation according to the mathematical model 'pays no attention to the relations that might structure the configuration or development of those terms, for instance relations of struggle or

⁴¹ In the *Ethics* interview, Badiou explains what Hallward calls Badiou's 'fairly unusual fidelity to Plato'. Badiou 'renounces' Plato's transcendence but cites three things of value in Plato: his awareness of 'the conditions of philosophy' belying the common understanding that Plato's is a total system; Plato's commitment to the existence of eternal truths, without which philosophy 'doesn't add up to very much'; and what he sees as a Plato for whom transcendence is really the investigation of the 'internal articulation between Ideas...the movement of thought...its impasse...' (see Appendix of *Ethics*, 119-120). A survey of Badiou's major works would quickly reveal or confirm that he is indeed an admirer of Plato, draws many aspects of his arguments from the latter, and traces his philosophical lineage to this venerable Greek (a genealogical trace that includes Plato's debate with the sophists that finds a counterpart in the figures of the modern philosopher of truth and the universal and the modern sophists who play only language games).

solidarity' (Hallward 2008, 103). *Logics* presents a theory of relation but only one that is 'a self-reflexive "morphism", a relation that measures the degree of identity between X and X'—of a being to itself (115). Moreover, if there is a relation, it is only the relation between 'objects' of a world (the process of appearing as that which objectifies being) and such 'relations of objects can never result in anything more than the mere modification of a world, even so violent or unpredictable a world as a battle or a political demonstration'. Thus, such relations 'can never serve to mediate or influence genuine change' (116).

Hallward therefore says that Badiou's revision of his ontology still resorts to a simplification. He praises the inclusion of the 'body' and the idea that this body must live in a place for it to effect a transformation of the place (107). But even 'body' is 'not necessarily organic' [examples include armies, political organizations, groupings of artistic works or sets of scientific results] (108); multiple beings remain multiples and 'not entities' (119); and there is no 'mediating term' between the being-multiple and its appearing. The 'conversion of an object's degree of appearing from minimal to maximal'—the 'singularity' that occurs in the evental site, and the site itself, are conceived 'in terms of exclusion pure and simple'. Thus

Badiou evades, rather than illuminates, engagement with the actual power relations that structure situations in dominance. Practical political work is more often concerned with people or situations who are not so much invisible or unseen as under-seen or mis-seen—oppressed and exploited, rather than simply excluded; they do not count for nothing so much as for very little. This difference involves more than nuance. As several generations of emancipatory thinkers have argued, modern forms of power do not merely exclude or prohibit but rather modulate, guide or enhance behaviour and norms conducive to the status quo (117-118).

Badiou's grave lack is 'a clear place for ordinary ontic reality' (118). And for Hallward, '[i]nsofar as *étants-multiples* are treated as multiples rather than as entities, they are emptied of any ontic dimension' (119).

In Eagleton's critique of *Ethics* (2001), this lack is identified as a 'disdain' for the quotidian world. Badiou 'wants to insert the eternal into time, negotiate the passage between truth event and everyday life, which is what we know as politics' (Eagleton 2001, 158), but his disdain for everyday life is everywhere present in his work—

Common knowledge is just idle opinion, and there is as sharp a gap for him between *doxa* and truth as there is for Plato. Indeed, Badiou characterizes everyday life in quasi-biological terms as a realm of appetite, self-interest and dull compulsion. If this is the case, then indeed, little short of a quantum leap out of it into a higher dimension of truth is going to suffice. But if he had a less jaundiced view of the everyday, he might need a less exalted alternative.... (Eagleton 2001, 159).

Eagleton doubts Badiou's point about 'the need for truth and politics [as being immanent in a situation]' because Badiou does not believe 'as Hegel and Marx do, that there are forces which are part of the situation but which also have the power to transform it. He does not trust the quotidian world sufficiently to believe that' (158). Eagleton suggests that Badiou might not after all be so much different from the nihilistic postmoderns that he critiques. He says in fact that Badiou's thought is 'elitist' and 'exceptionalist' and interrogates the very fundamental idea that truth arises from or is produced by an event. Finally he issues a series of questions that echo criticisms levelled against Badiou: 'What is to count as a situation, and who decides? Are there really any "singular situations", as Badiou seems to imagine? And is there any way of analysing, or even identifying one, which does not implicate general categories?' (160).

Hallward believes in the merit of Badiou's conception of political truth and the need to get down to the simple decision of a 'yes or no', 'for or against' that he says lines up Badiou with the 'prescriptive tradition' to which names like Césaire, Fanon, and Freire can be associated. However, Hallward insists that these 'moments of decision' must not be 'weakened by excessive simplification or abstraction' as he sees in Badiou. What is required is 'a thoroughly relational ontology'—one that will

...privilege history rather than logic as the most fundamental dimension of a world, and to defend a theory of the subject equipped not only with truth and body but also with determination and political will. It may further require us to take seriously the fact that in some cases—with respect to some 'points' of a world—there can be more than one way of saying 'yes' (Hallward 2008, 121).

And, I would say, more than one way of saying 'no' as well. The categorical choices put forward are difficult, even oppressive. Nevertheless, I find great value in Badiou's philosophy as it can possibly apply to my own study of the dotoc as *performance event*.

Chapter Five

Religiosity and the Performance of Pilgrimage

The dotoc is *pagsa-Dios*. This is the answer one gets to the question about what the dotoc is or why people observe the tradition. *Pagsa-Dios* can be variously translated as: for God (Dios); an act of faith or belief in God; a religious practice. An account that is faithful to the dotoc event would then consider its religious character first and foremost, because that is what is said by those who practise it, a saying that is at the same time a shaping or construction of the event for themselves and for others. The question prompts them to think about it, often for the first time, and the answer is not rehearsed or readymade. There is another answer given: that it is tradition, what they have been used to (*'su nagimatan'*)—part of their heritage from the ancestors, but this is often subsumed into the first one. Indeed, content-wise and by all appearances, the dotoc is a tradition of worship or devotion, and it is but proper (or 'polite') that we pay attention to the way it appears as such, to how it is shown, and what people say they are doing.

All indications point to the dotoc as religious performance that is not autochthonous to the performers. One would quite easily be seized by questions about the existence of these forms in a place far from the West, where Roman Catholicism began and flourished. Any scholar would have to 'penetrate the surface'¹ appearance of these performances and delve deep into history. Colonialism obviously brought the dotoc to the Bicolanos. But if, as the historians

¹ 'No humanist account of the past or present can (or does) go very far without the kind of understanding that the ethnographic gaze presupposes.... By the same token, however, no ethnography can ever hope to penetrate beyond the surface planes of everyday life, to plumb its invisible forms, unless it is informed by the historical imagination—the imagination, that is, of both those who make history and those who write it' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, xi).

say, the people resisted the colonial imposition, why did the new belief prosper and why has it persisted? In Badiou's terms, there must have been an evental experience that pierced the state of things and made the people keep their fidelity.

Also, first-hand experience of the performances raises the disturbing question about whether or not the texts and how they are performed have a direct connection to the faith experience of the participants. If there is such a connection, it is definitely not a straight, linear, one-to-one link. It seems to me that, as a general observation, the words or verses are just mouthed and that there is a whole set of meanings that cannot be accessed only from knowing the words said or sung.² The text obviously tells only half of the dotoc story. It seems to me that there is no aim to represent the text through the dramatization, even in the komedya where roles are taken and played by 'actors'. In addition, the presence of the *maestra/autora* (director) dictating the lines destroys any expectation of or attempt at verisimilitude. Instead, the performances are a ritual display of faith. There is no doubt, it seems to me, about the sincerity of the faith that drives and sustains the performances,³ but this cannot be found in the texts or in the aesthetic

² Cannell (2006b) has the same view, suggesting that one has to go even beyond Rafael's (1993) linguistic analysis (of the reading as being 'against the grain' of Spanish intentions) and see how even the text that seems to 'promise submission' was 'performed in ways that potentially modified its message and was moreover inserted within a symbolic exchange with the *Ama* that was distant from the church's intended message' and that such performance (with its style of singing) was not simply drawn out of the reading of the text itself but from associations with 'aspects of social interaction, such as notions of balance and contestation between matched players'. Additionally, the text (or *librito*) was in itself valued as an object 'which can enter into an economy of arcane knowledge' (159-160).

³ Keane (2006) takes up the concept of 'sincerity' in Christian belief, using examples from his field work among the Sumbanese Protestants in Indonesia. He proposes that sincerity is a 'metadiscursive term [that] characterizes a relationship between words and interior states... [and] seeks to locate the authority for words in the speaker as a self, as a responsible party' (316). He adds that sincerity is 'interactive', suggesting that there is necessarily a public accountability for what one professes in which the sincere person thus displays that his/her words match his/her thoughts. For him, non-discursive actions can be considered sincere only when these are 'translated into discourse or at least be treated as some sort of signification' (323, n10). The difficulty for the ethnographer is that a society might have one view of how speech and speakers are related but the way this is evaluated may differ. Among the Sumbanese, for instance, interiority—or speaking from the heart—is highly valued, but the way that 'sincere speech' is evaluated comes in the form of a public performance. 'The doctrinal stress on interiority works in tension with the highly formalistic

aspects of their performance. One may say that there is a wholly different aesthetics at play here, and certainly there has been a strong concern among the performers and practitioners of the dotoc (and the komedya and lagaylay) that aesthetic standards be followed and preserved. But this is certainly not Western aesthetics or what Feodor Jagor had in mind when he spoke scathingly about the komedya he saw in Albay in the 1800s.⁴ Jagor judged what he saw using criteria totally alien to the experience.

How then do we explain the religiosity or faith of the Bicolanos? I have already said that the performances have an artifactual quality, a point also raised by Mojares (2008)—that the discrepant and chaotic impression, the lack of logic or unity of the performance elements, is precisely where their strength—and hidden truth—lie.

PANATA, FAITH, AND THE DEVOTION OF THE BICOLANOS

Tito Valiente, a Bicolano anthropologist, explains that the conversion of the Bicolans to the religion of the colonizers came about in the way that it did—with the Bicolans accepting the new faith and embracing it like it was their very own—because they were not pagans in the truest sense and their autochthonous system of

procedure that enacts not belief per se—there is no testimony, no cries of anguish or exultation here—but rather the discourse of belief.’ What stands out is ‘its schematic nature, its theatricality, its lack of psychology’ (320). In saying then that the dotoc practitioners are ‘sincere’ about their faith, I risk making a tautological statement or an entirely subjective judgment of one who shares in the culture of the paradotoc. Alternatively I am using evaluative criteria similar to what Keane describes: taking the public performance as a mark of such sincerity. But a more important point is the recognition that the paradotoc are human agents fully aware of their actions, while such actions do not necessarily match the words said or that there is a correspondence of the words said and the thoughts ‘behind’ them. As Cannell (2006a, 37) remarks, we can think of the Bicolanos’ behaviour as a contrast to the Sumbanese’s valuing of ‘sincere interiority’—in the Philippines, ‘the chain of connections soul-guilt-repentance-salvation/damnation does not appear to have been completed even in the course of more than four hundred years.’

⁴ See the quotation from Jagor in chapter 2, page 50.

belief was as complex as the one that was imposed.⁵ It was a matter of substituting figures for the highest god and the lesser forms of the divine. This is also the belief of most other Filipino scholars (and non-Filipino Philippinists),⁶ and supported by statements in publications of the local (Bicol) church, such as the following passage:

In their *boot* or innermost sanctuary of the soul, the natives had a deep sense of the sacred and divine. They believed in a Supreme Being they revered as *Gugurang*, the Old of Olds (Tria 2004, 18).

The sun was *Gugurang*'s visible manifestation, 'the answer to their prayers because it brought the light of day, fire for heat and nourishment for their crops, as opposed to darkness and the destruction wrought by typhoons which frequently ravaged the land' (18). When the colonizers came introducing their *Dios*, *Gugurang* quite simply, according to the explanation, became *Dios* or God.

Many accounts of the conversion generally favour the view that, after the initial violent clashes with the conquistadors, the Bicolanos were an easy conquest. The various *relaciones* (accounts) written by the early Spanish missionaries (mentioned in chapter 2) like those of Loarca, Chirino, and Alcina are typical, but some later works are criticized for having basically the same view about the rapid conversion of the natives in the islands. John Leddy Phelan (1967) is noted for

⁵ Interview conducted for a separate project in September 1991.

⁶ Reyes (1985, 206-207) notes that the animistic rites of propitiation were substituted by the devotions to Catholic saints; Wendt (1998, 8) talks about the continuity of pre-colonial forms of propitiation in the fiesta, for instance, those in honour of San Isidro Labrador (Saint Isidore) who became the patron saint of farmers from whom the devotees ask for blessings of a good harvest; Gorospe (1986) reports about the continuity of indigenous forms of prayers in contemporary Catholic practices (discussed in a seminar on the topic by the Philippine Province of the Jesuits held in 1985). Particularly notable in Gorospe's report is the research finding that 'four forms of devotion dominate the prayer life of the 476 respondents: (1) *panata* (fulfilling a vow); *sanib* (spirit possession); (3) *ayuno* (fasting); and (4) *paramdam* (feeling the presence of the dead)' (Gorospe 1986, 231). MacDonald (2004, 79) presents a slightly different view, saying that the similarity between the indigenous pre-colonial religion and Catholicism lies in the polytheistic character of the former which can also be said as existent in the latter: 'The idea of a supreme being, presiding over the universe and above other deities or spirits, was very much part of some pre-Spanish belief systems. Conversely, with a well-developed angelology, demonology, and cult of the saints, Catholicism had developed its own brand of polytheism.'

crediting the missionaries with the skill with which they ‘adapted themselves to the local culture while at the same time transforming this culture’, therefore making possible the ‘religious syncretism which characterized folk Catholicism’ (Gerona 2005, 23). Counter-discourses are presented by Iletto (1979), Rafael (1993), and Aguilar (1998), who take subaltern perspectives and interpret conversion as a process of native appropriation and translation that served emancipatory purposes. Iletto presents a ‘history from below’ that contends that the masses interpreted the *pasyon*, the ritual chanting of the passion of Christ during Lent, using their indigenous epistemological frames to fuel revolutionary consciousness and to forge secret societies and brotherhoods that launched and sustained insurgent (or what are known in traditional history as millenarian) movements. Focusing on early Tagalog culture and society and working mainly with colonial texts such as catechisms and *confessionarios* (confession manuals), Rafael uses linguistic analysis in showing that the colonizers failed to bridge the deep chasm between the indigenous worldview and their own: ‘the Tagalogs were converted despite and because of the failure of the Spanish notion of translation to fully impose itself on the natives’ (Rafael 1993, 110). While the Spaniards successfully imposed their Western colonizing signs in the crafting of vernacular grammars, dictionaries, and missionizing texts, the colonized transacted with these materials and with the friars who were their primary producers using their own linguistic frames and wielding their own powers of survival. If, from the Spanish point of view, the rapidity of conversion meant that the natives, due to their ‘lack of intelligence’, did not understand the faith they were accepting (although quick to attribute it to the workings of ‘divine will’), for Rafael this indicated how ‘the Tagalogs had their own way of appropriating Christian signs’ (87). Aguilar casts this encounter as a

violent ‘clash of spirits’ in which, on the one hand, the spirit-world of the colonized was subdued or taken over by the spirit-world of the colonizers, but, on the other hand, the colonized appropriated the spirit-world of the colonizers and interpreted it according to their own cosmology. The rapid conversion is explained by the similarity of these spirit-worlds from the perspective of the natives. In the native cosmology that Aguilar draws from creation myths and folklore, there is a constant contest of strength for domination of the spiritual realm that, in turn, manifests in the world of the real. The natives saw how strong the spirits of the colonizers were, enough to give in to these foreign spirits, the better for them to profit from such potency in propitiating for a good harvest, for protection against calamities, for the healing of illnesses, or even for winning in cockfights. As Aguilar elaborates, the cockfight is a cosmic contest of one spirit protector against another and, thus, by extension, the experience of colonization was an enlarged or macroscopic version of such cosmic clash. It is to be noted that Aguilar does not subscribe to the idea of syncretism: ‘Far from being syncretistic, the religion of the colonized native epitomized what it meant to live in two colliding worlds’ (Aguilar 1998, 46).⁷

And so it happened that when the Bicolanos’ ancestors embraced Catholicism, they did so with full devotion in the way they knew how and developed a fidelity to the religion that can be seen in the *panata/panuga* (promise or vow) and in the many faith expressions associated with the Catholic calendrical rituals and devotional practices.

⁷ Syncretism is a dominant explanation of Filipino ‘folk Catholicism’ and essays too many to cite here are probably as numerous as the ones who say ‘folk Catholicism’ in the same breath. MacDonald (2004) cites syncretism as one possible explanation for how ‘religious forms [are] combined, survive, or transform themselves’ but suggests that a more important idea is ‘transformative continuity’ whereby the same belief structure is used within a new framework (83).

If one looks at the dotoc as devotional practice and asks what event in the Badiourian sense brought about the fidelity, or what is the event in the event, it may be impossible to answer using historical specifics on the dotoc practice in the colonial period (which I had no means to access) in the way, for instance, that Aguilar does so in his study of the historical beginnings of the power and hegemony of sugar planters in the Visayas. His work thus provides an instructive model, especially because I find his concept of ‘pivotal conjunctures’ as strikingly similar to Badiou’s ‘event’.

Formed by an event or interrelated set of events, each conjuncture leads to a reshaping of lived experiences and social structures as reflected in changes in modes of thinking, in ways of behaving, and in systems of producing (Aguilar 1998, 8).

That the dotoc practice and other devotions have survived to this contemporary day and age is proof enough of this fidelity to a fidelity. And it is a fidelity that can only be described as tenacious, even fierce. The dotoc is a lighter example, because it is quiet, muted, even melodious and lilting, but also uneventful in the sense of being almost ordinary or quotidian, whereas there are other forms that are more spectacular, more visceral in their impact, outstanding—like the devotion to the Black Nazarene of Quiapo, Manila, to cite just one already mentioned in the previous chapters.

A particularly Bicol example is the devotion to the Virgin of Peñafrancia enshrined in Naga City, discussed in the next section to provide a background against which to see or compare the dotoc devotion of the Bicolanos and their expression of religiosity.

SAMNO ASIN ATANG: EMBODYING THE SACRED

The Peñafrancia devotion unfolds in overwhelming spectacular proportions, not so much because it has grown into a huge festival and gathers millions of visitors and pilgrims, but because of the two central events that have become the distinct marks of this devotional practice: the *traslacion* and fluvial processions, and the role and behaviour of the *voyadores*. Described by observers as ‘the biggest and most popular religious event in the Philippines’ (Feast of Peñafrancia 2002), the Peñafrancia fiesta starts on the second Friday of September when the Virgin of Peñafrancia, lovingly called ‘Ina’ (Bicol for ‘mother’), is transferred in a procession (*traslacion*)⁸ from the basilica to the cathedral where nine-day prayers are held in her honour. On the third Saturday of September, the image is returned to her shrine through a fluvial procession on the Bicol River that traverses the city. In both of these events, the *voyadores* (also, *boyadores*) carry the ‘Ina’ and the Holy Face of Jesus (Divino Rostro) with whom Mary as Virgin of Penafrancia is venerated.⁹ In the foot procession they serve as a human cordon for the images, interlocking arms and forming a human chain around the images. The point, however, is that the *voyadores* are unable to become a human cordon for the images and to many observers they are rather the blight to the sight that jars in sharp contrast to the solemn and prayerful atmosphere. They are ‘the boisterous, unruly, crass, sweating mob—the last of the fragments that still remain to remind

⁸ *Traslacion* means ‘transfer’ of the venerated image of the Virgin of Peñafrancia and the painting of the Divino Rostro (Holy Face) from the shrine to the Cathedral about a mile south, a procession by foot introduced by Bishop Manuel Grijalvo, O.S.A. in 1855. The decision to transfer to a bigger venue was due to the phenomenal increase in the number of pilgrims which the old shrine could not accommodate. (Tria 2004, 50).

⁹ The name *voyadores* is a ‘corruption of the Spanish *bogadores* (seafarers)’ for the devotees who paddle the huge raft on which the images are transported during the fluvial procession. See descriptions at <http://www.naga.gov.ph/pdf/2005/> (retrieved 13 May 2008).

one and all that the icon (of the Peñafrancia) was initially the “Ina” of the Cimarrones’ (Obias 2003, 7).¹⁰

The *cimarrones* were the Bicol natives who initially refused conversion to Christianity and chose to remain in the mountains or on the margins of the towns set up by the Spaniards through the *reduccion*.¹¹ They had accepted Christianity but continued to reject the authority of the civil colonial government. ‘The Cimarrones would not have any of the tax system and the titling of lands by the Castila’ (Obias, 1). The standard history of the devotion says it was for them that a friar, Fray Miguel Robles de Covarrubias, had an image made of the Virgin of Peña de Francia of Seville, Spain, which he then set up in a chapel far from the town centre. But because of the miracles believed to have been wrought by the Virgin, the cimarrones were eventually ‘dispossessed’ of their icon as the devotion grew and attracted the *mestizos* and rich people, who

...crept into the care of the icon and into the manner she should be presented to the devotees. The icon had to be covered with padding and plates of silver, hiding the entire body of both mother and child, except their faces, from the devotees. The icon had to be made to wear a crown, her cape be studded with jewels, her body bathed in perfume imported from Spain (Obias 2003, 5).

The present day *voyadores* thus say their unruly behaviour is a re-enactment of the cimarrones’ devotion to their Ina. Some, however, explain their behaviour as called-for or necessitated by the circumstances of the *pag-voya* or the manner that the transfer of the image is done: one needed to be at least a little tipsy in order to survive the ordeal. This is the gripping sight that looms most large in

¹⁰ Gorospe (1994) comments that the processions are ‘only for the hardy and tough...[a]nyone with a weak heart or knees would never survive it’. Brawls and fistfights often erupt among the *boyadores*, but ‘[e]verything is done in the spirit of true devotion to the Virgin’ (72-73).

¹¹ The Spanish colonizers used the *reduccion* as a strategy to effect the total subjugation of the native populations of the Philippine islands. People were forced to live in close proximity ‘under the bells’ of the church instead of being dispersed across large expanses of territory.

the play of images that is the Peñafrancia fiesta. Visceral and elemental even for the locals, it escapes rational explanation, scandalizes many conservatives, and has become the object of a persistent campaign for reform by the church.

The *voyadores* dominate the scene, grabbing attention by their attire and demeanour, bare-foot, wet and, more often than not, tipsy or drunk with gin and reeking of it. They wait for Ina along the whole stretch of the processional route, and when she comes they join the throng of bodies around her *carro*, each of them clearing out a space for himself if he can by squeezing into the throng, dislodging others, or clambering on to the top of the tightly packed humanity, and trying to touch the Virgin on her shiny, globe-like *carro*. From afar the whirl of bodies looks like a vast sea, with the Virgin afloat on her *carro*, being tossed this way and that by wayward waves. The air is thick with tension and ringing with shouts of ‘Viva la Virgen’, now and then cut through with shrieks of alarm as the image appears in danger of toppling over into the swirling ‘water’ when the *carro* would dip too low on one side. When the *carro* regains its balance, there are shouted cheers and thundering applause from the crowd.

A veteran boyador said: ‘Once you are under the *andas* [the *carro*], you are squeezed willy-nilly, pushed every which way as the swaying of the human tide pushes and pulls and no one is in control of his own movements. There is no fresh air to breathe on. All one sees and feels from underneath is the dark wet body of the man ahead. Resounding cries of *Viva la Virgen!* overwhelm the ears (Gorospe 1994, 73).

The *carros* of both the Virgin and the Divino Rostro are beautifully bedecked with flowers when they leave the church at the start of the procession, but these are very soon stripped off, yanked, grabbed in a violent frenzy by the *voyadores*. Barely a foot out of the patio, the images stand bare on the *carros*, the *samno* (décor) of flowers crushed inside the denim or trouser pockets of the *voyadores*, safely stored there for carrying home later, so that they can be mixed

with the rice seeds for planting and thus ensure the blessing of a plentiful harvest. What is it about the *samno* that makes the *voyadores* risk their lives to have it? What is it about being in the throng of bodies? What is it about the Virgin of Peñafrancia or the Divino Rostro that makes people flock to the place? Non-devotees wonder why people would not go to pay a visit at other times of the year, when the city is not as crowded or the queues of devotees desiring to touch the icon are not as long as they are at fiesta time. People have died in the course of the 300-year history of the devotion, and to this day paramedics are present to assist anyone who falls ill during the processions. These processions are first and foremost a physical, bodily act, where one is just one body among thousands. The conflict is potentially fatal, felt as the raw experience of gasping for breath and yet not losing the objective of getting close to the image, while one's mind is surely taken over by the reality of the pressing crowd. People ask the same questions and are given the same answers, and the crowds still come each year, despite incidents of people getting hurt or dying. The same *boyador* quoted above by Gorospe says: 'It's a great *energating* feeling[:] you come out refreshed, as if all your sins have been washed away' (Gorospe 1994, 73). This remark stands out curiously against what Cannell (1999; 2006a) says of the Bicolanos she lived with in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, that sin and repentance are hardly present in their articulations of religiosity, an observation shared by Mulder (1992) who says that sin, repentance and atonement 'did not find a ready root in Philippine culture' (241) —proof perhaps that there is no single all-encompassing explanation for religious experience.

The exceptions are many. The other devotees who join the processions but are not *voyadores*—the women, children, elderly, and other males who do not join

the *pag-voya*—are really greater in number, easily twice or thrice as many, and even the mayor of the city joins the ranks of the *voyadores*, though not in the main groups clustered around the icons. Not everyone scrambles for the *samno* and many are content staying on the periphery or have no courage to brave the press of bodies around the images. Still many others dress the part but do not actually do the *pag-voya*. Moreover, although the focus of this discussion is on the *voyadores*, they constitute only a small part of the multitude that gather in Naga each year for the Peñafrancia fiesta and may therefore not be considered as representative of the devotees. The individual reasons for the devotion even by the *voyadores* are surely varied and potentially as many as there are individuals asked. The subjective quality of the experience that most participants may not even think about renders the task of describing such experience impossible.

Nevertheless, a way of making sense of the frenzied, chaotic central feature of the processions: the half-naked bodies clustered around the Ina is by investigating the concept of *samno* (decoration) and of *samno* as *atang* (offering) to the venerated divine being, using the Peñafrancia context and the ‘quieter’ context of the *dotoc*, both of which are forms of pilgrimage. The Peñafrancia devotees themselves become the *samno* offered to the divine, thus embodying it, and by such act perform power and claim their place in the structure of relationships that ensure the continuation of the devotion.

In *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol*, *samno* is ‘*la cosa compuesta, y engalanada, o las galas, y aderezos*’ (Lisboa 1865, 333) —a decoration, an ornament; to adorn, to garnish (Marcos and Britanico 1985, 380). In the text of the *Dotoc sa Mahal na Santa Cruz* (1895, 18-19 [translations mine]), *samno* and its verb forms: *samnuhan* (to be adorned), *isamno* (to be used to decorate or adorn)

are used always in connection with *dolot* (offering), *samba* (venerate) or *omao* (praise, adore):

<i>Cundi marhay pa gayod</i>	But perhaps it would be good
<i>Magdara quita nin dolot</i>	To bring offerings
<i>Na satuyang maaagod</i>	That we can carry
<i>Na anyaya sa Santa Cruz</i>	As gifts for the Holy Cross
<i>Igua digding manga burac</i>	There are flowers here
<i>Manlaen-laen na rosas</i>	Various roses
<i>May bandera media luna</i>	There are flags, half-moons
<i>Na ica sasamno ta nanggad</i>	That we can adorn
<i>Pag abot ta caidiong lugar</i>	When we reach the place
<i>Sa saiyang namugtacan</i>	Where he is located
<i>Satuya siyang sambahon</i>	Let us adore him
<i>Manga burac pagsabuagan</i>	Shower him with flowers
<i>Dangan mangaglohod quita</i>	Then let us kneel
<i>Na mangag omao saiya</i>	To praise him
<i>Asin man ipagcanta ta</i>	And let us sing
<i>Idtong himno na Vexilla</i>	The Vexilla hymn

The flower decorations in the *carro* of the Peñafrancia images are also called *samno*, in the same way that the Bicolanos use the same term (*isamno*, *isasmno*) for the flowers used in the *Flores de Mayo* or in the *Osana* on Palm Sunday. In all these cases, *samno* is associated with offering or praise. I therefore use the term in this sense: of the adornment as adoration or praise, an offering (*atang*) to the revered sacred being.

Atang in Lisboa is defined as ‘*ofrecer a los anitos cosas de comida, como solian antiguamente, y luego se lo comian ellos*’ (Lisboa 1865, 35). A translation appears in Mintz and Britanico (1985, 73): *atang* is ‘gift, sacrifice’, specifically ‘a sacrifice offered to the *Gugurang* (god of goodness) as a sign of thanksgiving. It consists of one-tenth of the harvest eaten later by the participants in the ritual’.

Every harvest time, the natives held the *atang* or thanksgiving ritual to the sun—*Gugurang*. A hermaphrodite priest, *asog*, led the people in offering newly harvested crops called *himoloan*. These were presented while a

balyana, a priestess, murmured sacred phrases and intoned the *sorake*, an ode to *Gugurang* (Tria 2004, 20).¹²

The word *atang* has survived to this day in the Bicol language with the same meaning of a religious offering, used interchangeably with *dolot*. The term *regalo* is used to refer to a gift in non-religious contexts.¹³

What is striking about these definitions of offering, considered vis-à-vis the *samno* in the Peñafrancia and *dotoc*, is that the terms refer to food, a meal (*la comida*) offered, not flowers. Even in the ancient *atang* ritual for *Gugurang*, the offering was *himoloan*, the harvest. When and why the shift from food to flowers as offering came about is however something outside the scope of this discussion.¹⁴

What is clear is that this was not a complete shift, since food is still offered to the dead ancestors on All Souls' Day and in the ritual of the *apag* and the *tulod*. Reyes (1992) defines *apag* as the act of offering 'food, drink, tobacco, etc. to an unseen spirit and announce at the same time the particular endeavour to be done, like to cut a tree, construct a house, etc.' (450) while Cannell (1999) identifies *tulod* as food offering to the '*tawo na dai ta nahihiling*' ('people we cannot see') in connection with the holding of a séance in a healing ritual (*pag-bawi, bawi*) for

¹² Descriptions of the *atang* ritual are also found in Realubit (1976, 2; 1972, 193), Gerona (1988), and Reyes (1992, 402), all of which draw from Castaño's *Breve Noticia* (1895, 27-33).

¹³ *Dolot* is included in Lisboa's *Vocabulario* (126) while *regalo* can be found only in Mintz and Britanico (357). *Dolot*, like *atang* and *samno* were therefore already present in the language of the pre-colonial Bicol while *regalo* came into it only from Spanish. It is notable that in Lisboa *dolot* is '*la ofrenda de cosas de comida que se lleva a la Iglesia*' (126) –which identifies it as a religious offering.

¹⁴ Rachel Fulton (2004) presents an interesting inquiry into the use of flowers especially in the veneration of the Virgin Mary, saying that one prays with them or that indeed they make 'better prayers' because flowers are Mary's symbols. Indeed certain cultures notably in Europe have long lists of flowers that are considered to be 'Mary's flowers' and the flowers are not just used to decorate images but depicted in paintings of images. The rosary is named after the rose, a whole garden of them to be exact, because a *rosarium* is just that: an entire rose garden. She argues that this use of flowers is not simply cultural, but has to do with life itself and the body. She thus looks into the links between 'flowers, bodies, imagination, and prayer' (7). It is possible that the use of flowers instead of food as offering in the *dotoc* and other devotions was one of the things learned from the Spanish.

people who are ‘*naibanan*’ (‘accompanied’) by the spirit¹⁵ which has caused them illness or injury (83-110).

It is notable that the *Flores de Mayo* (Flowers of May)¹⁶ which is predominantly Marian also uses flowers as offerings to the Virgin and that the dotoc that also happens mostly in May uses flowers as offerings to the Holy Cross.¹⁷ Also, in the Peñafrancia the Holy Face of Jesus is venerated together with the Virgin, while in the dotoc that is primarily for the Holy Cross, the Virgin is honoured with the *santo rosario*—in which the decades of Hail Marys are interspersed with songs many of which are also sung in the *flores de mayo*—and with a sung litany extolling all the titles of Mary. The devotion to Mary is so strong in the region that it is attached to any and all of the other devotions be they in honour of Christ (the son and God himself) or the patron saints.¹⁸ The use of flowers might have been introduced by the friars along with the preaching about the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, proclaimed by Pius IX in 1854. Tiongson writes that the *flores de mayo* ‘blossomed in Bulacan’ about ten years after this proclamation and spread out to the other provinces (Tiongson 1978, 2351). While there are no historical specifics about how or why the shift from food to flowers happened, one obvious point stands out: the food offerings, *tulod*, *apag*,

¹⁵ Also, ‘*naibahan*’ –translated as ‘enslaved by the spirit’ in O’Brien (1993, 285). *Pag-bawi* is defined as the act ‘to reclaim a person believed to be under the spell and power of an unseen spirit’ in Reyes (1992, 450).

¹⁶ Julio Mendoza’s MA thesis (1999) on the *flores de mayo* of Ogod, Donsol in Sorsogon mentions that for the people of Ogod, the *flores de mayo* and the *santacruzán* are just one and the same activity of the barangay (165); the novena prayers said are for the Holy Cross while the *flores* songs and the *santo rosario* (holy rosary) are for the Virgin Mary. One song in particular, titled ‘Santa Cruz’ is the same song sung in the *lagaylay* of Canaman, Camarines Sur (see Mampo 1980 for a full discussion on the *lagaylay*).

¹⁷ In the *panjardin* dotoc, what is offered to the Cross is an entire flower garden.

¹⁸ As Mulder (1992b) observes, Mary is ‘the central and most important personage in the pantheon of saints’—so important that the Philippines is considered as a ‘Marian country and the Blessed Mother is its patroness’ (248). In Bicol, she is always ‘Ina’ (Mother), ‘Gran Madre de Dios’ who is ‘Patrona de Bicol, Regina de Nuestra Region’ (great mother of God; patroness of Bicol; queen of our region) as the hymn to the Virgin of Peñafrancia invokes—‘perhaps in no region in the Philippines had the devotion to Mary acquired a more endearing human expression than the Bicol’s...’ (Gorospe 1994, 73).

are given to spirits (*anitos*) and the dead ancestors, while the flower offerings are given to the Holy Cross, to Mary and the saints—the Catholic equivalents of the gods of good of the ancient Bicol—who now occupy a rank higher or greater than the *anitos* or the dead ancestors.

Atang and *samno* as gift and as sacrifice have contrasting connotations—the act of giving places the giver in a dominant position, while sacrifice is humbling, potentially injurious, with the person risking death in some cases. Both are present in the Peñafrancia devotion. Fieldwork reveals that the devotees do what they do because of a *panuga*, a *panata* or *promesa* (vow, promise).¹⁹ They offer the sacrifice, say of doing the *pag-voya*, or being Elena in the *dotoc*, or accepting responsibility as *hermana* or *cabo* (sponsor), however hard it is financially or physically, in order to fulfil their vow made to the Virgin, or to the Holy Cross, or to *Inang Santa Elena* (St. Helene). In some other cases like the Lenten vows there are extreme examples such as flagellation or having oneself actually nailed to a cross just like Christ.²⁰ In all these cases, what is offered is not *samno* or decoration, but acts of hardship—or acts of penitence, a denial of oneself as a form of homage. *Panuga* is the most cited reason for the devotion, occasioned by a favour asked like the healing of a sick relative, passing an examination, or going abroad. But while the *panuga* is an offering of self, both a sacrifice and an act of giving, it also involves an immediate taking—for instance, of the *samno*.

¹⁹ Cf. Gorospe (1986) in Note #21 of this chapter.

²⁰ See Tiatco and Bonifacio-Ramolete (2008) for an ethnographic report on Filipino practices of actual nailing on the cross, specifically in Cutud, Pampanga, Philippines, which has its origin in flagellation (*pamagdarame*) and the *sinakulo* (the Lenten passion play).

The sacred is bodied, physical, and palpable. It is not a faraway ideal but a living presence in their midst.²¹ And so they commune and transact with it in a physical way, such that they go away from the experience with a physical proof of it—a crushed floral *samno* and a bruised and aching body. (Many swear their aches disappear miraculously fast after the event, as though nothing happened.) They want to touch the images. It is not enough to be just there. For the *voyadores* who are farmers, the floral *samno* are mixed with the rice seeds for planting to coax the land to give forth a bountiful harvest. For others, it is like a charm that is placed in the family altar, or on the door, to drive away evil spirits. More often than not, it is only the fragrance transferred to a handkerchief or palm dabbed on the image, or an imagined contact of ‘skin’ on skin, believed to cure the sickness of the person ‘touched’. But the floral *samno* disappears, fast, very early in the procession and thereby ceases to become the bone of contention among the *voyadores*. It is something they wish to get hold of, but something else is more important: their *pagvoya* is their *atang*.

The *dotoc* practice is also offered as *atang*, not so much because it entails the offering of *samno*, but because it requires much physical sacrifice. Some forms of the *dotoc* go on for hours (12 hours in Baras, Nabua), a strain on both the cantors and the audience with its repetitive sequences and the *marchas* (marches) and *batallas* (choreographed battles) that seem to go on forever in the *komedya*. Curiously, the *samno* in the *dotoc* serve just like any property in a theatrical show; they are not gathered or kept to work some magic in healing sickness or for fertility of the land or sea.

²¹ Mulder (1992b) remarks about how Filipinos regard the sacred (God and other divinities) as their intimates: ‘People do not live over and against things religious, but with them. They do not transcend the symbols they believe in, but experience them concretely, directly’ (251).

What of the atang as gift? Fewer Bicolanos talk about the offering as gift, but certainly they say that health, harvests, or good fortune are gifts from God, blessing or grace, and the idea propounded by Marcel Mauss (2005 [1954]) that there is no free gift applies here. The concept of compulsory reciprocity can be seen in the panuga, the atang, the dolot. The devotee feels obliged to give back to the divine—in the first place, to make the promise—in order to get what he/she prays for. To the Christianized Bicolanos, this was not a new thing for they continued to have an almost intimate link with those whom they could not see but have learned to live with, to placate, to negotiate with—with gifts of food, or flowers—even as they accepted a new name for *Gugurang* and learned the devotions to the lesser forms of the divine. But though they did so, the ‘power of the gift’ as their forebears knew it in the times before Christianity had its hold over them.²²

Mauss’ monumental work about the gift is most instructive in my understanding of the atang as gift, of the samno as atang, and the dynamics of reciprocity in the relations between humans and the sacred, considering the Penafrancia and dotoc traditions.

What imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged is the fact that the thing received is not inactive (Mauss, 15).

It follows that to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself (16).

The thing coming from the person...exerts a magical or religious hold over you...the thing is not inactive...it seeks to return to its place of origin...to retain it would be dangerous and mortal...(16).

²² Aguilar (1998, 65) qualifies that the precolonial society ‘should not be romanticized as an idyllic gift economy’ because the gift giving and reciprocity between the datu (ruler)—whose perceived strength or power was inseparable from his capacity to give—and his followers (the ruled) were driven by purely selfish interests: ‘The datu’s concern for his followers’ general welfare was profoundly indistinguishable from the self-centred calculation of his own power and social standing.’ As to the followers, the motivation was generally fear that the ‘magical datu’ would, if he so decides, exact retribution if they do not reciprocate with their loyalty.

The reference is of course not just to gifts of or from the gods/spirits but also from fellow humans and the ‘force of reciprocity’ was but a part of what Mauss called a gift economy that preceded the market economy. His work is an ethnography of archaic societies that, he asserts, is not just about religion, but also very much about politics and economics. His main point of inquiry sounds very much like my own question: ‘What power resides in the object given that causes its recipients to pay it back?’ (Mauss, 4).

The act of the voyadores is their return or reciprocation for the gift of the Virgin or received through her, and it is a thing alive, pulsing in itself, one that exerts as much power on the revered deity as it does on the giver —if we believe Tylor (cited in their seminal work on sacrifice by Hubert and Mauss 1964, 2). This strikes me as an example of what Helene Cixous calls a ‘masculine economy’ that ties the receiver of gifts in relations of bondage and debt. In ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ Cixous asks: ‘Who could ever think of the gift as a gift-that-takes? Who else but man, precisely the one who would like to take everything?’ (Cixous 1996, 344). In a feminine economy, it is possible to give not out of a calculation of possible returns.²³ Cixous recognizes Mauss’ view that there is no free gift and, while positing a feminine giving from a ‘superabundant generosity’, asks whether woman is indeed able to evade the law of return:

Really, there is no ‘free’ gift. You never give something for nothing. But all the difference lies in the why and how of the gift, in the values that the gesture of giving affirms, causes to circulate; in the type of profit the giver draws from the gift and the use to which he or she puts it (Cixous 1994, 43).

Apparently, for Cixous, such difference can be experienced in feminine giving, for in her ‘self proper’ woman is able ‘to deappropriate herself without self-interest’ (44).

²³ Elsewhere Cixous qualifies that these ‘libidinal economies’ do not correspond to male and female or man and woman (Cixous and Conley 1984, 54) and talks instead of a bisexuality that can be had by both sexes, although woman is more disposed towards such bisexuality since man is ‘trained to aim for glorious phallic monosexuality’ (Cixous 1994, 41).

But one wonders, however one looks, with whatever lens whether feminine or masculine, what is this power of the gift and where does it come from?²⁴ I propose that it is the act itself, the fact of its being *performed*, that is the source of its power. It is therefore not the objects in the ritual but the act itself that sacralizes. As Mojares avers:

In tracing the history of sacred objects, we have to move beyond the artifact and return to the story of the community itself. The power of a relic resides in its community of believers and the dialectic in which one is empowered by the other. As Taussig (1987, 197) reminds us, it is not the image which is active (a notion that is fetishistic) but 'the community of persons among whom the image exists, the community of persons doing the imagining and therewith bringing the image to life over and over again' (Mojares 2002, 154-155).

The voyadores seem to revel in the performance, aches and all, including the ritual dress-up as a shirtless, barefoot voyador with a red headband, including the wetting that is necessary because of the heat but which has long become part of the entire experience. Some of the devotees partake of this power by just putting on the dress, some only by watching and clapping when the *carro* is righted back to position, or shouting 'Viva!' and contributing to the general rowdy, noisy atmosphere, even by simply intoning the endless decades of *Dios te Salve* or *Tara Kagurangnan Maria*. And through the performance the sacred is bodied forth for everyone to take hold of, to feel in the pulsing of the blood, to see in the tangle of bodies and heads and arms choking the street from end to end, to be giddy about from the smell of sweat and gin-fouled breaths confusingly mingled with the odours of the steaming concrete and of burning wax from the lighted candles of the procession, while all around the unceasing din makes everything almost surreal. The *samno* disappears from the *carro* early in the procession, but the images take on a

²⁴ Further reading taken up in the later part of this chapter reveals that the concept of the gift and exchange is central in the concepts of power and how they circulate, are understood, and subtend relations both with fellow humans and with the supernatural.

wholly different samno—the swirling maelstrom, the bodies of the voyadores around each carro, hugging it, ringing it, embellishing it and the image. Everyone who witnesses this scene goes away from the experience with this disturbing sight. The sacred becomes more manifest with the bodies as samno. The performance makes the invisible visible and with such creative capacity empowers the performer. This is the voyadores' act and exercise of power; we may say a reclaiming of the sacred—of their 'Ina'—by the dispossessed cimarrones come alive year after year in the voyadores.

Edith and Victor Turner described *communitas* experienced in pilgrimage as anti-structural:

...an essential and generic human bond...undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential, I-Thou (in Buber's sense)...spontaneous, immediate, concrete, not abstract.... It may be regarded by the guardians of structure as dangerous and may be hedged around with taboos, and associated with ideas of purity and pollution. For it is richly charged with affects, mainly pleasurable. It has something magical about it. Those who experience *communitas* have a feeling of endless power (Turner and Turner 1978, 250-251).

The procession of the voyadores has all the marks of what the Turners call 'spontaneous, existential *communitas*' (252) that 'cannot be legislated for or normalized'—it is 'a matter of grace, not of law' (1982c, 49). The procession clearly exhibits the liminal state, reversal of roles, and flow.²⁵ There is liminality, because

²⁵ The Turners' book, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978), is a seminal work in pilgrimage studies that examines how Victor Turner's concepts of social drama, *communitas*, and liminality can be used as theoretical tools for the study of pilgrimage. Victor Turner elaborates on ritual and these concepts in his many other books (1979, 1982c, 1984, 1995, 1987) drawing on his field work among the Ndembu of Central Africa and, for the concept of liminality, on Arnold van Gennep (1960). His ideas have attracted a barrage of counter-arguments, not least of which is that his is in fact a 'conservative' view of performance: 'Liminal performance may invert the established order, but never subvert it. On the contrary, it normally suggests that a frightening chaos is the alternative to the established order' (Carlson 2004, 19). Nevertheless, his writings remain influential. Günter Berghaus (1998, 67) looks at Turner's ideas in a more positive light, saying that '[s]ocial dramas provide a motor for social development.' Judith Hamera (2006, 47) refers to Turner's concept of *communitas* as 'the potentially world-making power of performance', while Jill Dolan (2006, 521-522) draws parallels between 'spontaneous *communitas*' and 'utopian performativity in performance'.

the activity is itself a passage, a movement that is a constant displacement, ‘neither here nor there’, ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner 1995, 95). Roles are reversed, because the lowly and poor in life can be a *voyador* and take centre stage with the *Ina* while the rich and the authorities may stay at the margins—at the very least they can be together in the throng and lose their everyday identities to become, for the moment, *voyadores*. In the throng of bodies there are no rich or poor, all identities are dissolved into that of the believing, praying, sacrificing pilgrim, struggling to get a glimpse, a touch, of the revered image being carried in the procession. There is flow, a ‘merging of action and awareness’, action ‘with total involvement’, ‘a loss of ego’, the self becoming ‘irrelevant’ (Turner and Turner 1978, 254).

In the *dotoc*, one does not experience the intensity and thickness of the atmosphere present in the Peñafrancia processions. There is liminality that is embodied in the walking or the performance of walking or procession; there is flow that is experienced as a heady lightness in the thick of the performance and in the strong fellow feeling that dominates the preparations for the nightly events; one can experience a reversal of roles, because the solo parts are up for grabs every night and social roles or statuses are erased in the identity of the *paradotoc*. However, the quality or degree of such experiences is much more muted compared to the Peñafrancia.

Both the Peñafrancia and the *dotoc* are pilgrimages—a journey to the sacred that bodies forth the sacred each in its own way. The Turners’ position is a major discourse about Christian pilgrimage, but it is not the only one. There is a debate that Simon Coleman (2002) identifies as *communitas* versus *contestation*. Eade and Sallnow (2000 [1991]) debunk the Turners’ model, attacking its ‘determinist’ character that subsumes the motivations of the pilgrims under the

‘glossed’ term *communitas*. Alan Morinis (1992, 9) corroborates this point, saying that ‘[p]ilgrimage is too varied in content to be analyzed as if there were a single, recurrent, common, manifest factor’.

But for Coleman (2002) the ‘communitas’ view and the ‘contestation’ view both bring something to the discussion of pilgrimage. In Bicol, both the pagvoya and the dotoc as occasions of pilgrimage exhibit elements of communitas and of contestation—which is like saying, therefore, that they are not just one or the other but both, and perhaps something else exceeding these two ideas. In Badiou’s terms, they are multiples that are experienced only in their temporal and spatial situatedness, that is, as singularities. Whether as singularities they engender a truth is something else, but that is precisely my view: that indeed they do; beneath the ritual or the trappings of tradition, there is a genuine truth event that effects the subjectivation of the voyador or the paradotoc. This is the reason that we have to move beyond explanations of the sacred, magic and religion by early authors, even as we draw from their valuable contributions.²⁶ Cannell (2006a, 3-5) suggests that many theories about religious experience tend to consider such experience as an ‘epiphenomenon’ and therefore does not directly engage with it, but reduce it as a manifestation or result of other larger issues like economics or politics. There has been a ‘disciplinary nervousness about religious experience in general’ among anthropologists, she says, suggesting that Christianity, in particular, has been ‘the repressed’ of anthropology.²⁷ However, the repressed keep on ‘staging returns’ as

²⁶ We can cite some major ones such as Frazer (1993), Eliade (1960), Mauss (2001 [1902]; 2005 [1954]), and Hubert and Mauss (1964), particularly in relation to the sacralized objects or how sacredness inheres in or is embodied by such objects, the human body included.

²⁷ Cannell deplores the way anthropologists ‘have ...remembered the letter and forgotten [the] spirit of their mentors’ –that is, Durkheim, Mauss, and Weber, who ‘shared a deep sense of the importance of understanding the history and theology of Christianity’ even if their ‘legacy’ can be primarily summed up in the idea of ‘a transcendent Christianity [that came] as an irreversible moment of transformation’ that forever changed human history. As a result, the study of Christianity has been pursued only as it is attached to the theory of modernity, thus

can be seen in the work of Evans-Pritchard and Edith Turner, both Catholic converts. The latter is said to have developed ‘an anthropological method which allows the possibility that *religious phenomena might be real*’ (Cannell 2006a, 4 emphasis added). Introducing one of the essays in the collection [Keller (2006, 273-294)], Cannell notes that Keller’s ethnography of the Seventh-Day Adventists in Madagascar shows how Christianity cannot be treated ‘simply as secondary phenomenon of underlying political or economic change’ (29) and that it ‘provides an illuminating sense of the intellectual excitement and satisfaction of Adventists engaged [*in*] the pursuit of truth’ (30, emphasis added).

For the Peñafrancia and dotoc, it is possible indeed that there are other explanations, or even that there may be no explanation at all. And so while I subscribe to Aguilar’s notion of the ‘clash of spirits’ deriving from the early colonial experience to explain what appears as a confusing lack of congruence, an inconsistency, between present practice (the pagvoya and the dotoc) and prescription (of the institutional church), I continue to explore deeper ground in the effort to stay faithful to what I encountered: the dotoc (and pagvoya) on my pulses. Of course as Geraldine Harris (2008) suggests, ‘deeper’ may actually be all on the level of appearance, an idea that definitely finds support in Badiou’s philosophical explanation of the logics of worlds as appearance: as that which is apprehensible, the existence of a being. However, ‘deeper’ may also mean something else: the truth that flashes rare and quick amidst and through appearance, challenging us to seize and hold it, as Saint Paul did—and, I would argue, as the dotoc practitioners have done all these years. If I sound indecisive or ambiguous, it is because we are

‘downgrading...any serious engagement’ with Christianity per se. ‘If we can stop presupposing that Christianity changes everything forever, we may be able to begin to see the experiences of Christianity, in all their diversity, complexity, and singularity, for what they are’ (Cannell 2006a, 45).

dealing not with definitive, boxed, scientific data all laid out on a table for examination, but with subjective positions and their manifestations. What appears is not all there is.

Considering the pilgrimages as performance events, a point that can be made is that both the Peñafrancia and the dotoc are performances in the sense of being ritual and also in the sense of being repeated, ‘restored behaviour’ (Schechner 1988), both involving the elements of play and display. But one (Peñafrancia) is a ‘real’ pilgrimage, while the other (dotoc) is a performance of pilgrimage, that is to say it is a performed pilgrimage. The pilgrims of the Peñafrancia physically travel to the sacred site to visit the revered ‘Ina’, while the pilgrims of the *dotoc* only imagine the pilgrimage, ‘act out’ the journey, the performance turning intention into reality—*as if* they do become pilgrims *hale sa España* (from Spain), as the text says, looking for the Cross and finding it in the Holy Land. The defining difference is space, place and landscape, being on site and moving towards the site. But then again the difference may only be in the manner of embodiment. Although it talks about conflict, war, hardship, pain, the dotoc as performed pilgrimage does so from memory, in a kind of peaceful recollection, and the primary mood is celebratory, with song and dance. The Peñafrancia pilgrimage is a ritual performative that is combative, a Geertzian ‘deep play’, pulsing with the here-and-now, alive with the present. One may suppose that the voyadores ‘act out’ their role in a yearly performance of pilgrimage; that in fact imagination figures in the act as much as it does in the performance of the *dotoc*. But the difference between faking and making is hardly significant.

The *atang* of the voyador and the paradotoc becomes a creative act, an imaginative transaction *by a subject* in Badiou’s sense. The divine being sought in

the pilgrimage is made present by the act of seeking, the act thus revealing the subject at the site of the void—the ‘presence of absence within the empty tomb’ of the resurrection in the *Quem Quaeritis* trope that has become the sign of a primal religious desire as explicated in Anthony Kubiak’s discourse (Kubiak 1991, 51) and the repeated motif in the pilgrimage of the *voyador* and the *paradotoc* (as well as being itself the story enacted in the *tres marías dotoc*). The act of seeking becomes an act of giving that makes the subject. The centrality of the *voyadores* being both *samno* and *atang* marks their embodied fidelity—giving, so that as givers they may in turn receive in the dynamic play of reciprocity with the divine. In Mauss’ terms, such giving obliges the receiver to give back and places the giver on an even ground: the *voyador* or *paradotoc* is neither victim nor helpless supplicant in relations with the divine, even as individual subjective positions may be one of deep humility and desperate need, or even possibly of an abiding, saintly love.

Such giving may also be seen as conforming to Cixous’ idea of feminine giving,²⁸ because it is a giving that does not or cannot command a return. Though the return is prayed for, one can only believe in and hope for the love and goodness of the divine, and receiving becomes always an act of faith (because one can always think that the ‘return’ or prayed-for good is the product of one’s own labour and not a gift from God).²⁹ One may say that pilgrimage and its performance in the

²⁸ It would be quite easy to associate the *pagvoya* that is performed by men with masculine economy and the *dotoc* that is performed by women with feminine economy as described by Cixous, but such would be dangerously reductive. There is a ‘female’ version of the *pagvoya* (as the act of carrying the ‘Ina’) during a dawn procession on the ninth day of the Peñafrancia novenario where the *voyadores* are all female. In the procession I attended in 2008, I saw the same chaotic contest for spaces and the privilege to carry the image of the Virgin of Peñafrancia, although the atmosphere was not as charged as those during the daytime processions with the male *voyadores*.

²⁹ Parry (1986) refers to this kind of exchange as an ‘unearthly economy’ characterized by a ‘unidirectional transaction’ in which ‘gifts are...not in any ordinary sense reciprocated, although the believer may hope that the reward for altruism will be salvation in the next life; that his gift will, as it were, be converted from one economy [earthly] to the other [unearthly] on the condition that

Bicol experience thus become a seizing and sharing of grace.³⁰ And the giving is all the more precious because it is done not from excess but from lack—excess here flows from lack, a poverty that may be said to be so only in the physical sense but is actually a fullness in the realm of the spirit. The people generally, or in their majority, are poor and they save and scrape in order to participate in the devotions, although many attest (in Bigaa for instance) that they ‘miraculously’ have an excess (say, of fish-catch) that allows them to have a feast on the table and to buy the dresses or accessories for the performances.

THE ‘CLASH OF SPIRITS’ AND VERNACULAR RELIGION

Taussig’s point—about the community of persons imagining the sacred as the active force that keeps the sacred alive—brings us back to the first question: why have the Bicolos persisted in a devotion and faith that was imposed by the colonizers? Granting that the colonization happened centuries ago and may not figure in contemporary reflections on the religious experience by the individual — that is, that the religion professed by the Bicolos is now fully theirs however it might have been originally—what sustains the devotions? What keeps the faith alive? I consider as an answer the idea, from Badiou, that the people were ‘struck by grace’. It can easily be the Catholic concept of grace, which is surely what the dotoc practitioners’ ‘Pagsa-Dios’ would be, since it is the Catholic faith they

he acts in the spirit of the heavenly economy while still on earth’ (as cited in Cannell 2006a, 21). The goal of the giving as Parry puts it in this passage might, however, not be strictly true for the Bicolanos since salvation in the afterlife is not something that they talk much about (see later discussion), a point that I share with Cannell.

³⁰ Interestingly, Cixous also talks about grace, as Badiou does, and I suspect that these two views coincide in more ways than one (although Badiou certainly objects to identitarian orientations based on sexual difference). Judith Still (1999) observes that, in one of Cixous’ literary pieces where she takes up the story of Achilles and Penthesilea and talks about the *coup de grace* in the act of love of the couple, ‘there is an ephemeral moment of equilibrium that could be called the moment of grace’ (133). This sounds very similar to Badiou’s ‘laicized grace’ which comes in the space of a moment that stops time.

consciously profess.³¹ However, it can also be Badiou's 'laicized grace' that does not depend on any 'divine transcendence', but one that involves only human individuals grasping at a 'chance of truth'—persisting in a truth whose predications or outer appearances have changed because of the experience of colonialism, but remaining what it is. Attentive to meanings which are not said and fired by historical imagination, I have to seek for the unsaid, perhaps unsayable, explanation. For why is there a continuing discrepancy between popular faith observances and prescriptions of the official church? Such discrepancy cannot be explained merely as a 'natural' result of individual 'differences' or expected divergences between the official and the popular.

What the native Bicolns held on to with a fierce faith upon 'conversion' was not really Catholicism in its European or Spanish form, but one that was shaped according to the native understanding, that is, a thoroughly 'vernacular religion'.

I use the term as it is defined by Leonard Primiano (1995, 44): 'Vernacular religion is...religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it.' This is religion considered as speech, behaviour, performance, specific situated practice. Primiano suggests that all religion is vernacular religion, because it is interpretive; it is also ultimately 'personal' and 'private'. Even officials of major religions like the Pope, or the Dalai Lama, practise 'vernacularly'—they do not live 'an "officially" religious life in a pure unadulterated form... [even as they represent] the most institutionally normative

³¹ 'Christian' might be more appropriate (rather than 'Catholic') if other cases are taken into consideration. A friend (Kristian Cordero) has alerted me to the observance of the dotoc in another town in Camarines Sur where the community residents are Aglipayan or belonging to the Philippine Independent Church, or the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. This church, established by Gregorio Aglipay and Isabelo delos Reyes in 1902, was a product of the nationalist movement against Spain. Aglipay was a Roman Catholic priest before he was excommunicated for inciting rebellion among the Filipino clergy. It has not been possible to expand the research to cover this and other sites. For details on the Aglipayan church, see Schumacher, J. N. (1998) *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Ateneo de Manila University Press).

aspects of their religious traditions’ (46). Working in the field of folklore and folklife studies and their intersections with religion, Primiano posits the concept of vernacular religion both as theory and method, offering it as an alternative to approaches that presuppose a split between ‘official’ religion and ‘folk’ religion.³² Primiano rejects such approaches, saying that they only perpetuate the relegation of the folk to the margins and reifies religion as institution, making it stand for the ‘community of believers’ whose individual belief and practice are inevitably found wanting—such approaches thereby miss out on many dimensions of religiosity. As an alternative, he hopes that vernacular religion ‘will grow as a method of practice, a way of doing ethnography which has not been considered before’ (51). I share his hope, because I find his concept useful in thinking out the problematic of Bicol religiosity as expressed in the dotoc (and other devotions) without resorting to predicative claims of identity. The view that every religious practice is vernacular suggests that it is ‘multiple singular’ and thus contains a potential universal address.

Primiano’s idea is hardly original, however. An earlier book edited by Wendy James and Douglas Johnson (1988) sets out similar arguments, inspired by the thought of Godfrey Lienhardt. In it James and Johnson clearly forward the view that the Christian religion is a way to apprehend truths and that this way is in fact multiple: ‘for outside the authorizing institutions of the Churches and the texts of theological debate there is no Christianity except in the life of vernacular society and culture’ and that ‘without such a “native” appropriation, there cannot be a living religion’ (3). Anthropologists who take this view ‘eliminate the evolutionary

³² Don Yoder (1972; 1974 reprinted 1990) is one of the key proponents of the concept of ‘folk religion’ in the Western academy (see also Messenger 1972.) The concept (and term) has had great currency among Philippine scholars; many of the authors consulted in this chapter use it: Lynch (2004c); Gerona (2005); MacDonald (2004); Gorospe (1994; 1986); Reyes (1985). Mulder (1992a; 1992b) terms it as localization or the Filipinization of Christianity.

scale and make the “native” peoples they study not our contemporary ancestors, but our contemporaries’ (2). Fabian’s point about ‘coevalness’ in ethnography resonates here. Moreover, tying up with my line of argument using the Badiourian framework, James and Johnson cite Saint Paul:

Paul, through both the style and message of his preaching, can be said to have legitimized ‘vernacular Christianity’; yet he also embodied the tensions between the universal and the local which together have helped to spread the Christian way. As Saul, the Benjamite, he was a highly educated Pharisee, a strict observer of the Law. Yet he was also a Roman citizen by birth, educated in Greek, and it was under his Greek name, Paul, that he bore witness to the Gentiles, appealing to them through Greek logic, philosophy and literary style. This, more than his relaxation of the rule of circumcision, marks him as the apostle of both the universality of the Holy Spirit and the validity of the vernacular expression of its acceptance (3).

Badiou will argue against the ideas propounded in the quoted passage, specifically against the line that says Paul appealed to the Gentiles by using Greek logic, philosophy and literary style. For Badiou, Paul was in fact an anti-philosopher who refused to use ‘Greek discourse’ or the wise man’s ‘cosmic’ view, the ‘discourse of totality’ (Badiou 2003, 31). If he was a theoretician, Paul was ‘an antiphilosophical theoretician of universality’ (108). Neither did he write like the Greeks, for he wrote only letters and only ‘when necessary’—his writings were ‘interventions’, his speech a ‘speech of rupture’ (31). Badiou’s view is also the complete opposite of the idea in the last line of the quoted passage, because Paul did not just relax the rule on circumcision but went against it, based on his conviction and the ‘Christian discourse’, that the Christian message is for all, whether Jew or Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, and it was this and similar actions that questioned and rejected the Law (that is upheld by the ‘Jewish discourse’), more than anything else—more than his use of the vernacular, if you will, that marks him, in Badiou’s thought, as the great militant of grace that he was.

But can the vernacular in fact have a universal address? James and Johnson rightly raise the tension that will potentially explode my line of argument, what seems like opposing positions between Badiou's universality and vernacular Christianity. 'There is a point at which the proclamation of universal faith and its necessary practical demonstration must take precedence over and alter local cultural idioms' (James and Johnson 1988, 4). They go on to enumerate some of the ways that they think this happened, for instance, the way that the Jewish heritage (and laws from the Old Testament) was adopted by the Graeco-Roman world and imposed on and would have 'profound social implications' for those outside the Jewish world. Moreover, 'the early Christian apologists were aggressive in their claims to exclusive truth' (4) and the later Christians (Europeans) brought the religion by conquest to other populations in 'the rest of the world and the rest of the world must choose to submit or resist' (5). All these are true. However, going back to Paul, it was in fact not he who decided the adoption of the Jewish laws. It can be said that Paul in fact asserted the vernacular: the universality of the faith could be true only if it was vernacular—if the uncircumcised would be recognized as Christian as much as the circumcised. While the fidelity to the faith may be considered Pauline, the acts of colonizing populations as we know them in history cannot rightly be called so and can in fact be thought precisely as opposite and inimical to the Pauline idea. I therefore see no contradiction between asserting the vernacular and professing the universal, for as Badiou says, the universal is always local or can only be known as or appear in a local site. This is not to say that it is particular, because the particular is known by means of its predicates, but that it is singular, subtracted from all predications (Badiou 2006, 146). It seems to me that this is perfectly in agreement with the

assertion by James and Johnson (and surely by Lienhardt before them) that ‘there never was *a* Church’ but always churches in the plural, even during the early days of Christianity in Asia Minor, where it flourished before it reached Europe. Of course it is possible that James and Johnson are in fact talking about predications, particularities, ‘particular social situations’ (James and Johnson 1988, 2), but this may be just a matter of semantics or perspective, because any particular situation is itself a singularity and a multiple—that is, each of the churches that the authors are talking about is a multiple singular being as Christian and as Greek, Armenian, Assyrian, and so on. Predicates define a world, but it is important to see that a singular truth must be ‘subtracted from identitarian predicates...although obviously it proceeds via those predicates’ (Badiou 2006, 147).

In this section I sift through knowledge about the Bicolanos’ Catholic belief. I elucidate on the concepts of translation and appropriation and the ‘clash of spirits’ and how they are manifested in the practices of the dotoc as vernacular religious performance. In the process I seek to understand the conditions in which the performative commitment/devotion is sustained.

To begin with, Aguilar’s analysis provides a neat trajectory for this study—drawing from the past to explain the present, but also explaining the past in terms of the present. The preoccupation with the spirit-world continues in the present, changed and continually changing certainly, but substantively remaining alive and also surely figuring in a continuing clash between the indigenous and the institutionally configured spirits. Focused on the Visayas, Aguilar’s study invites one to search out the many parallels of Visayan cosmology with that of the Bicolos (who incidentally have often been lumped together with the Visayans especially in

the colonial chronicles). Often, the difference is in the terminology, because of the many varied languages used. Aguilar starts out by explaining that in the native worldview everyone has *dungan*—every bodily being has a dweller spirit, and the strength of such spirit’s presence determines the strength or potency of the person who has it. Even plant and animal life forms have spirit protectors and all transactions (between humans or between humans and plants, animals and sites and objects) are therefore also transactions of spirit beings. And these transactions are always contests of strength and power. It is therefore important that one learn to navigate one’s way through this world, to not displease spirits, or to propitiate the powerful ones for the coming of good things or the avoidance of ills and calamities. For the Bicolans, the Visayan *dungan* is the *saro*, (one or other) or ‘spirit companion’ who, in Cannell’s ethnography (1999), is present at least in or among healers, while spirits in general are the *tawo* or *tawo na dai ta nahihiling* (people we cannot see) who inhabit a world co-existent with the physical world. Cannell provides a description (Cannell, 83-85) that parallels the Visayan spirit world described by Aguilar.³³ However, except for the *saro*, it may be difficult to establish a one-to-one correspondence, and the *dungan* may be uniquely Visayan, for there are only Bicol terms that refer to ‘self’ like *kalag* (soul of the dead), *espiritu* (soul or self), or *boot* (inner self) (Cannell, 84-85).

Aguilar goes on to say that the ancient Visayans believed, as colonial sources show, that even the colonizers had *dungan* which proved to be powerful ones, so strong that they defeated those of the native shamans, the *babaylan* (*balyana* in Bicol) who were pushed to the fringes to practice their craft in secret. In the power struggle, the friars thus eventually replaced the *babaylan* and the

³³ Incidentally, Aguilar is a Bicolano who says he has grown up with an awareness of the Bicol world of the ‘*taong lipod*’ (Aguilar, 10), another name for the *tawo na dai ta nahihiling*.

natives converted to the new religion. '[T]he friars overwhelmed the indigenous cosmology, shattered the precolonial meaning system, and altered the configuration of the islanders' social world' (Aguilar, 38). Gerona (2005), writing on the Bicol experience, explains that this was accomplished in the scale that we now know it through what he calls a 'colonization of space' and 'control of the body'—the natives were forced to live in *visitas* and *pueblos* or an 'ecclesiastical domain' called a *doctrina* within which the friars systematically consolidated their influence. But it was a *conquista espiritual* (Aguilar, 33) that was thorough and successful, because the friars themselves dealt in magic, a language well understood by the natives.³⁴ Aguilar cites as evidences from the colonial sources how the friars began to replace the shamans as healers, investing the sacraments with healing powers, showing how the powers of the sacred realm of the new religion effected tangible results in the physical realm—or convincing them of such. Baptism and confession cured afflictions and holy water was drunk as medicine. Various religious objects like icons, medallions, rosaries, and scapulars became charms and amulets that enabled the natives to tap into the vast powers of the spiritual domain (39).

Despite the absence of conventional historical evidence, it can be argued that the circumstances of an imperial conquest led by a priestly caste impressed upon the natives a veritable 'spiritual invasion,' a massive intrusion of Hispanic spirit-beings into the islands. That this was the indigenous formulation of the Iberian conquest and the natives' way of coming to terms with the radical changes wrought by it can be inferred from Spanish words appropriated into various Philippine languages. Denoting preternatural entities of a distinctively Spanish origin, commonly

³⁴ Aguilar substantiates his analysis with a reference to the Spanish experience, demonstrating what he calls a fundamental likeness of the two religious systems (Spanish and native Filipino) at the time of the conquest. The Spanish worldview was also 'founded upon a solid belief in a nonmaterial yet palpable reality, particularly in a decentralized preternatural domain populated by spirit-beings with power to affect and even determine worldly affairs'. Aguilar explains that the great accomplishments of the missionary effort in the Philippines coincided with the 'golden age' of Catholicism in Spain, 'when piety encompassed all of human existence' and 'religious devotion "assumed a propitiatory nature" closely resembling the *indio's* religious practice' (Aguilar 1998, 36-37).

used words in the contemporary Filipino spirit-world include *engkanto*, *engkantu* or *ingkanto*, referring to a generic spirit-being, a word derived from *encanto* (charm/enchantment/spell) or *encantada* (enchanted); *dwende* from *duende* (elf); *multo* or *murto* (meaning ghost) from *muerto* (dead); *maligno* (an evil spirit) from *maligno* (malicious/malignant); *kapre* (a dark, hairy, otherworldly giant) from *Cafre* (Kaffir); *santilmo* (a spirit or soul in the appearance of fire) from *fuego de Santelmo* (Saint Elmo's fire); *sirena* (sea nymph) from *sirena* (mermaid); *tag-lugar* (environmental spirit) in a *lugar* (place, spot, or site) (Aguilar, 33).

These spirit-beings brought by the colonizers eventually dominated the native spirit-world; the indigenous deities disappeared and were eventually forgotten, or they became 'benign'. But here is the twist: 'the Hispanic spirits assumed the maleficent role of bearers of illness' (41). The *engkanto* (even to this day) is described as fair and having features suspiciously like those of the foreign invader, the Castila, and with behavioural quirks very much like his. And though the natives continued to fear this spirit-being, they had 'named' him and his cohorts and these spirits have thereby been rendered 'knowable, even familiar' (35).

The *conquista espiritual* succeeded and conversion was accomplished, but not quite. The natives learned how to survive and even deftly negotiate or broker power. Aguilar talks about how some native women, abetted by their families, cultivated intimate relations with the friars, or submitted to their advances and had children with them, or responded positively to them. '[T]his could be interpreted as the route chosen by natives to penetrate and know the colonizer's awesome power' (42). In Bicol, the *maguino* (elite) who were among the first victims of friar power resisted but eventually capitulated in order to preserve whatever ascendancy they had over the population.³⁵ But more to the point, the natives continued to covertly practise their old religion.

³⁵ Gerona (2005) provides a lengthy and substantive account and analysis. For a comprehensive account and analysis of Filipino elite manoeuvrings to stay in power, extending to the post-EDSA 1 presidency of Corazon Aquino, see Benedict Anderson's essay on 'cacique democracy' (1988).

Carolyn Brewer (2004) calls the clash a ‘holy confrontation’ between the ‘animist’ religion of the natives and Catholicism, in which the major antagonists were, first and foremost, the friars and the native shamans. Conversion could push forward only after the missionaries had displaced the shamans from their positions of influence and this they did with all their might, using force, rhetoric, performance, and magic. The first conversions (and baptisms) were effected on Magellan’s trip in 1521, followed in 1565 with the coming of Legazpi. Eighty years later, however, as shown by the Bolinao Manuscript unearthed by Brewer,³⁶ the native shamans were still active and the church authorities decided to conduct Inquisition-like investigations and to launch a full-blown campaign against the shamans and rid Bolinao and the surrounding area of their ‘diabolic’ sway.

So how did it happen that the Bicolanos were so thoroughly Christianized by colonization and were not even anti-friar enough during the revolution? As Cannell (1999) muses, why did they become ‘Catholicism’s earliest mass converts’ and ‘why was the revolution against Spain less flamboyant and less easy to characterize in Bicol than elsewhere?’ (1) Schumacher (1991) provides evidence culled from friar accounts showing that the revolution in Bicol ‘was not at all antifriar’ (232)—that Bicolanos even helped the remaining Franciscans flee from the region when the revolution broke out in 1898, that the Bicol revolutionaries were kind and courteous to them, and that the anti-friar actions came about mostly because of orders from Manila and the Tagalog officers of the revolution.³⁷ This

³⁶ The ‘Bolinao Manuscript’ is a report compiled by Dominican missionaries who were assigned in the town of Bolinao, Zambales Province (north of Manila) between 1679 and 1685, ‘on orders of Archbishop Felipe Pardo (who served as Commissary of the Holy Office in the Philippines of the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition in Mexico) with the express purpose of eliminating Animist practice from the Zambales district’ (Brewer 2004, 128).

³⁷ Vicente Lukban was the leader of the revolutionaries in Bicol. He was born in Labo, Camarines Norte and was therefore a Bicolano, but educated in Manila and had spent most of his life there. He had joined the Masons and had worked closely with Aguinaldo. Schumacher identifies him as

does not mean that the Bicolans did not support the revolution, because in fact many Bicolano clergy were actively involved as chaplains of troops and some even became commanders.

Rafael (1993) proposes that it was the idea of heaven and salvation that attracted the Tagalogs to Christianity, because it offered a promise of release from the oppressive bonds resulting from the unequal relations of exchange with powerful forces both human and supernatural. Early Tagalog society was structured by variations of debt bondage and the great mass of the poor often were prey to social predation when living and to predation by spirits when dead. As Cannell (1999, 137-138) interprets it, ‘while the elite might buy their way out of this by providing sacrificial substitutes (usually slaves) and ritual protection for their people at death, the poor went into the next world as they had lived in this—undefended.’ The promise of a blissful Paradise would have seemed attractive indeed, although it is the great achievement of Rafael to present the conversion as translation, whereby the natives used their own notions of exchange when they ‘contracted’ the new faith and thereby transformed it.

Translation, by making conceivable the transfer of meaning and intention between the colonizer and colonized, laid the basis for articulating the general outlines of subjugation prescribed by conversion; but it also resulted in the ineluctable separation between the original message of Christianity (which was itself about the proper nature of origins as such) and its rhetorical formulation in the vernacular (Rafael 1993, 21).

The resulting ‘vernacularization’ was, for Rafael (as for Aguilar explained earlier), not syncretic or the product of ‘historical synthesis’ but more a case of ‘fishing’ and ‘haunting’. What this means is that the colonized ‘fished’ what they were able from the speech of the colonizer that mostly sounded strange or unfamiliar, but

belonging to the anticlerical group of the Malolos government (the first Philippine Republic) (Schumacher 1991, 237).

were ‘haunted’ by images closer to home, lived realities in the native world that would not go away from memory. Rafael elaborates on the notion of ‘listening-as-fishing and remembering-as-haunting’ (12) by providing two brief accounts, one from Jose Rizal’s *Noli me Tangere* (1886),³⁸ the scene depicting Padre Damaso delivering a sermon using a combination of Spanish and Tagalog (1-2) and the other from an interview with a peasant rebel leader: Pedro Calosa interviewed by the American historian David Sturtevant in 1966 (8-10).³⁹ In the scene from Rizal’s novel, ‘listening to [the] veritable flood of Spanish words..., “the unlettered natives ... fished nothing out...except...the words *guardia civil*, *tulisan* (bandit), *San Diego*, and *San Francisco*...” and we witness the congregation skid from word to word without connecting what they hear to the priest’s actual message’ (2). ‘The penchant for hooking onto discrete words in the friar’s sermon results in some kind of native submission. But it is a submission purchased at the expense of marginalizing meaning and intent behind the discourse of authority’ (7). The near ‘incomprehensibility’ of it seems to compel submission, but meaning is displaced, because in their imaginings they associate the words ‘hooked’ with some other experience: ‘the native listeners moved to appropriate fragments of the priest’s discourse and so to deflect the force of his intentions’ (7-8). In the Calosa interview, Rafael observes that Calosa and Sturtevant (with F. Sionil Jose as interpreter) seem to be talking at cross-purposes. Sturtevant wants to get Calosa’s personal view of government and media reports on the uprising that Calosa led (the 1931 peasant uprising in Tayug, Pangasinan), but Calosa’s answers dwell on his remembrances of being haunted by or of haunting others—haunted by the spirits of

³⁸ See Rizal, J. (1961 [1886]). *Noli me tangere* [facsimile of 1st ed., Berlin first published by R. Martinez, 1958] (L. M. Guerrero, Trans.). Hong Kong: Longman.

³⁹ See Sturvenant, D.R. (1976). *Popular uprisings in the Philippines, 1840-1940*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

fellow rebels and haunting the president of the Commonwealth, his wife, and the American secretary of war. 'Calosa's stories of haunting circumvent Sturtevant's efforts to plumb his memories of historical events' (11).⁴⁰

Can Rafael's account be taken as a possible explanation for Bicol conversion? I agree with Cannell that there is something else that needs attention, something that Rafael's analysis is not able to cover, especially when we start asking about not just the conversion as such but what came after that: the lived religion of the Bicolanos and its continuity to the present. For this concern, it is Cannell (1999; 2006b; 2007) who provides enlightening discussion that is especially useful for my inquiry on the dotoc and with whom, therefore, I carry on a dialogue in the thesis.⁴¹

Cannell (1999) shows that belief in and transactions with the world of the *taong lipod* that Aguilar speaks of still exist side by side with Catholicism and that contemporary Bicolanos are still 'superstitious' and taken by magic or belief in spells, charms, or the *anting-anting*. Why this is so is explored in her ethnography of indigenous healing and spirit possession and the devotion to the *Amang Hinulid* in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, which reveal much that can be said about contemporary vernacular religiosity in Bicol and the way that relations with the sacred are informed by and interlinked with power relations evident in everyday sociality such as the transactions between husband and wife in forced marriages or the place of the *bakla* (transvestite men) in society.

⁴⁰ For reasons of space I can only present a very skeletal sketch of Rafael's concept, which hardly does justice to his fascinating account of the Christian conversion. But as I have shown in this chapter his ideas are useful for my study, especially taken in combination with the works of Iletto, Aguilar, and Cannell.

⁴¹ I cannot overlook the fact that Cannell's ethnography is the work of an 'outsider' and/or 'foreigner' which is now cited in these pages as an 'authority' on what I, as 'insider', am seeking to understand about my own culture. I do not take issue with this fact, intent only on my quest for answers, and focused on the merits of Cannell's work and its value for my own study. But perhaps, indeed, it makes for a fascinating subject for further inquiry into the inside-outside relationship and the state of knowledge production on Bicol and the rest of the Philippines.

Cannell shares most of Rafael's assumptions, such as the existence of a stratified social system (basically W.H. Scott's division of precolonial society into *datu*s/ aristocrats, freemen, and commoners [W.H. Scott 1985a; 1985b]) in which rank and status are 'mutable' depending on how one fares in the economy of social exchange—that is, the datu may lose his leadership status or the slave may become free or even ascend to datuship; the mutability is due to the relational/reciprocal character of power whereby the parties in a relationship, in the exchange, mutually affect each other: the datu's power is as much dependent on the loyalty of followers as the followers' welfare is dependent on the care of the datu. Moreover, and this is basic to Rafael's analysis that Cannell also takes for her own, it is one's obligation to enter into the relations of exchange; it is only by entering into relations of exchange that one cultivates one's *loob* or inner self. Cannell points out, however, that the question of conversion is even more complicated than Rafael takes up: for one thing, it was not just translation from one language (Spanish) to another (Tagalog), because there were many more: Bicol, for instance (Cannell 2006b, 139), and its many variants in the region, not to mention Bisaya, Iloko, Ilonggo, and so on in other regions. Texts were translated not only into Tagalog, but into these other languages, or the Tagalog text was further translated into Bicol. An example that is particularly relevant is the Bicol *Pasion*, thought to have been translated from the Tagalog *Casaysayan* by Tranquilino Hernandez at the instigation of Archbishop Francisco Gainza. There is a confusion about the authorship of the Bicol *Pasion* (it might have been Gainza himself), but the important point is that, in the introductory remarks, the author states that the Bicol translation 'clarifies' for Bicolanos what was otherwise not clear to them when they only had the Tagalog *Casaysayan*, suggesting that Tagalog as a totally

different language was in fact also poorly or not fully understood by the Bicolos: ‘one can imagine a phase in which [the *Casaysayan*] constituted yet another layer of the polylingual, half-understood, half-recognized religious texts with which Bicolanos were surrounded’ (2006b, 143). And there was more to the situation than is covered by Cannell, because with the dotoc the Bicol version of the *Casaysayan*, the Lenten *Pasion*, eventually migrated into many other texts such as the texts of the dotoc. What was/is going on then? ‘What, then, does it mean for present-day Bicolanos to insist that what they are doing, during Lenten vigils, is “reading” the *Pasion*?’ (2006b, 143) I extend this question further: What does it mean for the *pasion* to be part of the dotoc in the form that it takes, different from its source?

Bicolano *Pasion* singers are perfectly capable of explaining many of the episodes given in the text they ‘read,’ as well as of rhetorically quoting a number of passages from it, and they themselves emphasize their skill in producing the words clearly, a statement that would no doubt have gladdened the heart of the local priest. Yet at the same time, they stress the ‘matching,’ ‘harmony,’ and ‘pairing’ of their two voices, concepts that refer to ideas of balance, testing, and blending in Bicol rhetorical techniques in quite different contexts (such as formal riddling contests and courtship ritual). The extent to which Bicolano people literally ‘read’ in our sense when they perform the *Pasion* is, therefore, debatable. Actual performances often depart to some extent from what is printed on the page, and my observation over many readings is that singers rely on memory as much as on the text, despite the length of the piece. Semi-memorized, the reproduction of the *Pasion* occupies a space between the exclusively oral and the exclusively literate (2006b, 143-144).

Cannell’s answer takes the form of a description of the way that the *pasion* is ‘read’—essentially how it is performed, since the reading is actually a chanting in two voices (while in the dotoc it is singing⁴² that in many areas resembles the

⁴² The difference between singing and chanting can be seen in the melodic quality of the piece, the difference, for instance, between the cobacho dotoc singing and the chanting of the Lenten *pasion* that is evident even to untrained ears. I am not sufficiently equipped to describe this in specialist terms, but it suffices to say that the melodic structure of the cobacho dotoc is already predominantly Western, while that of the Lenten *pasion* is not. I have said elsewhere that the *pasion* chanting may

pasion chanting in the quality of the vocal production). The description is worth quoting at length:

The technology of performance ...goes far beyond what we mean by *reading*. In singing pairs, one person always leads, while the second harmonizes and ornaments the line. The way in which this is organized musically actually cuts across the structure of what is printed on the page. Thus while the *Pasion* is arranged in stanzas of five lines throughout, the musical ornamentation occurs principally at the ends of the first, second, and fifth lines and runs together the others in rhythms determined by the chant more than by the meter of the printed line. To know where to ornament, as well as to learn the wide repertoire of possible musical variations appropriate for particular points in the text, requires complex knowledge and experience, none of which can be read from the book itself. The performance of the *Pasion* by singing pairs in some respects actually seems to replicate a common pattern in the Bicol religious performances generally (144, emphasis in original).

And she goes on to describe the way that the dotoc in Canaman, for instance, is performed, with the *maestra* (Cannell identifies her as a ‘prompter’) reading the lines ‘slightly ahead of the moment when the group of performers need to sing it...[or] start reading while the singers are still completing the line before, producing a slightly syncopated effect in the performance.’ As a Bicolano I cannot help but say ‘Hurrah’ for the deep understanding evident in the ethnography and the way she ends this description: ‘Bicolano reading has this quality of interruption, of something extra being interjected. The line is not produced on a direct path from eye to mouth’ (144).

It may very well be that with the Christian conversion the Bicolanos had found another material and texts with which they can hone their rhetorical and performance skills that Cannell refers to, another way to show or present themselves (my point about self-presentation and the dotoc performance as ‘show’) and thus push their standing a further notch up the scale of exchange and balance

be traceable to the *soraque* intoned by the *balyana* in *atang* rituals of the ancient Bicolos that is mentioned by Fray Castaño (1895).

of power. If this sounds like an under- or devaluing of religious fervour or ‘sincerity’, one must think again because it is not so. It is only saying that the Bicolanos are a people who savour each present, happy moment and they show it in the way they enjoy their religious performances.⁴³

Cannell again diverges from Rafael on a key idea, in suggesting that the attraction of conversion to the Bicolanos lay somewhere else, not in the promise of Paradise. A point that she repeats several times in the ethnography and in subsequent papers is ‘the complex and ambivalent tone of Bicol culture’ (1999, 138), that the Bicolanos are ‘uninterested’ in constructing a clear picture of who they are or what their culture is or what they believe in, which of course makes it difficult for people like her (and me) to write about them (us). Nevertheless, a striking observation that Cannell seems certain about is that the Bicolanos (at least those with whom she lived) are also ‘relatively uninterested in the classic Christian “economy of salvation”’ that figures greatly in Rafael’s theory. ‘The relationship of exchange into which they insert [the words in the Pasion and other religious texts] is not the one intended by the church’ (2006b, 144). While some of the details she enumerates to support this view may be uniquely true to the Calabanga folk or may be true only to a limited degree or not at all for other groups of Bicolanos, I find that they can also be said of the ordinary folk in the dotoc sites covered by my own research—notably, that ‘ordinary Bicolanos are not especially priest-centred, nor are they deeply invested in a morality within the economy of

⁴³ A common description of the Bicolanos by themselves and by non-Bicolanos is that they are a ‘resilient’ people. Norwan Owen, whose research on Bicol and the abaca trade is a seminal work on the Bicolanos, writes: ‘As one native of Albay put it, “the land is so good, the people so kind, the Almighty had to invent the typhoon to even things up....” The history of the Bikolano has been influenced by...three geographic facts— isolation, agricultural wealth, and recurrent tragedy— which may account for his [sic] *resilient character*, his preference for farming and living at peace with God and his fellowman *rather than for elaborate plans and long-range projects that could be destroyed overnight*’ (Owen 1999, 3, emphasis added).

salvation, which is centred on sin, repentance, and justice in the next life' (145).⁴⁴ The novenario and dotoc performances run perfectly smoothly and largely without the involvement of priests, although they say mass on the day of the fiesta that marks the end of the nine-day cycles and ordinary folk are quite pleased to be at the receiving end of the priest's attention if and when it is given. Yearning for salvation is said in the prayers and found in the dotoc verses, but that is just what it is: text. The interiority of the desire is something else that is never discussed by or among the dotoc singers or their *kabarangay* (fellows). Instead, practitioners are preoccupied about present worries and frequently talk about them—like how the devotion to the Holy Cross saves them from the danger of volcanic eruptions or typhoons and flooding and puts food on their tables. For the paradotoc, therefore, conversion and fidelity would not be about a (sinful) past that must be ransomed or about a future (the afterlife) that must be ensured, but about the here and now that needs to be faced with faith and fortitude.

TRUTH, GRACE, AND THE TRANSCENDENT

Is Bicol Christianity, manifested in and by the devotional performances, an experience of the transcendent? Cannell (2006a) provides a brief survey of the anthropology of Christianity that I cannot take up here at length for reasons of space, but the kernel of which must be mentioned because it has bearing on the core of the inquiry about the Bicolano religious experience as it relates to the dotoc practice. The idea of the transcendent is traced back to Hegel who first remarked

⁴⁴ See also Note#20 in this chapter. Writing about Filipino religiosity in general, Mulder (1992b, 251) says a similar thing: 'the infraction of God's law as sin and its confession...are not deeply meaningful categories in the religious mentality' and that 'the way out of suffering, if any, appears to lie more in prayer and sacrifice than in repentance and seeking forgiveness. Religious practice is future directed and not intended to redeem a sinful past.'

that Christianity signalled a clear shift in the idea of the divine. Whereas the religions of pre-Christian peoples like the Greeks believed that gods were present in the world of the living, the Christian god was distant, separated from humanity in time and space. This belief in a transcendent divine has therefore led to the idea of Christianity as an ascetic religion that puts value on matters of the spirit and makes those of the body and the physical world inferior in comparison. Such is the explanation for the ‘unhappy unconscious’—the human forever mourning the separation, which can be overcome only in death when the spirit or soul is finally reunited with the divine. Notions about personal interiority can be traced back to this Hegelian idea, like those of Mauss on one end (the notion of ‘person’) and Foucault on the other (contemporary subjectivity as growing out of the confessional). Weber, focusing on Protestant thought, linked this to ‘the creation of the modern Western person under capitalism’ (20). More pertinently, Edmund Leach had written that a ‘political oscillation’ between radical cults and church authorities in the history of Christianity can be traced to this ‘radical separation between man and God’, while later works (such as those of Christian 1972, 1992; Pina-Cabral 1986; and others) suggest that ‘the struggles for control of mediation may be taking place not episodically (not therefore in the sense of an “oscillation”) but continuously’. Cannell is careful to say, however, that it might not be ‘adequate’ to look at ‘encounters between Christianity and local cultures [as] encounters between transcendent and nontranscendent religious conceptions, both because the transcendent may not be the sole preserve of Christianity and other world religions, and because Christian thinking itself is never solely or unequivocally otherworldly’ (44). For Cannell, in fact, Christianity is quite ‘paradoxical’: on the one hand, ‘even orthodox Christianity contained within it the

shadows of its own alternative ways of thinking’; on the other hand, the ‘elements of innovation’ are balanced by ‘elements of continuity’ (43). Certainly for Cannell, the encounter with the Bicolanos has sharply brought this paradoxical character into focus, because the transcendent, resurrected God that the missionaries introduced and taught through various evangelizing techniques was and continues to be worshipped or venerated by the Bicolanos as the ‘dead Christ’—the *Amang Hinulid* of Calabanga is Christ laid out in death as any human dead is laid for the wake before burial. I have to add that the Christ honoured in the dotoc is also the dead Christ on the Cross, or Christ represented by the instrument of his dying, certainly not the resurrected Christ.⁴⁵ For the Bicolanos, the dead God must be mourned and cared for, bathed and dressed, like any dead family member. While this is not evident in the devotion to the Cross as it is in the devotion to the Amang Hinulid of Calabanga, such practice of honouring the dead Christ is co-present with the dotoc devotion in Baao, not in the same degree as in Calabanga (in the sense of the Calabanga shrine of the *Ama* having the status of a pilgrim site), but certainly with an equivalent fervour usually seen during Lent. So if one must pursue the question of transcendence in Bicolano Christianity, and with it the question of what truths thereby arise in such vernacular practice, one will have to look elsewhere for the answers.

For Badiou, Christ’s death abolished the transcendent separation of God (Badiou 2003, 70) and made way for humans to be, like Christ, sons of God—or ‘God’s co-workers in the enterprise of truth’ (60). While his other formulation of

⁴⁵ Filipino priests and Catholic ‘reformers’ have criticized the Filipinos’ attachment to either the suffering/dead Christ (the Nazareno, the Amang Hinulid) or the child Jesus (Santo Niño), seeing in such attachment an intimacy with the divine in a weak or weakened state. Sally Ann Ness (1982) mentions this in her work on the *sinulog* in Cebu in honor of the Santo Niño. Jaime Bulatao is one of the first who observed that the Filipinos’ experience of the sacred that sometimes take the form of *sapi* (possession) is frequently with the Nazareno or the Santo Niño (Bulatao 1992, 72-75). See also Ambeth Ocampo (2007) on ‘The cult of the Santo Niño’.

this, that Christ's death became 'the means to an equality with God himself' (69) sounds quite heretical from an orthodox Catholic perspective, it makes sense in light of Cannell's ethnography of Bicolano religious practice and extremely useful for my own, since the Catholic God when considered in the economy of exchange with the sacred only replaced *Gugurang* and the saints, the lesser forms of the divine in the pre-Christian indigenous pantheon, and, thus, bound by the ties of reciprocity: 'We conform to Christ insofar as he conforms to us. The cross...is the symbol of that identity' (70). What Cannell calls as paradoxical I find in Badiou as the quality of the universal being 'neither on the side of the flesh (as conventional lawfulness and particular state of the world) nor on the side of pure spirit (as private inhabitation by truth and grace)' (64). The subject is therefore always a divided subject constituted by what Badiou calls a 'not...but' condition, which is not a state but a process of becoming—from Paul's 'for you are not under law but under grace' [Rom. 6.14] (63). The pure event of Christ's death and resurrection erupts from out of particular worlds governed by law to be in excess of all particularities, universal in its address because it is for all, a superabundant giving.

The sign of the One is the 'for all', or the 'without exception'. That there is but a single God must be understood not as a philosophical speculation concerning substance or the supreme being, but on the basis of a structure of address. The One is that which inscribes no difference in the subjects to which it addresses itself. The One is only insofar as it is for all; such is the maxim of universality when it has its root in the event (76, emphasis in original).

Of course this is Saint Paul according to Badiou, and church authorities and theologians will certainly have a lot to say about it, probably in contestation, but it certainly makes a great deal of sense in thinking about the dotoc. For when the One was addressed to the native Bicolanos, albeit through colonization, they responded in the only way they knew how: what for Paul was the pure event of the

resurrection could only be thought within the situation, that is, vernacularly. And this could in fact be the answer to the question of why they have kept the faith—why ‘[t]he “native”...appropriated Christianity in such a way as to become more Christian than the former imperial master’ (James and Johnson 1988, 12).

If a truth is to surge forth eventually, it must be nondenumerable, impredicable, uncontrollable. This is precisely what Paul calls grace: that which occurs without being couched in any predicate, that which is translegal, that which happens to everyone without an assignable reason (Badiou 2003, 76-77).

And so in the case of the dotoc, one feels the fidelity surging out from the garishness of its appearance, through the discrepant performance that seems unrelated to the text—the costumes, movement, stylized delivery, or the highly ‘ornamented’ singing on the one hand, the mere mouthing of lines on the other. The in-existent appears, the invisible becomes visible: on the one hand, the ‘native’, who cannot be conformed to the law imposed by the colonizer: of modesty, of piety, and so on, that is supposed to be demonstrated in behaviour and appearance; on the other hand, the vernacular that is the product of situated transactions governed by the idioms of reciprocal exchange. The subjugated and converted is revealed as an active subject who acts on/in a situation and transforms it and him/herself to be the militant of the truth that he/she is capable of being. Through the dotoc and other devotions, God appears and the self appears, to be presented for thought—the only way that they can be thought—and for them to commune *without mediation*: without priests, shamans or other intermediaries (although devotees do have recourse to them when they so wish), or with the *Ama* himself as the ‘super shaman’ (MacDonald 2004, 86) or ‘the most powerful and exemplary of shamans’ (Cannell 1999, 199). The artifactuality of the material of the devotions (the texts and manners of performance) can be said therefore to mark the

particularities of religion as colonial imposition, one that is thereby consigned to non-significance, empty of any emotional, even mental, investment.

Does the repeated negative reference to law mean that the Christian is lawless? That is precisely how the colonizers saw the converted natives: that they were not true to the law of the religion, that they were idolatrous or conducted illicit rituals. Such view has traces in the contemporary fashioning: that their native beliefs ‘must be purified’ by the experience of Jesus Christ (Gorospe 1986, 232). Quoting from a pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines in regard to the devotions to Mary, Gorospe elaborates:

‘The valid elements of an authentic faith, which are present in the profound religiosity of our people, need and demand that they be purified, interiorized, and made more mature, and brought to bear on life. This demands that certain syncretistic and superstitious elements that might have entered into certain practices of devotion, at time (sic) a kind of folkloric ritual which is wholly out of keeping with the true Christian faith, must be eliminated and transformed’ (Gorospe 1994, 76).

The Philippine church is committed to what it calls ‘inculturation’ –‘the effort to express and live the faith in terms and ways more attuned to the symbols and traditions of a people’ (Claver 2006, 3), which became clearly articulated as official policy after PCP II (the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines) held in Manila in 1991. Moraleda (n.d.) identifies inculturation as ‘one of the patterns in which the pluriform character of contemporary Christianity manifests itself’. In a 2000 pastoral letter of the CBCP penned by Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, OMI, then president of the CBCP, this is further explained by the following passage:

Inculturation: Our own missionary work must foster authentic inculturation within the cultures of Asian peoples to whom Jesus and his Gospel are to be proclaimed; we do not want to repeat the imposition of alien cultural forms in worship, lifestyle and ministry, as was so often done in the past. Creative inculturation in our own communities will instill *attitudes of that catholicity* of the Church, which is the source and end term of missionary inculturation. Thus we hope that Filipino missionary endeavor will bring forth a genuine flowering of inculturated communities, alive to both past

and present culture, but also attuned to the changing cultures of our modern and post-modern world. True inculturation, our Asian theologians have repeatedly taught, is really the building up of an authentically local Church for its own time (emphasis in original).

It is clear that while there is a move to inculturate the Christian faith, there are notions of ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ inculturation and that, therefore, the Philippine church continues to be bound by an idea of a ‘pure’ faith vis-à-vis vernacular expressions that need to be ‘purified’.⁴⁶ But then again this is perhaps only to be expected since we are talking about an institutional program, what Badiou might typify as law. At the very least, the good news is that there is now wide acceptance of and advocacy for a local, vernacular practice as an idea; its practical application will however remain a site of continuing contestation.

I see what Badiou means in saying that the Christian is not so much a transgressor of law as he/she is bound by a different law: that of love. Badiou may not be Pauline himself, but I understand his idea of militant commitment much better, through the example of Saint Paul the militant Christian who says, ‘faith works only through love’ [Gal. 5.6] (as qtd. in Badiou 2003, 89); that ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ [Rom. 13.10] (87); that ‘love alone is the life of truth, the pleasure of truth’ (91). Among the paradotoc, I have seen this love of self and other at play in the yearly devotions—*anduyog* at work in the life of communities. The performances become a declaration of a shared faith, and an embodiment of the Pauline love that Badiou also calls fidelity to truth without which the declaration becomes useless (91).

⁴⁶ In the anthropology of Christianity, the discrepancy between institutional prescription and the faith expressions of individual Christians has often been seen as the difference between ‘outward sign’ and ‘inward meaning,’ which largely subscribes to the evolutionist conception. Ritual is viewed as symbolic action and, thus, representation, and the problem has been that ‘anthropologists have incorporated a theological preoccupation of establishing authoritatively the meanings of *representations* where the explanations offered by indigenous discourses are considered ethnographically inadequate or incomplete’ (Asad 1988, 10-11, emphasis in original). That is precisely what Cannell takes pains to avoid.

Chapter Six

Identity, Economy, and Material Practices of the Quotidian

‘It is not the heart of faith that saves, but the lips’—this is Badiou’s restatement of Saint Paul’s words in Romans 10.9-10. ‘Genuine subjectivation has as its material evidence the *public declaration* of the event...’ (Badiou 2003, 88, emphasis in original). The dotoc performance is precisely this public declaration that is first and foremost a bodily engagement and only secondarily the making of spectacle. And just as this group of faithful people believe that the sacred is manifest, palpable, and embodied, so they perform their fidelity in all its corporeal possibilities, even in the face of a poignant lack of material means.

This chapter is an expansion of the fidelity question, but now focusing on who are these ‘declarants’, who perform and how that has bearing on the longevity of the devotion and, inversely, on how the devotional practice has constituted identity and/or the becoming of the dotoc subjects and their strategies of emergence and tactics of survival (de Certeau 1984); on the how or the processes and dynamics of the devotion, on the economy of devotion in its material forms. Here I tackle the dotoc performances in their groundedness in everyday life, in the material practices of the quotidian, attentive to Alan Read’s statement that everyday life is the ground of theatre/performance: ‘In all situations the everyday has to be known before its theatre can be understood’ (Read 1995, 10). In Badiourian terms, this pertains to how the dotoc appears *as* and *in* a world and how it subsists in that world, but also how the dotoc *as* world is disarticulated by the subjects in their emergence. There are two distinct movements here. On the one

hand, the act of fidelity renders this world strange: an artefact of the colonial heritage that has become manipulable, a set of empty signifiers apparent in the komedya forms of the dotoc. On the other hand, with the cobacho dotoc notably of Baao and Canaman, this act of fidelity has burst the frames of ritual and made it quotidian, such that what is left is just the act itself, spare, unadorned, stripped of everything except the singing, the praying, the walking—sometimes not even this last one. What remains is the active declarant persisting in the truth of the declaration, revealed more starkly as vulnerable to the vicissitudes of everyday life, marked by poverty and social inequality, beset by worries of daily living, but ever hopeful and finding reasons to celebrate.

WOMEN, SIBLINGSHIP, AND THE CONTINUITY OF TRADITION

One rainy night in May 2008 I had the opportunity of seeing yet another dotoc performance in another barrio of Baao: San Juan, about three kilometers south of Santa Cruz. At the end of the performance, I was given permission to speak before the group of performers and spectators about my research. Trying to be inclusive and politically correct, I spoke about the dotoc as being performed by women or sometimes by women *and* by men—whereupon, a paradotoc interrupted my speech saying that of course the dotoc is performed by women! (*'Mga babayi man talaga a magdodotoc.'*) Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence on the dotoc as a performance by women or by females. The cobacho dotoc in Baao, Nabua and Bigaa, the dotoc and lagaylay of Canaman are performed either by girls or by mature women; the komedya dotoc in Baras, Nabua has an all-female cast except for the Constantino who is a male child (aged about 12) and the Magurang who is a male elder person—it is even striking that the antagonist in the Baras komedya is

female, the Emperadora, and all the soldiers are female. It is only in the Bigaa komedya where there are many more males taking on roles: the Constantino, Pregonero and Soldados, while the cobacho dotoc is performed entirely by female youths. In the performances I observed in 2007 and 2008 in Santa Cruz, Buluang, and San Nicolas, Baao, participating children were both male and female and among the older set there was a gay person and some few males. The same can be said of the dotoc in Santa Teresita in Canaman where I saw several male youths joining the cantoras. By and large, however, male presence in the *predominantly* female¹ performances is usually limited to the musikeros. And so the woman's almost scandalized remark in San Juan, Baao was not surprising at all, because in their barrio the dotoc is an all-female performance, with the men involved only in the supporting role—for instance, the lone musikero playing a guitar; also, the person in charge of the logistical organization was male; his wife was in-charge of gathering and rehearsing the paradotoc and supervising the performance itself.

Gender and Siblingship

A good question to ask, therefore, is whether the concept of gender is relevant to this research. The immediate answer would be affirmative, but there is great danger of falling into a reductive analysis. Again, the requirements of a co-performative ethnography requires that I pay attention to the specific situations encountered in the field and inquire into local notions of gender and how these are played out, if at all, in the performances of the dotoc and the social organization of the communities that sustain them. For one thing, as pointed out by Atkinson and

¹ I say 'predominantly female' because it can be said that the male musikeros are also performers, especially since musical accompaniment is an integral element. The remark by the paradotoc in San Juan shows, however, that the musikeros are thought to be secondary, providing support for the cantoras but not the major 'actors' in the performance. See the later discussion of musikeros and their craft in the section on transmission.

Errington (1990), Western or Euro-American concepts of gender cannot be used for thinking about male and female roles in societies such as those in the Philippines and other sites in what they call 'Island Southeast Asia' (that includes Malaysia and Indonesia), especially in what Errington refers to as the 'Centrist Archipelago' where societies are 'level, egalitarian, or non-hierarchical because they have no mechanisms or institution for transferring prestige or potency...from one generation to its descendants' (Errington 1990, 45). Anthropologists such as Jane Belo (who wrote in the 1930s and 1940s) and Clifford Geertz (who wrote decades later) have remarked on the 'complementarity of the sexes or, alternatively, the downplaying of differences between them' in these societies (Errington, 2). Complementing such observations is the view that women in these parts of the world enjoy high status, one described by Penny van Esterik (1982, as cited by Errington, 1, 2-3) as a 'delightfully refreshing cliché' when talking about women in Southeast Asia. Such greater equality of men and women, especially as contrasted to the situation in India and China, is explained by Barbara Ward (1963, as cited in Errington, 3) as arising from 'bilateral' or 'cognatic' kinship, where a child is considered as equally related to the families of both parents. Drawing primarily from O.W. Wolters (1982) who is also cited by Atkinson and Errington and by Cannell, Rafael (1993) takes up cognatic kinship in Southeast Asia to explain why genealogy is 'a provisional, revisable marker rather than an unassailable organizing principle of authority' (Rafael 1993, 14). This links back to the idea of power and status in Philippine society as something that can be lost or gained, or changed (the *datu* can lose his following and be deposed and the slave can attain leadership status). Cannell (1999) sees such cognatic kinship as evident in her research site, Calabanga, and explains it as 'siblingship' or a system of

family relations in which marriage becomes ‘the coming-together of two groups of sibling sets’ (55) such that both the bride and the groom (or the wife and husband) each becomes equally a member of her and his biological family, an arrangement that leads therefore to the widely-held view that people inhabiting a specific place are all siblings (*‘magturugang’*—from Bicol *tugang*, meaning sibling) and ‘the desired unity and harmony of the barangay is described by claiming “We are all siblings here: we are all of one stomach”, or “We here are all cousins, that is, we are all siblings”’ (54). While Cannell suggests that lowland Philippine societies can be thought as excluded from discussions of Southeast Asian kinship as described by Errington (and taken up by various other anthropologists who propose a re-thinking of Levi-Strauss’s concept of ‘house-based’ societies [Cannell, 51], an elaboration of which goes far beyond the scope of this study), she subscribes to the idea that Bicol kinship is cognatic: ‘the ubiquitous Bicolano (and Filipino) preoccupation with siblingship as the paradigm of relatedness’ (Cannell, 54).

I touch on ‘the paradigm of relatedness’ to clarify notions of gender and power and how women in particular are ‘authorized’ as performers of the *dotoc*, which is a devotion of both women and men in the community. My intention is not so much to tackle gender or to get embroiled in assertions of sexual or gender differences, but to seek answers to the question of transmission and continuity, in which women appear as the predominant figures. Transmission and continuity are in fact the result not only of women’s labour, but of a dynamic system of relationality between females and males, young and old, rich and poor, and so on, not without conflict but ‘filiated’ (Badiou 2003, 59) by a common faith.

The Paradotoc as Woman

The ethnography clearly identifies women as the main performers of the dotoc (cobacho, komedya, lagaylay), as trainers and directors (variously called parabalo, maestra, or autora), and even as musikeros, though this is clearly predominantly a role for men. There is also a clear awareness of gender roles or the roles of females and males. But equally evident is that the males are not excluded from the devotion, but considered as collaborators—as in the case of the female parabalo and male musikero, or the female cantora and the male musikero, and so on. There is also no exclusivity of the gender roles and this is seen in the way the learning of the dotoc singing is encouraged for both male and female children and the inclusion of gay persons. I suspect that the force of tradition (having women sing the dotoc) has made its mark in thinking the dotoc as a performance by women, and that is the reason that the practice continues, but that the anthropological concept of complementarity of the sexes is true for the Bicolano dotoc communities. I did not hear a single complaint from women or from men about gender roles, and the notion of the ‘high status of women’ in the Philippines could certainly be discerned in the way the married women, most of whom have children (I am speaking primarily of the paradotoc in Baao), seemed to enjoy themselves tremendously on these occasions: staying away from and out of their domestic responsibilities long into the night after the performance and oftentimes drinking alcoholic beverages and dancing cha-cha-cha and boogie-woogie or the *pantomina* (a Bicol wedding dance) among themselves. May Choleng, a respected cantora and dotoc soloist, told me that her husband, when he was still alive, was very supportive of her participation in the dotoc and it was she who exercised prudence in how often she would join the dotoc or how long she would stay out at

night after the novena and dotoc, out of pity (*erák*, or *herak* as Cannell puts it in her ethnography) for her husband who was left at home to care for the children. Of course, this is probably not true in all cases and there would always inevitably be some exceptions—of jealous husbands who would not permit their wives to participate (though I have not come across a case like this), but perhaps even these should not be seen from a gender perspective, just as an aberration or breakdown in relationality that can sooner or later be mended. Again, Cannell's theory drawn from her case study of forced marriages in Calabanga is useful here: even if women are seen as obedient or pliant (to their parents' wishes in the case of a forced marriage, and afterwards to their husbands, whether or not the union was forced or one of love), they are 'reluctant' and 'the reluctance counts' (Cannell 1999, 36). '[T]he acts of obedience themselves obligate others, compelling recognition, a kind of return gift' (46).

But the predominance of women in the dotoc requires some kind of deeper explanation. Carolyn Brewer (2004) offers one that can apply to the dotoc: that in the pre-colonial Philippines, femaleness was valued as the necessary attribute in mediating between humans and the divine, between the physical world and the spirit-world. The shamans were thus predominantly female, old women to be specific,² variously called *bailan*, *baylana*, *balyán*, *balian*, *baliana*, or *babaylana* in the Visayas (and Bicol), *catolonan* or *catalona* in the Tagalog areas and north of Manila, and generally in use in the archipelago were the terms *maganito* and

² That many of the dotoc performances have young women as cantoras may have a separate but related explanation. In explaining the origins of the *lagaylay*, a Bicolano historian (Danilo Gerona, speaking before lagaylay participants and audience at the last day of the town performances in Canaman in 2008) talked about an ancient ritual, the *halea* or *halia*, that the early Bicolos performed to drive away a dragon in the sky called *Bakunawa*, believed to swallow the moon and therefore to be the cause of eclipses. The performers were girls, maidens, who sang and chanted and made noise, supported by the rest of the villagers, presumably including the menfolk, who beat hollowed pieces of wood called *patong*. The ancient Bicolos believed that the noise scared away the *Bakunawa* and brought back the light.

anitera (from *anito*, the word for spirit).³ Male priests dressed as women, called *asog* (Bicol and Visayas), *bayog* or *bayoguin* in other parts, in order to carry out their shamanistic office (Brewer 2004, 84; 1999, n.p.). Brewer surmises that the *asog* were not really hermaphrodites or persons who were physically both male and female (having both genitalia) as construed for instance in many writings on the Bicol *asog* (for instance in Tria 2004 cited earlier). They were males who felt they had to dress as females to become a shaman.

I am reminded here of Palango (Mateo Brillante), the first parabalo remembered in Baao (early 1900s), who was a *parapa-Jesus* (see earlier discussion). My informant did not say that he dressed like a woman, but we can trace his lineage to the *asog* of the pre-colonial period, then already ‘freed’ of the need to dress female because by then the male shamans, no other than the friars and secular male Filipino priests who succeeded them,⁴ had long replaced the female *balyan* in brokering power with the divine. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the missionaries carried out systematic campaigns to eliminate the female shamans because they stood in the way of conversion of the population who continued many practices of the old animistic religion.

Brewer provides a gripping account of the violence done on the women, including attempts to discredit the female shamans by calling them *hechicera*

³ Mangahas (2006, 24) provides a more area-specific list: ‘*daetan* (among Samareños), *catalonan* (in Bulacan, Batangas), *mumbaki* (among the Ifugaos), *mabunong* (in Benguet), *mensip-ok* (in Sagada), *baglan* (in Pangasinan, Ilocos), *mamallyan* (in Pampanga), *babaylan* (in Palawan, Tayabas, Laguna, Leyte), *babaylana* (in Capiz, Antique, Iloilo, Cebu, Negros), *baylan* (among the Mandaya), *mabalian* (among the Bagobos), *kapandaian* (in Lanao). Spanish accounts attest, in describing their ritual and function, that babaylans were mostly women; the gendered usage of nouns and pronouns in Spanish is proof of this.’

⁴ It is relevant to mention here that the very first Filipino bishop, Msgr. Jorge Barlin (conferred the title in 1912), was born and raised in Baao and the town became known as a top producer of priests in the region. Barlin is known in Bicol church history for his defense of the Catholic religion against the Aglipayans (that eventually separated from Rome) and his skillful handling of the Americans when they invaded the region that prevented the shedding of more blood (Schumacher 1991; see also Abella 1954).

(witch/sorceress), *diablesa* (she-devil), *anitera maldita* (cursed priestess), or *mala mujer* (evil woman). Brewer thus calls this a linguistic shift or movement from *baylan*, respected shaman, to *bruja*, feared and hated witch or evil person (Brewer 2004, 86-96) that in Bicol is called *aswang*, the entrails-eating, human fluid-sucking creature of darkness, very much alive in popular imagination even at present. It is possible that a campaign similar to the Inquisition-like investigations conducted in Zambales (as revealed in the Bolinao Manuscript) could also have happened in Bicol in the early years of colonization. It is not logical to suppose that there was no resistance, that the Bicolanos, especially the balyans and asogs, were just instantly, magically, converted to Christianity. Recent research by Gerona (2005) describes the ‘aggressive’ campaign undertaken for ‘the eradication of the native religion’ by friars such as Pedro Ferrer, Esteban de Solis and Juan de Oliver in the sixteenth century and how the ‘inversion’ of the balyana to aswang was accomplished⁵ (238-288). Gerona mentions that ‘the king placed at the disposal of the church the necessary coercive mechanism from the colonial state in facilitating conversion’ (259). But there are no documents about Bicol specifically related to activities of the Inquisition and much of current scholarship favour the view that the Franciscans were (eventually) generally loved by the Bicolanos.

⁵ ‘Whereas the *balyana* is associated with herbal fragrance, the viscera-sucker’s noxious smell betrays her malicious presence. Whereas the *balyana* delights in delicious offerings, the *aswang* is addicted to human flesh or raw, unsalted and unsiced animal meats. The *aswang* are unselective of their victims, often striking within their own families, indicating a denial of strong kin obligations normal for Filipinos. With her hollow tubular tongue, elongated thin as a thread when necessary, she drains the foetus out of the womb or incises a pregnant woman’s belly with her long fingernails to remove the infant. This gruesome image is the most spectacular reversal of the role of the *balyana* as healer and midwife. The nocturnal flight scouring for its prey seems to be a satirical inversion of the trance journey of the shaman for spiritual powers.... But above all, the *aswang* represented the repudiation of God’s power, a complete reversal of the function of *balyana* as priestess’ (261-262). Gerona supports the view that the conversion of the *balyana* was crucial to the success of the efforts of the friars. ‘It was no mere coincidence then that once known for their tradition of female priesthood, Bicol and the Visayas gained a reputation for being the home of viscera-suckers’ (Meñes quoted in Gerona 2005, 263). Iriga City which lies between Baao and Nabua has been particularly well known as home of the Bicol *aswang*.

However, it is probable that the same methods of divide-and-rule used in Zambales by the Dominicans could have been employed in Bicol by the Franciscans—luring young boys and converted asogs to serve in the parish rectory or assist at mass and making them divulge, through confession, the identity of persons (even their mothers or sisters) who continued to practice as balyans in secret, where they conducted the rituals, what instruments they used, and so on (see Brewer 2004, 161-183).

The babaylan stood horrified and powerless before their own former chiefs (*datus*) and newly-converted babaylan—the *asogs* (effeminate or male babaylan, also recruited into the colonial bureaucracy)—and worse, before the very eyes of their following who all witnessed the burning of *anitos* into ‘powdery ash and the breaking of porcelains into unrecognizable pieces, and if unbreakable, profaned and contaminated by body waste in the privy.’ It takes little historical imagination to conclude... that the babaylan (isolated and discredited before their own community), were forced to surrender or go underground in order to survive (Mangahas 2006, 39).

But many of them ‘defied the *reduccion*...and urged the people to resist and preserve their own ancient beliefs and practices’ (Mangahas 2006, 37).⁶ Mangahas draws from Filipino historian Milagros C. Guerrero (2000) who provides names of the women who led rebellions against the Spanish from 1596 to 1780:

Dapungay, the most celebrated in Cebu, Negros, and Panay (1599); *Caguenga*, the provocative *vieja anitera* of Nalfotan, Segovia in Cagayan Valley (1607); *Yga*, who assumed the title *Santa Maria* causing Fray Juan de Abarca to reduce Gapan, Nueva Ecija ‘by blood and fire’ (1646); and one from Oton, Iloilo (1664) who called herself *Santissima* (referring to the highest God) and was punished by death ‘impaled on a bamboo pole in the mouth of the river for crocodile feed’ (Mangahas 2006, 37).

Those who did not die in the violent campaigns of the friars found other means to practice the pre-colonial religion, mainly as healers, like those described in Cannell’s ethnography. Others converted and became active lay parishioners who curried the favour of the new shamans and in so doing preserved their high status

⁶ See also Gerona (2005) for specific Bicol examples of resistance led by balyanas or incidents of violence committed against the friars or desecrating Catholic objects of worship as reported in friar accounts. There are however no cited cases of executions of specifically named balyanas.

in the community. Still others resorted to some extreme measures such as having sexual relations with the friars—certainly there are some *paradotoc* or *cantoras* in church (still living) who are known in the community as the daughters of priests, the practice being an old one, going back to colonial times; that friars had sexual relations with native women is mentioned in some writings, notably Jagor's (1965 [1865]). Among these instances of survival or survival tactics, I wish to focus on those who converted and became an active supporter of the friars. For Salazar (1999), those who were co-opted became the *hermanas* in church and given charge of rituals such as processions.⁷ Some of these women later became the *beatas*.

If there was a movement from *balyan* to *bruja*, there was a corresponding opposite movement from *balyan* to *beata*.⁸ The *beatas* were native women who chose to live a life devoted to prayer, to 'the reading of spiritual books, fasts and the use of instruments of penance. They lived lives of outstanding piety confounding the claim that the "natives" were unfit for religious life' (Brewer 2004, 120 citing Ferraris 1987, 73-83).⁹ Some of these women became so respected that they attracted followers even among the religious, like a certain Luisa de los Reyes who had two faithful Jesuit supporters; she drew the attention of the Holy Office of the Inquisition and after an investigation was exiled to

⁷ Salazar adds trenchantly that for some of the *hermanas* the duties included pimping for the priest.

⁸ See Jaime Veneracion's unpublished paper 'From *babaylan* to *beata*: a study on the religiosity of Filipino women' (date unknown) at the University of the Philippines.

⁹ Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana (1988) writes that the *beatas* or *beatae* were 'deeply religious women who proposed a new, feminine approach to Christianity' (51), whose 'movement' reached its 'height in sixteenth-century Castile' (51, note #1), proliferating in the thousands in Seville, Granada, Baeza, Madrid, Toledo and other areas. He describes these women as variously '[n]oble, plebeian, holy, sensual, saintly, pious, wanton, witchlike, enlightened, possessed, prophetic, ascetic, visionaries, mystics, and miracle-workers...bold enough not only to invade masculine precincts and public spaces but to storm and take over intellectual and sacred strongholds' (52), counting famous personages such as St. Teresa of Avila among them. The account is fascinating, though well beyond the scope of this study; it suffices to note that the *beatas* were already making their mark in Spain at the time of the conquest of the Philippine islands and that in all probability the *beaterios* established in the colony were modelled after the Spanish ones, though they excluded native women, just as there was a movement among the Spanish to bar native men from entering the priesthood well into the nineteenth century.

Mexico and prosecuted in 1665 (Brewer, 120-121). In 1684, a Filipina of Chinese descent, Ignacia del Espiritu Santo, later known as Mother Ignacia, established the Beaterio de la Compañia for native women and sought approval for its operation from the Archdiocesan Office in Manila; the beaterio eventually became the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM), a congregation of religious nuns (120).¹⁰ Brewer writes that in the Filipino beatas, notably Luisa de los Reyes, one can see a reversal of roles in which once again the female is in the privileged position higher than even the male foreign priests and commanding their admiration and following, a flicker of the once superior female balyan of the pre-colonial period (121).

The conquest of the female body was well and truly accomplished by Christianization, however, as new norms and standards of morality were constituted in the colony according to the medieval European model of female modesty, following the Virgin/whore binary. Sexuality was regulated within the limits of a monogamous marriage blessed by the church and native bodies of both male and female (but especially female) were clothed, covered, hidden from coveting eyes. The extant confession manuals are full of detailed interrogations of sexual behaviour that verge on the vulgar. Women, epitomized by the balyan, were cast as consorts of the devil.¹¹

Moving forward to the present, feminists have appropriated the baylan/balyan/ balyana identity, choosing to use the Visayan term *babaylan* and

¹⁰ See Ferraris, M.R.C., RVM (1987), *The beaterios for native women in colonial Philippines*, Manila: Religious of the Virgin Mary Publishing Committee.

¹¹ Drawing from Spanish accounts beginning with Pigafetta's, Brewer describes the shock experienced by the Spanish males at encountering a people whose women were free to choose their sexual partners and where sex was a 'natural act' that 'both met a physical need and was a pleasurable activity' and allowed outside marriage. While such attitude and behaviour were observed in both male and female, the female natives got the harsher brunt of the missionizing effort for 'decency', 'modesty', 'civility' (Brewer 2004, 17-32). See also 'Catechisms of the Body' in Mojares 2002, 171-197.

linking it to *babae*, the Tagalog term for woman, and thereby asserting the transgressive meaning of *babaylan* as woman with a priestly function.

For these women, sensitized to the way Roman Catholicism has consigned them, by their biology, to the silent side of the altar as far as formal teaching, authority and administration are concerned, *babaylan* represents a subversive, power-full and inextricable entanglement of woman with religious leadership (Brewer 2004, 86).

The movement is called *babaylanismo* or *babaylan feminism* that is asserted as ‘a form of women’s consciousness indigenous to the Philippines’ (Mangahas 2006, 21), which ‘antedates the feminists of the suffragist era’ (Mangahas and Llaguno 2006, 15). In Bicol, Paz Verdades Santos locates *babaylanism* in the work of the women writers who ‘espouse new advocacies along with the old: nationalism/regionalism, spirituality, feminism, environmentalism, and basic humanism’ (Santos 2003, 8). It has to be said, however, that this movement is generally among middle class and educated women. The women who sing the *dotoc* do not say they are feminists and most of them, if not all, do not have any conception of it.

So what authorizes the *parabalo/maestra/autora* of the *dotoc*? or the *paradotoc* as woman to perform the devotion on behalf of the community? I propose that these women are the inheritors of the office of the *balyan* and her place in Bicol society, whose authority thus derive from ancient social dynamics of power. Indeed some of these women, the *dotoc* trainers, in particular, are also healers who perform *santiguar*, a form of divination and healing (or *bawi*, recovery/ransoming) of people who have been struck ill by the spirits (*naibanan*), like Nana Ilar of Bigaa. Apong Imang who taught the *sanabua* in Baa was a midwife, as are some of the *parapanganam* I know. And May Choleng, my own mother and grandmother, and all the other *paradotoc* could go out at night to sing

the dotoc and thereafter to eat at the house of the cabo (sponsor), dance and drink, while their husbands cared for the children left at home. They also travelled to Nabua, Naga, and as far as Manila to perform the dotoc. Theirs is an organic source of power buried deep in the collective consciousness, a power that goes beyond the performance of ritual or devotional acts and unfolds in relations with husbands, brothers, fathers, with other women across class, age, and family affiliations, in the realm of the everyday.¹²

SPACE, PLACE, TIME AND MOBILITY

‘Space is a practiced place,’ says Michel de Certeau (1984, 117). Place connotes ‘stability’, the location of elements one beside the other in ‘relationships of co-existence’. Space is not equal to place, for it is ‘composed of intersections of mobile elements...in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space *occurs* as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, *situate* it, *temporalize* it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities’ (117, emphasis added). While space can be thought as ‘ultimately reducible to the *being-there* of something dead’—as ‘place’: for instance, a tomb where the dead are interred—historical human *subjects* can *specify* ‘spaces’ by their actions (118). It is easy to see how this happens in the dotoc as a performance of pilgrimage, where space exceeds place because it is

¹² This is not to deny that there are grave situations of women who suffer discrimination because they are female, such as in the workplace: for instance, women are paid lower rates than men in factories, or housework is still not considered a form of gainful employment. In the global job market, female overseas contract workers exceed the number of male OCWs and many scholars like Tyner (2009) have observed that ‘transnational migration has become increasingly feminized’ (8) resulting, therefore, in the urgency of making a case about the gendering of international labour and its possible solutions. This matter is however too big to be covered by this research in more than a tangential way.

imagined, but also because it is ultimately ‘a nowhere, a utopia’ (17), albeit one that proceeds inextricably from a very specific, physical, place.

In this section the ethnography is read against the narratives of place, of poverty and dislocation of the Bicolanos and vis-à-vis the question of class and how it relates to the social organization of the devotional practices. Mobility is tackled both in its social and spatial dimensions, and time and place are interlinked to the ‘travelling’ dotoc and to diasporic performances in the era of globalization.

Virtual Space

On the first night of the dotoc in Santa Cruz, Baa0 in 2007, I saw how space in the dotoc is very much really an imagined space and how quickly the community transposes the physical to the virtual without so much fuss, how the paradotoc in fact is not bound or constrained by place or physical space.

On that night there were no lights on the chapel street, just the spill-over from the households lining both sides of the street, the lights streaming out from open windows. There was no cobacho. There were no flowers on the altar or anywhere inside the chapel; the Holy Cross stood bare without even the white strip of cloth usually used on special occasions to represent the holy body hung there. Nothing was out of the ordinary. There was a tent set up on the chapel street and there were people around, mostly men. The tent and the men were there not for the dotoc, however; many of the men were there in fact to play *sakla*, *pusoy* or *entre cuatro*—card games in which they could gamble what little money they had hoping they would win a bigger amount. Someone had died and the flurry of activities on the chapel street was for the wake of the dead person, whose house was right next to the chapel. The *cabo* and dotoc sponsors of the night assigned with him decided not to set up a cobacho because of the wake: to honour the dead and of course as a

practical matter since there was no space; the tent for the wake was right on the way of the dotoc procession. (I saw a small table set up just outside the chapel obviously intended to be used in the cobacho, but this was not used eventually.) Already the men were setting up the gaming tables and several persons were going around with cups of coffee and orange juice in disposable plastic containers. The stream of people arriving to pay their last respects to the dead and condole with the bereaved family steadily thickened, while the gaming tables attracted more and more participants and *miron* (watchers, audience) that soon I could see only the circles of male bodies congregated around several tables under the well-lit tent. The paradotoc talked among them and agreed to have the entire dotoc just sung inside the chapel, since the street space was occupied by the wake. And so that was how the dotoc of the first night was done: without the usual movements, just sung by the paradotoc all seated on the pews inside the chapel. For me it was like having another level of imagined action: imagining the imagined pilgrimage, all the action happening inside the mind, the rhythm of dance-like walking manifesting in the tapping of hands on thighs, in the slight swaying of the torso and movement of the head. Only the parts of the dotoc on reaching the 'Holy Land' were performed in the usual way, especially the offering of flowers, belatedly provided by the cabo of the first night: sweet red *santan* blooms. No complaints were expressed; nobody criticized the gambling that continued just a few yards away while the novena and dotoc were performed. There was a matter-of-fact acceptance of the lack of space, and the walking of vaster spaces together in the realm of imagination.

The cobacho was finally set up on the fourth day, after the dead had been interred and the tent for the wake had been cleared away from the street. This

cobacho was used for another two performances with hardly any additional décor. On the eighth day, the cobacho was new and much improved, with bougainvillea flowers of bright fuchsia on the posts and white bamboo orchids gracing a central bouquet tucked on the back wall. But the ninth day dotoc, held a week later, was a muted, drab affair. There was no cobacho structure, just a table covered with white cloth. There were yellow and white *banderetas* (festoons) forming a canopy on the chapel street, a usual marker of festivity, but the area was still unlit. There was no more reason not to use the space, the wake was over and the dead had been buried, but it seemed like it went back full circle to the first night, when there was no space.

Perhaps there is more to this than just the argument of economic hardship, which can be easily deployed (—the pageantry has deteriorated, has been abandoned even, because people cannot afford it any more), or invoking the ‘destructive influences of the modern times or of globalization’ (—the older *paradotoc* said *dotoc* audiences decreased when most homes already had television sets, and inter-barrío basketball tournaments became standard fare for summer, providing a more exciting form of entertainment/amusement/diversion for people young and old). Scholars like Clifford reject this kind of argument, dismissing it as nostalgic sentimentality (Clifford 1988). In the case of the *linambay* of Cebu (the local version of *komedya* in this southern island), Mojares (1985) attributes the reason for the disappearance of the practice to what he calls ‘the collapse of context’ that is not just cultural or social, but also economic and historical. For the *dotoc* of Santa Cruz, I may need to look at not just this kind of collapse meant by Mojares, but also the ways that space and time in the *dotoc* are always collapsed in the here and now, spatial and temporal practices being, I suspect, subordinate to

ones that aspire for the larger, cosmic, and eternal—utopian time and place,¹³ if you will, that is defined only by being the opposite of what is experienced now:

Iligtas mo ngani cami	We implore you, save us
Na nagtitipon digdi	Who are gathered here
Sa hampac na macuri	From the ruthless lashes
Sa hambre, gierra, y peste	Of hunger, war, and pestilence
(pasion-cobacho 2: 2)	

Obviously, there is more here to dig out. Its spatiality is important. That it *happens*—however small or humble—is important. The *doing* in real time and space is necessary. On the one hand they can just sing the text, the performance becoming an abbreviated gesture spatially. On the other hand they can only go so far, because temporally it cannot be shortened: the whole dotoc is performed, the singing of the text marking the passage of time as much as the actions performed in space do. Presence—liveness—is essential. There must be warm bodies in the dotoc, even if they only sing in place, when there is no space for performing the pilgrimage. There is no question of stopping the practice altogether.

The Poor Bicolanos: A Heritage of Woes

The place that is Bicol is everywhere marked by poverty and no year passes without disaster of one form or another befalling the inhabitants. Evacuations are a matter of course and the rebuilding of homes, school buildings, and other public infrastructure is a constant concern. A journalist commenting on the frequent experience of displacement caused by calamities has called Bicol ‘a beautiful but tragic region’ (Murphy 2008). Unemployment is high, reported at 6.1 per cent, with underemployment at a high of 38 per cent in January of 2009, the latter

¹³ Foucault’s notion of heterotopia may be more applicable, considering the discourse of contestation in pilgrimage and, by extension, religious experience, as propounded by Eade and Sallnow (2000).

considered as the highest in the country.¹⁴ The region is primarily agricultural, producing coconut and rice, with close to fifty percent of the population dependent on agricultural work, but many are landless and production is sustained by a system of share-cropping. For those who do own small parcels of land, cultivation is a heavy burden since production costs have steadily risen, and their fields are more vulnerable either to pests (since fertilizer costs are prohibitive) or to harsh weather conditions. Population in the region has risen to 5.1 million in 2007 or about 345.1 persons per square kilometer, with poverty incidence at 51.1 per cent in 2006. The poverty threshold counts as poor a family of five with a monthly income of 6,256.25 pesos a month (or £80.22). The latest government reports (in 2008) still list the Bicol Region as the second poorest (of 13 geopolitical regions) in the country in terms of the number of poor families.

This enumeration of woes translates into everyday reality, what Bicolanos call '*makuring pagtios*' (grave misery) of the people who are '*mayong-mayo*' (who have nothing at all), '*mga pobre*' (poor), as the Calabanga folk say of themselves (Cannell 1999, 15), or '*nagtitios*' (suffering). The awareness of being poor is, however, again, relative, because one's poverty is always contrasted to the '*irigwa*' (somewhat rich or the moderate 'haves') or the *mayaman* (rich) and Cannell says, citing Pinches (1991), that this awareness goes beyond material poverty or wealth: 'it is the experience of not being valued as human beings, of having to endure humiliation, disapproval and rejection, of constantly having one's dignity challenged, and of being shamed' (Cannell, 18). At the very least, it takes the form of a feeling of inadequacy and inferiority, even as the desire to improve one's lot remains constant. I remember a conversation with a Bigaa resident, Manay Rose

¹⁴ All statistical data presented here are taken from the online resources of the National Statistical Coordination Board (an agency of the Philippine government) available at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/ru5> (retrieved 7th July 2009).

(not her real name), a dressmaker. She told me that she was a classmate in the elementary of one of my university colleagues in Legazpi, Ditas (not her real name), who was also a resident of Bigaa. But she could not finish school because they were poor. And so while Ditas is now a professor and has a position in the university, she is still struggling to make ends meet, this time for her own family. She wants her children to go to college, but she could not afford the maintenance costs even if they work as student assistants and enjoy discounted fees. I could almost taste the bitter frustration laced perhaps by a tinge of envy as she said, *'Maray pa si Ditas'* (How fortunate is Ditas).

'Maray ka pa' (*'maray pay ka'* in Baaó: how fortunate are you) or *'maray pa siya'* (how fortunate is he/she) are common expressions in Bicol, acknowledging how others have fared better in the daily pursuit of a good life. Tellingly, people talk this way about folk who are more or less on the same bracket as themselves, while those who are far off even in their horizon of dreams, the very rich, mostly figure in conversations in comparison to themselves only in jokes where they are themselves, often but not always, the butt of the joke. That Bicolanos often laugh at themselves or find humour in even the direst of circumstances has been observed by foreigners like Cannell, who talks about the *bansag* and other ways that Bicolanos make fun of their own or others' follies, 'joking that is never only levelling; it is always more celebratory than critical' (1999, 22). The *bansag* is a nickname that people use to tease each other, oftentimes associated with particular individuals or families. In Baaó, some of the *bansag* I know are *'daan'* (old), *'da ubak'* (without cover/skin), and *'udo'* (shit) to name only a few.

Underneath all the joking and teasing, however, is a poignant awareness of the constant, everyday urgency of the struggle to survive. For the people who are ‘mayong-mayo’ existence is *‘isang kahig, isang tuka’*, a Tagalog expression that means a hand-to-mouth existence, their earnings being barely enough for a decent meal on the table. It is a situation that makes one very much aware of how one stands in the scheme of relationships between the *mayong-mayo* and the *mayaman*; one feels one’s invisibility and marginality like a material shroud that keeps one always excluded. As Cannell says of the people she knew from Calabanga, the affluent spaces of malls, shops, and restaurants in Naga City, markers of a fast growing urban landscape, are areas they do not inhabit:

Space is different for rich and poor; people from San Ignacio see the gloss of Naga City as they pass by its windows, but they do not possess it or partake of it; they do not consume its products as purchasers, and they do not eat its food. The incongruity between the world of the rich and the world of the poor, albeit superimposed on each other on the same streets, is therefore a daily, tangible experience. It is a difference particularized in a thousand material objects; canned peaches versus boiled sweet potato, plate glass versus nipa tiles, the air-conditioned chill of supermarket aisles versus the village store (Cannell 1999, 20).

What de Certeau describes as ‘ubiquitous injustice—not simply the injustice of the established powers, but, more profoundly, that of history’ (1984, 16)—is ubiquitous indeed for the poor Bicolanos. For Manay Rose and her children, it means not so much the inability to access what Cannell calls ‘[pieces] of America-in-the-Philippines’ (1999, 20) like canned goods and designer clothes, but being unable to afford education (also American-style) and thus being deprived of the opportunity to be ‘the best that they can be’ and the chance of upward social and economic mobility, education being seen as the sure way out of poverty.

And so people like Manay Rose remain poor, condemned to eke out a hand-to-mouth existence, and *to stay in place*—both literally and metaphorically,

that is, they remain in Bigaa, or in Baao, or in Baras, and they live and die poor, because they could not afford the exit fees, not even to take the other *perceived* ‘sure’ way of escaping the debilitating poverty: working abroad; visas and placement fees are beyond their means, or else they sell even their souls, sinking further into indebtedness in order to become overseas contract workers.

Not surprisingly, in the last ten years at least, education and working abroad have coalesced as an anti-poverty strategy actively promoted by the Philippine government, the first serving to make the second possible, with university degrees increasingly keyed to train professional nurses, engineers, IT programmers for work abroad, alongside vocational courses for welders, plumbers, domestics, caregivers, and entertainers. As James A. Tyner puts it, the Philippines has been ‘integrated into the world economy’ for the last five centuries, but recently it has become the ‘world’s largest exporter of government-sponsored temporary contract labour’ (Tyner 2009, xiii), annually deploying over one million workers to ‘all corners of the world’. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) places the ‘stock estimate’ of overseas Filipinos at over 8.7 million in 2007.¹⁵

While many people are forced to remain in their villages because of poverty, this does not in any way mean that they would not move given the opportunity and means to do so. Poverty in fact drives many rural people to the cities, thus swelling the number of urban poor or squatters even in the local cities of Bicol like Naga and Legazpi.¹⁶ Mobility has always been a reality for the

¹⁵ See Table 30 of the 2007 Overseas Employment Statistics. The report covers data on overseas work deployment by country of destination, by skill, sex, landbased and seabased work and remittances.

¹⁶ In Naga, 5,000 of 19,500 households in 1990 were squatters or slum dwellers dispersed in 27 communities/villages ‘which lack basic services such as shelter, potable water, streetlights, pathways and drainage’. The information is provided by a report on best practices in human

Bicolanos and can be seen in its many forms other than travelling within or outside the region or country for economic reasons: evacuations and forced evictions, relocations and zonings due to one or other catastrophe like a typhoon or the escalation of hostilities between government troops and rebel groups, regular travel to visit relatives and friends during fiestas, or to seek the help of renowned local healers, to go to the market, the cinema, or the cockpit, as Cannell cites (1999, 18)—and for the paradotoc of Baao, travelling to another barrio, town, or city to perform the dotoc.

For good or ill, the Bicolanos have been travelling and moving even before the so-called post/modern era of globalization. Nabua, for instance, is known for its huge number of citizens who joined the US Navy prior to, during and after the second world war, whose families are now mostly residing in Southern California, notably the San Diego area.¹⁷ This is evident in Baras/Sta. Elena where the main road is lined on both sides with fine houses: huge and gated, with two or three storeys, slate roofing, wide balconies, manicured lawns, and with at least one car visible from the street—markers of wealth gained from working abroad. I was a bit disorientated when I first arrived and thought I was in the wrong community. But even in Baras, not everyone has had the good fortune of getting a well-paying job abroad. Some have gone as domestics and do not earn so much, and many more have remained, striving to survive on the meagre income from agricultural work, or from odd jobs in the service sector of Nabua or nearby Iriga City. When I went

settlement programs titled 'Kaantabay sa Kauswagan, An Urban Poor Program in Naga City, Philippines' (n.d.). It is to be noted, however, that the statistical count of slum dwellers even in Manila is something that remains ambiguous. The last attempt at an 'accurate' count by the National Housing Authority in 1990 placed the figures at 1.65 million or 26 percent of the total population, while a recent (1993) estimate placed it at 3 to 4.53 million—but 'in other words, no one can claim to know how many there are' (Murphy 1993, 2-3 quoted in "The Urban Poverty Morphology Project: RS-GIS Applications for Metro-Manila, Philippines" (n.d.).

¹⁷ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nabua,_Camarines_Sur (retrieved 22 July 2009). In a 1982 article in *The Ledger* (May 20, 1982) the mayor of the town is reported to have claimed that 2000 of 20,000 Filipinos serving in the US Navy at that time were from his town.

past the main road to the interior, through a small path in between the fine houses, looking for the residence of May Fe the autora of the dotoc, I saw the other side of Baras. There the houses were ordinary, many of them ramshackle, or half-finished, ever in the process of construction: concreting of walls this year, tiling of floors or roofing the next time, making do with the mud floor or the water supply from a nearby *bomba/poso* (deep well pump) and an outhouse for the toilet and bathroom in the meantime that money is not enough, which can go on for years. Those who have gone abroad to work save their earnings and send home money to their families as much and as frequently as they can,¹⁸ for food and the education of siblings or children, for an interior bathroom perhaps, or a television set, or a ceiling (at last) to have relief from the scorching heat of the GI roofing, and for the expenses of the dotoc, perhaps only to pay for the musikeros this year, or, if one gets lucky enough, to have a special private *padotoc* as a gesture of thanksgiving for blessings received. The performance I saw on 21 May 2008 was such a one, sponsored by the family of a domestic contract worker who was fortunate to have been saved from sure perdition during the last war in Lebanon, the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. As people there told me with some obvious degree of pride, there are always out-of-season dotoc performances in their village, sometimes two in a month, because of individual or family devotions. Every time a seafarer or OCW comes home, or if a *balikbayan* (returning Filipino resident abroad) arrives for a vacation, he/she commissions a dotoc.

Mobility in its negative aspects can be seen as displacement, the form through which many Filipinos directly apprehend the condition of being part of a

¹⁸ Overseas contract work is a major income earner for the Philippine government. Total remittances from 8.73 migrant workers in 2008 amounted to a staggering US \$16.4 billion, representing 9.7 percent of gross domestic product (GMANews.TV, 21 May 2009)—see <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/162261/RP-Italy-officials-tackle-ways-to-enhance-OFWs-remittances>.

globalized world characterized by what Pertierra (2004) calls an increasingly deterritorialized, diasporal culture—from the families who decide to relocate to seek ‘a better place’ for their children, convinced that the Philippines with its ‘irredeemable’ poverty and inept and corrupt public officials is not the place for them, to the migrant workers who labour for precious dollars and pounds and euros to send home, to those who stay on but find themselves dislocated because of deadly typhoons and floods, fire, volcanic eruptions, or by demolition jobs in the city, militarization and the war in the countryside, or by the pervasive illegal recruitment and trafficking that victimize many women and men, and the many stories in between. These are movements *out* of place. The displacement is not just spatial, but also socio-economic, political, cultural, and also intensely personal.

But there are counter movements. I argue that the *dotoc* inverts that condition in two ways. First, the cantors as pilgrims seek the Holy Cross and always find it; each night of performance enacts dislocation but ends it. Second, they perform a kind of inverted virtuality, with the text or content fulfilling an artifactual function and meaning derived more from the act of performance itself, their song of triumph. Mobility in the *dotoc* is movement *in* place. Going away in the *dotoc* is going nowhere but here. The dislocation is willed and performed; the movement is constantly repeated but never completed, because the repetition brings pleasure as much as it is a fulfilment of a sacred vow. There is no question of leaving, but always the seekers find what they have come for, whether in Bicol or in San Diego. The *dotoc* performers dislocate themselves; they enact dislocation so that each time they can reach the end of the journey that is always good and pleasant. No wonder the wanderers want a piece of the action.

In Tinago, Bigaa, the main street where the komedya is performed can be imagined as the Roman Empire through which Helena and Constantine pass, making sure that everyone knew what they sought, brooking no resistance among the conquered populations, showing the full extent of their imperial might. On the day of the fiesta, when the performers are arrayed in their brilliant silks and crowns, one can imagine that the scene that unfolds in Tinago could have been what did happen when Helena launched her campaign as told in the accounts: rural populations suddenly roused to activity by the arrival of the imperial entourage, local folks gawking at the sight of such magnificence. The *sacada* and procession go beyond this street, expanding the dramatic space to include all areas of Bigaa that can thus be considered as a representation of the expanse of Helena and Constantine's influence. But one can also think how the performance constricts time and space to the here and now, for the real barrio in real time hailing the True Cross and the successful staging of the yearly tradition. With every performance, Tinago proclaims itself triumphant and claims its space in the larger barrio's imaginings of itself vis-à-vis the rest of Legazpi and the larger world.

Here were these people, mostly fishermen, in a village that showed all evidences of economic strife and wearing like a badge the wreckage of the last typhoon, garbed for this *katapusan* (end) of the dotoc and komedya in shiny silks, coiffures and make up, including the *Gurang* who wears a long white robe and a beard and wig of long braided white abaca fibre. Their shiny shoes got dirtied by the dust on the street, the high heeled sandals of the ladies sinking into the sand on the unpaved areas. They have refused to leave their place by the shore, near the sea that somehow gives forth more produce in May so that the fisher folk are able to save enough money for the fiesta, and vie for the public's attention and praise as

they spend on the rental of costumes or on having them especially made for their sons or daughters who play roles in the komedya or sing the dotoc. Tinago is on the path of mudflows from nearby Mayon Volcano, neighbour to Padang, the barrio that disappeared from the map in the last typhoon, washed out to the sea by the rampaging mud and boulders from the volcano. I shudder at the thought of the grave danger. But the Tinago folk have long ago decided to remain here. And they walk their pain, sing their prayer, and celebrate their triumph, with full trust that they will endure and live.

Walking in the dotoc has become ‘exoticized’ (Read 1995, 7) in the sense of its being placed within the performance of pilgrimage and, ‘as a space of enunciation’ (de Certeau, 98), it is deployed as a practice of an abiding fidelity. But it ‘affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it “speaks”’ as the ‘[walkers constitute] in relation to [their] position, both a near and a far, a *here* and a *there*...’ (99), because the dotoc as performance continues to be poignantly woven with the performers’ everyday life. The paradotoc in Baao *walk their pain*—perform liminality, it seems to me: perpetually going the distance between a here and a there—but they do it with a lilt, dance-like, with hips swaying, while the girl cantoras in Bigaa dash through the poorly lit street with energetic strides. In Canaman, the cantoras do their walking on a mat, in place, the ‘action’ subordinated to the singing.

Counter movements and spatial practices in the dotoc may be explained as the ‘ruses’ and ‘tactics’ of people who have no place, who ‘poach’ on the ‘space of the other’ (De Certeau 1984). These are marks of the ‘art of the weak’ that as ‘trickery’, ‘legerdemain’ or ‘wit’ can be seen in the *pusong* of the komedya (indeed ‘*la perruque*’) and in the many jokes that Bicolanos exchange among themselves.

While de Certeau talks about ruses and tactics as ‘determined by the *absence of power*’ in contrast to strategy that is ‘organized by the postulation of power’ (38, emphasis in original), he clearly strongly rejects the idea that the weak and common people—the subaltern postulated in this thesis—are helpless and passive consumers of the productions of the powerful, be they states, the rich, or the ‘authors, educators, [and] revolutionaries’ (166-167). I would argue that the dotoc subjects in their emergence in the act of fidelity thus move from ‘tactic’ to ‘strategy’ and this is evident in the way they now fully claim and have indeed taken over a tradition of worship like the dotoc.

DRESS, HUMOR, POWER, AND VIRTUAL INVERSIONS

The Bicolanos take their humour seriously, and I am not speaking in jest. Life for the poor majority is miserable as it is and one would not profit from a choleric or saturnine disposition. And so they look forward to their fiestas and punctuate their daily transactions with ironic jokes and teasing. Anything at all can set off the laughter always bubbling close to the surface. But also, what is laughed at almost always involves ‘what people have [or do not have] and what they would like to have’ (Cannell 1999, 25), like the man whose small lot and shanty adjoined a rich man’s property—a story people love to tell in Baao: the rich man offered to buy the poor man’s lot and house in order to expand his lawn, whereupon the poor man made a counter offer, saying he had long wanted to buy the rich man’s mansion; the only problem, he said, was where to get the money to do it.

Bicolanos ‘highlight incongruities as well as trying to resolve them’; they have an ‘ambivalent sensibility... [that] enters into all their “conversations” about power’ (25). As Cannell emphasizes, the concept of power in Bicol is relational

and reciprocal and the poor man or woman is just as dignified as his/her fellow man/woman who lives in a mansion and happens to have money. The rich are bound to the poor and vice versa, and this becomes quite real for anyone who by hard work or fortune becomes wealthy, for one is obliged to share one's blessings on pain of public censure or being thought '*iba na*' (already different) by kin and friends. Worse, one can be accused 'that one had "forgotten one's kin" or had become "an oppressor of one's fellow men".' (24). People who do not forget their less fortunate relatives or friends ('*dai nakakalingaw*') are valued as good people (*maray an boot* [with a good inside]).

Class in Bicol was theorized in the 1950s by Frank Lynch (1959; 2004b) as a relationship between 'big people' and 'little people' suggesting that such relationship is 'one of harmonious patronage rather than conflict' (Cannell 1999, 23). This view has been widely criticized, because of its functionalist basis. Cannell proposes that Bicol society is 'not strongly egalitarian in any generally understood sense; they do not maintain that absolute equality is a social good, or that all individual betterment is anti-social or unmerited' (Cannell, 24). In short, there are class divisions and there are stark inequalities. In the *dotoc*, inequality can be seen in fact in the way the poor, individually, cannot afford grand performances—with expensive dresses, a band of *musikeros* (who are paid sometimes as much as 700 pesos each), and a banquet after the performance. Only the *mayaman* (rich) or the *iri-igwa* (somewhat rich) are able to sponsor a private *padotoc*; the people who have nothing contribute for the expenses only with great effort and sacrifice.¹⁹

¹⁹ It is telling, in some areas, that the crowd swells when the performance is near its ending each night, for sometimes food packs are handed out instead of having performers eat at the house of the *cabo*. This is the practice of giving *tandan* (tokens), also present in other devotions like the *flores de mayo* and the *aurora*. Sometimes food is served right at the chapel and given out to everyone

But what applies to gender also applies to class, that is, that the relationship is always negotiated. What obtains is an economy of exchange between unequals and it is one which can be seen as tending to favour, for the time being, the haves over the have-nots. But the clash is by no means over or decided and the mayong-mayo find ways to stay in the contest. If they are not decisively winning now at least they are mitigating its effects and there are always ways to win small battles through survival tactics (de Certeau 1984) and everyday politics (Kerkvliet 2002; Gerona 1997, 2005).

If power is to be distributed unequally, lowlanders [/Bicolanos] seem to be saying, let us at least constrain the power-holders within a relationship with their dependents which they cannot entirely ignore. Similarly, if the poor are to be poor, let it at least not be forgotten that human value is not entirely measureable by wealth, and that all unequal relationships of wealth and power are, finally, mutable (Cannell 1999, 24).

Talking specifically about Bicol ritual such as the Lenten pasion, Cannell argues that it demonstrates just how such relations of unequals are not fixed because power is accessible only through an exchange between persons who have the capacity to turn it around. There is a 'lack of closure' in such relationships: 'hierarchy may or may not remain, but even the most powerless persons may—in fact must—place the kernel of humanity which commands recognition and constitutes value within the relations of debt and pity, and hope gradually to be able to wrap it round in protective layers of alliance, patronage and wealth' (253).

In a foreword to a new edition of Lynch's essays, Aguilar (2004) suggests that Lynch, despite his theoretical moorings, writing in the 1950s until the 1970s, was actually affirming the view of power as reciprocal, the relations of reciprocity that tied the big people to certain obligations toward the little people; Lynch in fact

present, even to the *miron* (bystanders) or until the food runs out. One gets a sense that this communal feast functions as an alternative feeding program for those who would otherwise not have a meal for the day, though no one in the sites I covered would admit to being that poor that they wait for the *tandan* to fill their stomachs.

uses this same term ('the system of reciprocal obligations' [Lynch 2004d, 234]) as he elaborates on the dynamics of reciprocal exchanges, for instance in the way fiestas and religious events are organized: 'It can be said that the upper class makes folk-religious activities a possibility [because of their wealth], while the lower class makes them an actuality [because of their labour]. In the local view, who will say which contributes more?' (Lynch 2004c, 216). Aguilar goes further to say that Lynch's ideas even predate what would eventually be called 'everyday forms of resistance' by James Scott (1985) who talks about the 'weapons of the weak' in his book.

In the dotoc, I argue that such power play is manifest in the way the performance is centred on the act of performing itself and not on what is performed, how even the text is turned around to narrate the journey of ordinary pilgrims, the villagers themselves instead of the 'big people', or how, in the dotoc as komedya, the supposed antagonists are given as many lines and as many scene exposures as the protagonists (in the Baras dotoc, the conquered Emperadora even shares 'the throne' of Elena and Constantino). More to the point here, power is deployed by the powerless in the most visible aspect of the performance: the dress or costume.

The dotoc as komedya may not be seen as humorous now by any measure, because the performers and their directors take their task seriously. Costuming, for instance, is a matter of convention, not a laughing matter. But to an external observer, the incongruities speak volumes—mimicry as mockery, the conquered presenting the conqueror as a fop, the powerless drowning their sorrows in the spectacle and haze of bright colours and gaudy fabrics. The early practitioners must have been laughing quite hard at the joke on their tormentors. In the case of

the cobacho and Canaman dotoc, it is the opposite: making it ordinary, everyday, quotidian, and in many ways transgressive of imposed standards of ‘decent’ dress for occasions like this.

While these observations may be neither here nor there and may be vigorously contested by the performers and their communities, one remembers that in performance, appearances do matter even as one equally reminds oneself that what appears is not all there is.

The lagaylay maestra in Canaman sadly remarked that many people come to watch the lagaylay only to see how the girls are dressed. The same could perhaps be said of the komedya in Bigaa, or the dotoc of Baras. Inversely, one could say that the reason for the poor audience count in the dotoc of Santa Cruz, Baa and the other places where the performers do not dress ‘well’ or are not in costume—including the first eight days of the komedya in Bigaa when costumes are not used—is precisely that there is little to see. There is no ‘show’. And yet, while this can be interpreted as an indication of the modern predilection for the visual, one can think that it is also very much still the operation of a desire to contain the strange and foreign, the little understood stories of the dotoc texts or the dotoc as remnant of the colonial experience, to domesticate and appropriate it. In *The Promise of the Foreign* (2006), Rafael elaborates on a point about the *comedia* (he uses the Spanish spelling) introduced in an earlier essay (Rafael 1999): that in the *comedia* the foreign is contained in the vernacular. In two brilliant essays, Rafael argues that the foreignness of the *comedia* was its main attraction for the huge crowds that gathered to watch every performance; the bits of untranslated Castilian or Latin were prized precisely because of their opacity; and ‘costumes were made not so much as faithful copies of their originals but in ways

that suggested their alien origins' (104). He explains this phenomenon as a 'double estrangement'—

They displace fragments of the foreign into the local. But in doing so, they also dislocate the local, denaturalizing the native speech and rendering it beholden to foreign signs and appearances. Through translation, what comes from the outside is given a place inside. And it is this giving place that converts both the outside and the inside into something other than what they were (109).

'The foreign lodged in the vernacular' carries a 'promise'—of the natives gaining the 'telecommunicative power' of Castilian, of reaching across boundaries closed off by class or the hierarchies of colonial society. The vernacular is 'rendered uncanny' so that it might do the job of inversion: the recurrence, indeed persistence, of the 'colonial uncanny' is tamed and the vernacular is elevated into a position of dialogue with the foreign, that now can be spoken by the lowly natives or, as costumes, can now be 'draped on native bodies'. Indeed, for Rafael, the *comedia* 'rehearsed' what would become the movement for nationalism and the 1896 revolution against Spain: 'this letting loose and putting forth of the alien constitutive of nationalism involved ways of doing and making do, rhetorical practices, mechanical instruments, and repetitive gestures that could be summed up as the technics of translation' (14-15). He proposes to think of the foreign as 'technology' or as 'infrastructures with which to extend one's reach while simultaneously bringing distant others up close' (5).

But this account of the *comedia* as translation is instructive for understanding another kind of double movement I speak of here, which has two seemingly contradictory purposes but really accomplishes, to my mind, the very same thing. That the *komedya* costuming and all its other 'absurdities',²⁰ (124)

²⁰ Jagor was not the only one who derided the *komedya* (Guerra made similar comments also on performances in Albay). As Rafael reveals, such 'absurdities' earned for it even the rejection of

make it a show renders it as other—which has the same effect, I would argue, as the gesture to make the dotoc ordinary (as in Baa and Canaman) and thus bound within the performers’ realm of control. What appears is not even half the story, for it opens up a void where the inexistent can be discerned. If the dotoc practice as colonial imposition is the state of the situation, this is pierced asunder by the *tactics* of the colonized and the *strategic* practices of fidelity of the post-colonial, contemporary performers: exaggeration to play up the strange and the disjunctive; stripping or subtraction to assert the centrality of the embodied subject.

FEASTS, OLFACTION AND DEFIANCE

The fiesta has been much criticized. It is an unnecessary expenditure for people who are poor and cynics scoff at the way poor families would go to great lengths like borrowing money from the local loan shark at usurious rates (the loan is called ‘5-6’) just so they would have special dishes to offer their guests at the fiesta, never mind if they spend the rest of the year paying off the loan and suffer the daily uncertainty of where or how to get the next meal.

But the Bicolanos love their fiestas. Contrary to common belief that its origins can be explained by its introduction to the culture by the Spanish colonizers, feasting and revelry go all the way back to the traditions of the ancient Bicolanos prior to colonization. The *atang* ritual to Gugurang described by Castaño (1895) always ended in the eating of the *himoloan*—the cornucopia of the best harvests from the land and sea offered to the highest God—and in revelry that usually ended in drunken brawls. The Spanish accounts noted the Bicolanos’ love

early Filipino nationalists, who considered it an ‘embarrassing’ sign of inferiority (Rafael 2006, 124).

of feasting carried over into the Christianized traditions like weddings and christenings. One report on Baa that I found in the archives says the town celebrated the feast of its *patron titular* San Bartolome Apostol ‘*con gran pompa bailes y funciones religiosas y demas diversiones publicas en los barrios y visitas*’ (with grand pomp, dances and religious functions and other public amusements in the barrios and *visitas*) and ‘*los casamientos y bautismos con comidas y bailes particulares*’ (the weddings and baptisms with feasts/banquets and special dances or balls) (Memoria 1892). Present day celebrations are perhaps less grand than before and many Bicolanos have become more practical and more careful in spending their hard-earned money, but the fiestas have not disappeared. Indeed one can write a whole thesis on the way the fiestas can be used as a barometer of the nation’s socio-economic conditions over the years, the worsening poverty and sheer incapacity forcing people to abandon age-old practices. Much of the pomp has gone, but the eating remains. However meagre the fare, families will have something to feast on, as though they would feel more miserable if they had nothing at all to mark the fiesta. It is after all the only time in the year (aside from Christmas) when they could have something special to eat for a very good reason and not out of whim which they could ill afford.

In 2007 and 2008 the mainstays in the fare were *sotanghon* or *bijon* (noodles) and *ibos* or *ginalpong* (varieties of rice cakes cooked in coconut milk) during the novenario, progressing to meat dishes like *caldereta*, *estofado*, *mechado*, and *embutido*, combined with the now ubiquitous fried chicken, and *leche flan*, *buko* salad, and candied pili nuts for dessert during the fiesta. As could be expected, the richer families had many more: barbecued pork *liempo* or chicken

legs, *morcon*, steamed tuna or *lapulapu* topped with mayonnaise, grilled fish, and *lechon* (roasted pig).²¹

The fiesta is indeed very much about food and eating and that it is so partly explains its longevity. Of course it is also very much about getting together, meeting friends and relatives, and marking the culmination of the devotion to the patron saint. But I propose there is a more basic element involved in the continued observance of the fiesta, one that is integrally woven into the practices of fidelity. This is the very corporeal experience of being filled and feeling good, the experience of gustatory and olfactory delights mixed with the feeling of being in control, of playing host to friends and family and even to total strangers who come to partake of the food. Alan Read talks about olfaction as an ‘inducement to memory’ (Read 1993, 120); I suppose the same can be said of the sense of taste.

What reaches us through the nose is a knowledge, not drawn from the encyclopaedic tradition but a *doxa*, a wisdom, that belies the splitting of the mental and the material (Read, 124).

The smells and tastes of good food are experiences of the good life that many are unable to have for most of their lives, but which stay long in the memory, provisioning them for the long haul and making them ever hopeful. The aroma and taste of food and the rituals of preparation, cooking and serving are real, and they hold on to this real. The ‘wasteful’ spending is a gesture of defiance, it seems to me, of their poor state and all the misery it brings day after day.

Taking the argument further, the defiance may well be the very emergence of the subjects who hold on to the truth that they are capable of being these persons who host feasts and share materially with others. They are not the lowly, deprived, miserable beggars who can only be happy with the crumbs from other people’s

²¹ Doreen Fernandez’s books (1988; 1994; 2000) provide a rich virtual experience of these fiesta dishes and everyday Filipino cooking, works which are all meticulously researched and deep wells of insights on food as culture and performance.

tables, the typhoon victims who wait for relief goods from charitable institutions, the Bicolanos who are counted only in the nation's poverty statistics.

There is nobility here that flies in the face of the cynics' criticisms. There is grace and dignity. And there is a political act that calls for our faithful attention. As Read says, 'Aroma and odour are...as public and political a part of our lives as one could imagine' (Read, 124).

Conclusion

I am an insider studying my own culture from the outside. This is the starting position from which I have asked the questions that led me to the concept of ethnographic co-performance and to the practices of fidelity in the dotoc as performance event. Talking about my own culture was not as straightforward as it seemed and posed innumerable problems related to the so called 'crisis of representation' and ethnographic authority. I found that I did not stand outside but was fully implicated in the critique of colonialism that has had its stranglehold over how we Filipinos/Bicolanos see ourselves or how we have become over the course of our history. New challenges had to be confronted, such as the challenge of constant self-reflexivity: where was I coming from and how was I looking? The formerly solid ground of 'scientific' research had been shaken and even the 'indigenous ethnographer' cannot claim authority on the basis of an insider position. Performance as concept, practice and epistemology provided a way forward that opened up the inquiry towards the dotoc participants' fidelity and why it matters. Whether as insider or outsider, there was this persistent constancy, the longevity of the performance practice to think about first and foremost, followed closely by the sharp incongruities in the way it appears, the multiple ways that the communities in the different sites perform their stories, sing the texts, dress up the characters, or not make an effort at all to put up a show. I had to rethink what to say about them and how I would say it. The dotoc was something else altogether behind or beyond (or *beneath*) appearances, but I wanted to practise fidelity myself and not be 'rude'.

The questioning both enabled and bedevilled the journey set on course by the project. I trod along paths many others have walked before me; I cannot presume to have been the first one there, for the previous travellers have left their marks. But in many ways this journey was all mine. I had taken a fork in the road few, if any, have taken, because it requires a difficult decision to begin with. I risked trying to speak a truth.

FRAMEWORK AND PROCESS

The research lies on the borders of the disciplines it has engaged with: performance studies, theatre studies, anthropology, cultural studies, history, religious studies, gender studies, folklore, and philosophy. It has been necessary to navigate between and across these fields in the search for an ethics of practice that would be faithful to what I encountered in the field work and respectful of the people I have met. The ethical concern drove my methodology, the co-performative ethnography derived from Dwight Conquergood, which I named *anduyog*. I never had doubts that my enterprise was political from the beginning, but that it was political disturbed me, because I knew that the dotoc participants I write about would never think of the dotoc in that way. That the dotoc is a colonial legacy is something they acknowledge but are not bothered about; instead they proudly say the practice goes back to the days of their ancestors, inherited from the Spanish. I knew I had to pay attention to such articulations and in the end this was made possible by using Badiou's politics of the situation, while de Certeau provided the means to think about how these articulations are being made in relation to the everyday concerns of the dotoc practitioners.

Conquergood's methodology goes back to the event, the act of saying itself and the sayer that ethnography inevitably writes for the archive. And in this process, the researcher remains visible, open, and vulnerable. *Anduyog* as co-performance became my own version of this methodology and my process has been guided by the six principles I enumerated: presence, paying attention, participation, visibility, reflexivity, and activism. The calendrical nature of the dotoc events posed some challenges, but I managed to be present three or four times at least in most of the different performances. I joined the paradotoc in Baa several times and experienced just how hard it is to sing the lines correctly without rehearsal. I watched with my camera, but also experienced being watched. In most of the events, even in my own hometown, I was a stranger doing research, and the whole village knew I was there. In both the field work and the writing, I have been visible, for this experience is very much also mine, their story is my story. I listened and paid attention to details, to what was being said and how and when and where, but also to what was not said but shown, or to what passed for silence, or the ordinary. And through all these encounters I never stopped thinking that I was doing this for a PhD; fed by the thought that I would benefit from this experience more than they would ever do, guilt was never far away.

My self-awareness made me all the more determined to be careful with my words, to pay attention to my rhetorical devices, to anticipate possible ways that my writing will be read or misread. Many of the people I met and spoke with may be unable to ever come across this writing, but it is for them that I write. And I have resolved to go back to all the sites each year to witness and participate in the continuation of their tradition.

Badiou's thought on grace, truth, fidelity and the event, and the process of subjectivation provided the framework that worked, indeed like grace, fittingly, with co-performance as methodology. Co-performance is itself fidelity to the event and to the sayers/performer. The example of Saint Paul became a model with which to think about the enduring practice. (I linked Badiou to Paul perhaps in a way that may not sit well with Badiou, because my view will never completely be divorced from my own Christian moorings.) The concept of filiation that the truth event engenders I found neatly congruent with 'siblingship' that lie at the core of Bicolano notions of power and the guiding principle of relationships. The idea of the 'inexistent' coming to be, the invisible becoming visible when a truth event unfolds, provided a way to think about the performances beyond their appearance but ever close to what has been experienced.

I had been working with the concept of 'everyday politics' before I read Michel de Certeau, but his concept of 'tactics' and 'ruses' in the practice of everyday life provided the philosophical tool I needed to think about the dotoc devotion as being about the everyday. Taken with Cannell's account of the life and struggles of the 'mayong-mayo' in Bicol, de Certeau's ideas became a useful frame for making sense of practices of the quotidian evident in the dotoc performances. '*La perruque*' sounded very much like the *pusong* in the komedya and manifested in the Bicolanos' ironic humour about their situations of hardship and continuing negotiations with powers greater than themselves.

While I have claimed that this is the first 'serious' work on the dotoc practice, it shall have been evident in the course of the writing that many others before me have written about the conditions within which the practice thrives and what I have tried to accomplish is to navigate a route within, through, and around

these literatures as they relate to or speak about the dotoc. The works of Filipino scholars Mojares, Aguilar, Rafael, Iletto, Fernandez, Tiongson, and Gerona, and those of Philippinists Cannell and Brewer enfolded the triadic configuration of theories (Conquergood, Badiou, de Certeau) with insights on Bicolano/Filipino society and historical experience. The discussion of pilgrimage revolved around the debate between the *communitas* view of the Turners and the contestation view of Eade and Sallnow, while Mauss' theory of the gift and reciprocity with the divine was counterpointed by Cixous' idea of feminine giving. On performance and ethnography the works of Turner, Geertz, Clifford, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Taylor, Roach, Bharucha, Taussig, and Read were key texts considered; and those of Hall, Spivak, San Juan, and Hallward provided the major provocations on postcoloniality.

RETROSPECT

To think the dotoc as performance event using the Badiourian framework is to make sense of the dotoc (*as performance as appearance*), to think of it as a situation governed by a certain logic, to see it as a world. In its being it is a multiple singular and experienced empirically as such. In truth I can only speak of dotoc practices in their multiplicity, each instance singularly experienced in space and time, at its local site. The way that it appears changes from one instance to another, marked by the peculiar vernacular improvisations of each place and of the individuals who perform the texts, sing the songs, re-enact the stories of the finding of the Cross. What is striking about these vernacular expressions is that they do not neatly cohere. One can see them as empty form, shallow ritual, just words mouthed or said and people dressed up in fancy costumes. In some instances there is even

no attempt at having any kind of ‘show’ even if the performers are dressed in their shiny satin dresses. One could find oneself asking what the point of it all is. But such is the state of the situation: the dotoc as colonial imposition or the dotoc as post/colonial borrowing. The stark strangeness of its physical appearance, the stories far removed from reality, the lack of logic and coherence of the ‘artistic’ elements, even the lack of showmanship or mastery of the lines of the song or the *dicho*—these are its logics. But the act of performance is a process of subjectivation that pierces this state of the situation, revealing the dotoc subject. The performers and their act of performance—the sayer and the act of saying—are central in the event. That is the point of it all. This is not to say that these performances are just poorly rehearsed shows—although one can say that of particular instances; or that the dotoc participants do not care about the aesthetic aspects of their performances—though indeed there is much indifference among certain sectors in the communities not just on how the performances turn out but that they are done at all. On the whole, these communities revel in the practice. But the whole point is that it is done, that it is performed, even when quotidian concerns intervene. Fidelity to the practice has kept it going.

What I have found was fidelity in action, the enduring faithfulness of individuals and communities who have kept up a tradition despite and also because of all manner of catastrophes. It is a fidelity borne out of quotidian need and abjection and conditions of vulnerability. It is a fidelity sustained by autochthonous understandings of unequal relations of exchange with forces beyond their control but which they negotiate with, please, placate with their *panuga*. It is a corporeal fidelity, a material expression of faith and hope that becomes its very own reward.

Fidelity as/is political—this sums up all that I have found. It is the subaltern speaking, wielding their creative tactics of making up and making do to stay in the game, in the contest of power, in the cosmic clash. Theirs is not a grandiose act or a sweeping, passionate revolution. Theirs is not a movement couched in big ideas and announced with manifestoes. But theirs are aspirations just as noble: food and survival, safety, justice in the land, unity of nations—ones that translate and are concretely felt in their daily lives. And theirs is always ultimately the actual ground of even the most celebrated revolt.

That the dotoc is a performance of pilgrimage calls attention to the centrality of the act of fidelity, which becomes the only permanent reality while all around the landscape and those embedded in it shift in time and space, including the performers themselves. The dotoc walking whether real or imagined becomes the creative embodiment of this fidelity. And, as Cannell has convincingly argued, for the Bicolanos it is not the destination in the great beyond that matters, but the act itself, always here and now. Inspired by Badiou, I call this the fidelity of hope. For if grace, while it comes to anyone as gift (*kharisma*), is ‘no more than an indication of a possibility’ (Badiou 2003, 91), hope is ‘the simple imperative of continuation, a principle of tenacity, of obstinacy’ (93) that takes the gift and multiplies it—something that the paradotoc and Bicolano Christian has to overflowing quantities.

I can only hope that I have kept a similar fidelity. My methodology bade me to be faithful to what I saw and heard and experienced; to my face-to-face conversations; to my own singing of the dotoc as a researcher co-performing the dotoc with my informants and to my memories of childhood and growing up in the tradition; to the stories told by my mother, grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins,

neighbours, friends, and fellow Bicolanos; but also to my see-sawing emotions and theoretical struggles, to my politics and personal history of radicalism, to my own faith in a just God.

Badiou's politics of the situation has proven, for this study, to be sufficiently supple for thinking about the quotidian, because the realities of the everyday are precisely made up of Badiou's multiples of multiples that are only ever experienced singularly, some more intense than others in their appearance, but each one potentially the site of an event, an immanent truth, and the emergence of a subject. Taken individually, some of Badiou's 'declarations' posed problems, like the idea that history and memory contribute nothing to the truth procedure, or that truths are devoid of all predicates. One can add to these Hallward's criticism that Badiou does not offer explanations for structures of relations such as regimes of domination and how one might go about dismantling them. And I did use de Certeau's 'ruses' and 'tactics' as theoretical tools to talk about specific ways of handling situations. But these ideas do cohere. History ceases to be about the past when it continues to be embedded in the present. Truth in its universality is always for all, however these 'all' are configured or predicated. There is no big or small situation, no big or small issue. And, yes, therefore, Badiou's thought embraces the quotidian. I believe the lesson is that one must act from moment to moment. In any specific moment, one acts as the moment requires, not by any kind of 'law' or predetermined modes of action, but by 'grace'.

PROSPECTS

Several open questions remain for possible further research on the dotoc. Paramount among these is the question of community: what binds people together,

especially as it relates to ‘finitude’ –themes in Heidegger also taken up by many contemporary theorists like Alphonso Lingis and Jean-Luc Nancy. I have argued that the dotoc renews the community and keeps them working together to survive, enabling them to surmount pain, grief, loss caused by catastrophes. How might the argument stand if I look not at the practices of fidelity but at the sites of their occurrence? Their vulnerabilities unite them. Death unites them. Death is the ground of self and of ethics, related to the gift that does not expect a return, and thus related to community— Jacques Derrida’s ‘gift of death’ and the influence of Emmanuel Levinas. I would like to pursue my investigation along the lines opened up by these other theorists and how they clash with Badiou, because, as he avers, his is a philosophy against finitude. More importantly, community and death are important persistent realities encountered in the field work that I have been unable to take up within the parameters of the project—a humbling reminder of the limits of discourse or of any attempt to contain the empirical within epistemological frames. The dotoc practice will always be bigger than any attempt to talk about it.

Another project might be a fuller engagement with globalization and the performances of the dotoc and the Peñafrancia devotion by diasporic Bicolanos in the United States, the U.K., Germany and other areas, and the issues of home, nation and belonging, as well as the gendering of international labour migration. The rapid changes in Bicolano/Filipino communities whether urban or rural are wrought in radical ways by the continued outflow of citizens to work and live outside the country, with the government as chief labour recruiter and promoter. As Tyner (2009) points out, the Philippines’ massive export of labour ‘has dramatically reshaped both the processes of globalization, and also our understanding of globalization as a concept’. I am interested in both the stories of

those who have migrated and of those who stayed behind, and how they sustain their links to home and family by means of their cultural performances. I am equally interested in the kinds of improvisations that have come out of diasporic performances and their practices of fidelity.

The prospects of a co-performative ethnography of the dotoc can extend well beyond the limits of this research. There are many more sites of the dotoc performances even in Bicol only and my own attempt for the specific practices covered here has been limited. For instance, a more comprehensive documentation project can be pursued. There is an urgent need for continuing documentation of these practices for purposes that do not so much serve ‘strategic essentialisms’ as make space in the archive for practices that are as valuable as the huge social movements in bodying forth new ideas about our world and the way we live our lives in it. For the Bicolanos and Filipinos, the time for ‘turning things upside down’ in order to surge forward to a genuinely post-colonial future is far from over and there are precious lessons to be learned from listening and being attentive to practices like the dotoc.

According to May Fe the *autora* of Baras, every time a ship drops anchor anywhere in the Philippines and a Bicolano seafarer from Baras works in that ship, the community will surely have a dotoc very soon as a thanksgiving for his safe passage. The practices of fidelity shall live on beyond all borders, law and catastrophe. Indeed, ‘neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature’ (Rom. 8:38-39) would stand in the way of the Bicolanos’ irrepressible fidelity of hope.

Glossary

Note on Language. The language of the dotoc and komedya texts is Standard Bicol or what is commonly known as the *lingua franca* in the region, spoken primarily in the major urban centres of Naga and Legazpi, although with distinctive particularities of vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation. There are many other Bicol dialects which continue to be the first languages in many parts of the region, such as that spoken in Baao. Language remains an ongoing political issue and a sore subject of debates, especially as it impacts on pedagogy and educational programs. At present there is still no active teaching and learning of the language and its literature in the schools and universities except for a few. My use of Bicol here is therefore not grounded on any ideological or pedagogic preference, but follows only what has been found in the field work, in the texts of the *orihinals* and archival materials. For consistency I use 'Bicol' with a 'c' following the old orthography also evident in 'dotoc' with a 'c' and not 'k' –as in 'Bikol' that, of late, has been used to refer to the language. Most contemporary Bicol writing favour the Tagalog orthography that uses 'k' instead, but the 'c' is still widely used to refer to the place (Bicol) and the people (Bicolanos). Some of the terms in the following list have the 'k' such as 'kwitis' and 'komedya' and 'kalbaryo' which are also Tagalog terms.

<i>Andas</i>	Litter on which religious icons/images are placed and carried in processions
<i>Asog</i>	Male priest who dressed as a female in ancient rituals of the Bicolanos
<i>Atang</i>	Offering; also the name of an ancient ritual of thanksgiving to the highest God, Gugurang, of the ancient Bicolanos
<i>Autora</i>	The trainer/director of the dotoc in Baras, Nabua
<i>Balyan/balyana</i>	Shaman or priestess in ancient Bicol; counterparts in other areas of the Philippines are known by other names such <i>bailan</i> or <i>catalonan</i>
<i>Banwaan</i>	Town; the town or people of the town
<i>Batalla</i>	Battle; the scenes of stylized fighting in the komedya
<i>Cabo</i>	The dotoc host or sponsor for any of the first eight nights of the novenario
<i>Cabo Mayor</i>	The host or sponsor of the fiesta

<i>Calle Amargora</i>	A type of dotoc that traces the path of Jesus to Calvary, identified as the oldest dotoc type practised in Santa Cruz, Baao
<i>Cantora/s</i>	Singer/s; the dotoc performers in all the sites are called cantoras, although the performers in Baao are more commonly called <i>paradotoc</i>
<i>Carro</i>	Cart or carriage, sometimes wheeled, on which religious icons/images are carried in processions
<i>Cobacho</i>	The hut or shelter used in the <i>corocobacho/cobacho</i> dotoc where the pilgrims meet fellow devotees of the Holy Cross to whom they relate the story of the captivity of the Cross by the Persians and its recovery by Emperor Heraclius
<i>Corocobacho/Cobacho</i>	The dotoc type used to this day which carries the narrative of the loss of the Cross and its recovery by means of a siege led by the Emperor Heraclius against the Persians
<i>Diana</i>	The early morning parade of a band of musicians around the barrio which marks a special occasion or a day of celebration
<i>Dicho</i>	Stylized verse delivery in the komedya
<i>Engramada</i>	The roofed structure that serves as performance space of the dotoc and lagaylay in Canaman
<i>Gab-i</i>	Night
<i>Gozo</i>	Hymn to the patron saint
<i>Gurang/Magurang</i>	Old Man; the character in the komedya of Baras and Bigaa who defies Elena and is punished for his disobedience
<i>Hermano/Hermana</i>	The chief sponsors of the lagaylay and dotoc in Canaman
<i>Jardenera</i>	Gardener; a character in the <i>panjardin</i> dotoc
<i>Kagab-iyon</i>	Another term for <i>cabo</i> (sponsor) in Baao—the person/s responsible for the night's events
<i>Kalbaryo</i>	Calvary; the set piece of the komedya and dotoc in Tinago, Bigaa

<i>Komedy</i>	A Filipino dramatic/theatrical practice that developed from the Spanish <i>comedia</i> ; the stories are usually about princes and princesses from far away/fantastical kingdoms; it is popularly known as <i>moro-moro</i> in which Christians battle against non-Christians/Moors and always win in the end
<i>Kwitis</i>	A type of cheap firecracker usually used in celebrations like the dotoc
<i>Lagaylay</i>	The specific performance practice in Canaman in honour of the Holy Cross
<i>Laguerta</i>	Garden; the set used for the <i>panjardin</i> dotoc
<i>Lamano</i>	Hand gestures used by the performers in Tinago, Bigaa
<i>Maestra</i>	Teacher; the trainer/director in Bigaa and Canaman
<i>Marcha</i>	March; entrances and exits in the komedy performance are made with stylized walking or marches
<i>Moro/Mora</i>	Moor, male or female; the non-Christians in the komedy and in the Pagboniag (Christening) dotoc in Canaman
<i>Musikero</i>	Musician
<i>Notador</i>	Prompter; in Canaman, often the maestra is also the notador
<i>Novenario</i>	The cycle of nine-day prayers in honour of a patron saint
<i>Orihinal</i>	The script
<i>Paaram</i>	Leave-taking; the final part of the dotoc in Baao and Canaman
<i>Padotoc</i>	A type of dotoc sponsored by a private individual or family who has the devotion to the Holy Cross
<i>Pagvoya</i>	The act of transferring the Virgin of Peñafrancia in a procession from the Basilica to the Cathedral of Naga and back; the term comes from the Spanish <i>bogadores</i> , meaning seafarers, adopted for this tradition probably because the return journey is a fluvial procession
<i>Panamparan</i>	A character in the lagaylay less important than the responde

<i>Panjardin</i>	A type of dotoc set in a garden or which has most of the action set in a garden; the dotoc that highlights the offering of flowers, an entire garden of flowers, as adoration of the Holy Cross
<i>Panuga/Promesa</i>	Sacred vow; <i>panata</i> in Tagalog
<i>Parabalo</i>	Trainer; the dotoc trainor or director in Baao
<i>Paradotoc</i>	The actor-singer or cantors in the dotoc of Baao
<i>Paraduyag</i>	Flag-bearer in the lagaylay
<i>Parapanganam</i>	The prayer leader in the novena
<i>Pasajera</i>	Traveller; a character in the <i>panjardin</i> dotoc
<i>Pasion</i>	The part of the dotoc in which the Cross is praised and adored or in which the suffering of Jesus on the Cross is told and Christians are exhorted to repent and repay Christ's sacrifice with goodness; also refers to the chanting of a text, the <i>Pasion Bicol</i> , that recounts the story of salvation during Lent
<i>Personajes</i>	The characters in the komedya
<i>Porlaseñal</i>	A type of dotoc that uses for its basic structure the prayer used in making the sign of the Cross, which begins with the expression 'por la señal'
<i>Pudientes</i>	The <i>nasasakupan</i> or the families or heads of households assigned under or with the <i>cabo mayor</i> to take care of the fiesta in Santa Cruz, Baao; each pudiente takes his/her turn to be <i>cabo mayor</i>
<i>Pusong</i>	Trickster, also called by other names like <i>bulbulagaw</i> ; a character in many komedya stories
<i>Raraga</i>	A maiden or unmarried woman; the paradotoc of the past (until the 1970s) were almost always <i>raragas</i>
<i>Responde</i>	A character in the lagaylay who carries an incense
<i>Sacada</i>	The opening parade of the fiesta performance of the komedya and dotoc in Tinago, Bigaa
<i>Samno</i>	Adornment or decoration; the dotoc praises and adoration are expressed through the offering of adornments

<i>Sanabua</i>	A type of dotoc that is distinguished for its having a <i>pasion</i> that recounts the passion and death of Jesus and in which there are specific flowers offered by the paradotoc
<i>Sinanta-Elena</i>	The dotoc type in Baao that carries the narrative of the search and finding of the Cross by St. Helene; it is sung but not enacted as a drama similar to the komedya of Baras and Bigaa
<i>Sitio</i>	A zone or neighbourhood cluster in a big barrio
<i>Tierra santa</i>	Holy Land; the destination of the dotoc pilgrims
<i>Tono</i>	Melody or tune
<i>Traslacion</i>	The procession that brings the Virgin of Peñafrancia from her Basilica to the Cathedral in Naga City in September
<i>Tres Marias</i>	A type of dotoc that carries the narrative of the visit to the sepulchre by three women (all named Maria), probably as related in Mark 16:1 and in the Quem Quaeritis trope
<i>Tugtog</i>	Accompaniment or music
<i>Voyador/Boyador</i>	The devotees of the Virgin of Peñafrancia who carry the image on her <i>andas</i> or <i>carro</i> in the procession
<i>Walo-walo</i>	The cobacho dotoc in Nabua is called <i>walo-walo</i> because the number of cantoras are eight (<i>walo</i>)

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APPENDICES

Santa Cruz, Baao / Fiesta Dotoc 1998



San Jose, Baao / May 1998

Padotoc by Fr. Jorge
Tirao at San Jose,
Baao held May 30,
1998. At right is the
tierra santa with the
Cross on the highest
tier of the tepee-like
structure.



Santa Cruz, Baao / 2007



28 April 2007 / Day 1



1 May 2007 / Day 4



2 May 2007 / Day 5



5 May 2007 / Day 8



11 May 2007 / Day 9

San Nicolas, Baao / 19 May 2007



Buluang, Baao / 2007



Barrio Dotoc 6 June 2007



Dotoc at Centro, Buluang / 27 May 2007

Sta. Cruz, Baco 2008







San Juan, Baao / 16-17 May 2008





San Nicolas, Baao / 25 May 2008





Bismonte Family Padotoc, Baao / 24 May 2008



Tinago, Bigaa 2007



17 May 2007



31 May 2007



31 May 2007



31 May 2007

Tinago, Bigaa 2008



23 May 2008

31 May 2008











Canaman 2007



Town Dotoc / 11 May 2007



Sta. Teresita, Canaman / 13 May 2007

Canaman Town Dotoc / 11 May 2008





Canaman Town Lagaylay / 11 May 2008



Pante Family Padotoc, Canaman / 18 May 2008



Sta. Elena/Baras, Nabua 2008



Baras Fiesta Dotoc / 18 May 2009



Solano Family Padotoc / 21 May 2008

Peñafrancia Photos 2007, 2008









PHOTOS AND VIDEO CLIPS

(In DVD Format)

Note: In addition to the photographs in the Appendices, more photos can be viewed in digital format. These are arranged in folders and would play as a slide show. On the Menu page, click on a site or year to view slides or click on 'Browse CD' on the upper right hand corner to access the data folders.

The video clips are similarly organized in folders. Click on a site/year on the Menu to view clip. Adjust sound volume as needed.

Most of the video clips are short, ranging in duration between 2 and 37 minutes. One can view as many or as few as one would wish. They are provided as supplements only and are not intended as integral components of the thesis.

Disc 1: Photos

1. Baa0 1998
2. Baa0 2007
3. Baa0 2008
4. Baras Nabua 2008
5. Bigaa 2007
6. Bigaa 2008
7. Canaman 2007
8. Canaman 2008
9. Peñaf Francia Photos

Disc 2: Video Clips

1. Baa0 1998
2. Baa0 2007
 - a. Sta. Cruz
 - b. San Nicolas
 - c. Buluang
3. Baa0 2008
 - a. Sta. Cruz
 - b. Bismonte Padotoc
 - c. San Nicolas
 - d. San Juan
4. Baras Nabua 2008
5. Bigaa 2007
6. Bigaa 2008
7. Canaman 2007
8. Canaman 2008
9. Peñaf Francia 2007 and 2008