

**SAYAW NG BATI:
A PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSCULTURATION OF THE SPANISH COLONIAL HERITAGE
IN THE SOUTHERN TAGALOG REGION OF THE PHILIPPINES**

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Abstract

Just like other dances that developed during the Christianization of the Philippines, the *Sayaw ng Bati* (Dance of Greeting), a dance performance conducted during the dawn of Easter Sunday in the Southern Tagalog Region, is a byproduct of transculturation, a process where the subordinate culture (the colonized) selects certain cultural items in the dominant culture (the colonizer) that fits their contexts and preferences. This paper then aims to elucidate how transculturation occurred in the Philippines that dramatically altered the precolonial heritage of the Filipino people during the Spanish colonization of the country. Using a variety of sources from reputable Filipino scholars in the field of cultural anthropology and dance, the precolonial and Spanish colonial experiences were reviewed and contrasted to understand how transculturation happened in Philippine society and to look for parallels between the two historical contexts, which also affected how dance forms imported from Europe were perceived and developed through the ingenuity of Filipinos during the colonization of the archipelago.

Keywords: Sayaw ng Bati, precolonial Philippines, Spanish colonization, Philippine dances, transculturation

Diszcipline: cultural antropology

Absztrakt:

SAYAW NG BATI: A SPANYOL GYARMATI ÖRÖKSÉG TRANZKULTURÁCIÓJÁNAK PERSPEKTÍVÁJA A FÜLÖP-SZIGETEK DÉLI TAGALOG RÉGIÓJÁBAN

A Fülöp-szigetek keresztényesítése során kialakult más táncokhoz hasonlóan a *Sayaw ng Bati* (Üdvözlő tánc) – mely a déli tagalog régióban jellemző húsvétvasárnap hajnalán bemutatott táncelőadás - is a transzkulturalizáció mellékterméke, mely egy olyan folyamat, amely során az alárendelt (gyarmatosított) kultúra kiválasztja a domináns (gyarmatosító) kultúra azon kulturális elemeit, amelyek megfelelnek az ő kontextusuknak és preferenciáiknak. A tanulmány célja, annak megvilágítása, hogy a Fülöp-szigeteken hogyan zajlott le a transzkulturalizáció jelensége, s rámutasson arra, hogy a sziget őslakosainak (a filippínóknak) nemzeti öröksége hogyan változott a spanyol gyarmatosítás következtében. A kvalitatív kutatómódszertani technikákra támaszkodó elemzés a kulturális antropológia és a tánc területén elismert filippínó tudósoktól származó különböző források felhasználásával tekintette át és állította szembe a prekoloniális és a spanyol gyarmati tapasztalatokat, annak érdekében, hogy megértsék, hogy hogyan történt a transzkulturáció a filippínó társadalomban, és párhuzamokat keressenek a két történelmi kontextus között, ami szintén befolyásolta, hogy az Európából importált táncformákat hogyan érzékelték és fejlesztették tovább a szigetvilág gyarmatosítása során.

Kulcsszavak: *Sayaw ng Bati*, Fülöp-szigetek, Spanyol gyarmatosítás, Fülöp-szigeteki táncok, transzkulturáció

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

Sayaw ng Bati: A perspective on transculturation of the Spanish colonial heritage in the Southern Tagalog Region of the Philippines

It was in the later years of my college days between 2009 and 2010 when I discovered a unique Easter dance ritual through a casual search on YouTube. I found this dance ritual interesting because, while every Catholic parish in the Philippines conducts the *Salubong* (a ritual on the dawn of Easter Sunday where the image of the Resurrected Christ meets the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary after the procession), the performance of the *Sayaw ng Bati* (Dance of Greeting) as part of the Easter liturgy is unheard of except in the Southern Tagalog Region. In this study, I will be using the term *bati* to refer to the said dance for the sake of efficiency. The performance of the *bati* that I watched on YouTube back then was an annual tradition in Ibaan, Batangas where the dance ritual is customarily performed by a *kapitana* (a lady) and two gentlemen. The *kapitana* in her frilly white

costume complete with a straw hat held a white flag or *bandera*, while the gentlemen wore fine Barong Tagalog (a traditional embroidered shirt for men normally made of pineapple, *jusi* or cocoon fiber) and black trousers. Together, the three dancers performed the *bati* in the plaza adjacent to the church. The dance routine is a mixture of intricate footwork and marching where the emphasis is geared towards the *kapitana* who waves the flag in various postures throughout the performance, which lasted for ten minutes. This performance is accompanied by the tune and tempo of the local brass band.

After this brief encounter with the *bati* tradition, it developed a keen sense of interest on my part to watch the succeeding performances every year via social media. It was also on YouTube where I discovered that variations of the *bati* existed in many localities in the Southern Tagalog Region, which is composed of the following provinces: Batangas, Laguna, Cavite, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Quezon,

Rizal, Romblon, Aurora and Lucena (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2003). Despite many towns practicing the *bati*, the most prominent varieties, upon closer inspection, could be found in Angono, Rizal and Ibaan, Batangas. It is also practiced in Parañaque, a city located in the National Capital Region, which was once under the province of Rizal (Historical Milestone, n.d.; Alas, 2021). In the Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, an authoritative source in Philippine art forms by the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the documentation of the *bati* is anchored on the tradition in Angono, Rizal (Matilac, 2018), whereas, based on my initial perception, formal written documentation is lacking on the *bati* tradition in Ibaan and Parañaque except for a few written excerpts and annotations on Facebook (Parañaque City Public Library, 2019; Sinsay Ibaan, 2021) and probably through published souvenir programs. In contrast, what lacks in written documentation is salvaged by the amount of video recordings uploaded on social media, particularly on YouTube. These reasons implored me to focus this study on the *bati* rituals of Ibaan, Angono, and Parañaque. As I have become engrossed with the *bati* tradition, I made it a point to look for some written extracts that would lead me to understand the root of the said ritual. If it is practiced in many towns in the Southern Tagalog Region, then it must be significant to the culture of those people. There must be a common ground why majority of these towns and their people preserved the dance ritual. In one of the articles I extracted, it proposes that the *bati* (or *bate*) was Christianized during the Spanish occupation of the Philippines (Villaruz, n.d.) just like many indigenous practices of pre-Hispanic Filipinos. However, I never encountered a single source that documented the *bati* in its purest form – the way ancient Filipinos practiced it. Without any validation or proper documentation, I suppose that such belief is merely a proposal worthy of further exploration. I also raised this concern to Bryan

Viray, a scholar specializing in Filipino dances from the University of the Philippines who wrote an important article entitled “Greeting the Virgin Mary: The Dancerly Attitudes of the *Bati* in *Salubong*” published in 2019, which compared the *bati* tradition between Boac, Marinduque and Angono, Rizal. Through email correspondence, he pointed that although the *bati* is a common practice, finding an indigenous dance parallel to it is challenging.

Out of the three *bati* variations I mentioned earlier, it is only in Ibaan, Batangas where the routine is performed by a female and two male dancers. If the *bati* in Ibaan stemmed from a pre-Hispanic tradition, could it be linked to the dance *saraw* or *sa araw* (to or for the sun)? *Saraw* is an ancient dance tradition of *Batangueños* (natives of Batangas) that relates to sun worship where couples performed the custom (Acuña et al., 2018). This dance tradition, unfortunately, is now extinct and to find connections between *saraw* and the *bati* seem to pose great difficulty. Therefore, as an ethnographer and anthropologist, I argue that to understand holistically the *bati* and the people who practice them, we need to scratch the surface of the custom by contextualizing it through the pre-colonial society, religion and dances of early Filipinos, the political changes that occurred during the arrival of the Spanish colonizers, the imposition of Christianity to native society as part of the colonial agenda, and the dances introduced, transformed and inspired by the Christianization of the Filipino people. These facets will foster a deeper understanding of the *bati* rituals and their significance to the identity and culture of those places where the *bati* is performed.

Pre-Hispanic society in the Philippines Government and politics

Historical narratives regarding pre-Hispanic society in the Philippines are comparable to solving a puzzle. Majority of what we know today are largely based on the observations of Spaniards,

especially the missionaries, who evangelized various provinces in the country between the 16th and 17th century. If not, we turn to archeology to get our information from ancient relics that were excavated through the years. Archeological evidence suggests that human presence in the country was already present 22,000 years ago and traces of Indian, Chinese and Islamic influences were clearly notable (Jocano, 1998; Agoncillo, 1990). Pre-Hispanic society in the Philippines, just like its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, practiced tribalism (Reyes, 2015). As an archipelago composed of three major island groups – Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, there was no centralized government. Authority to govern rested on local leaders, the *datu*, who ruled thirty to one hundred families. These families represented the so-called *barangay* (a village or neighborhood). The term is derived from an earlier word *balangay*, which was a boat used by sea-faring natives who conducted trade in various islands and eventually settled in the Philippines. In the *barangay*, the *datu* led based on blood and kinship relations and he also forged alliances with other *datu*s to safeguard peace (Scott, 1994). He was also considered as the chief executive, legislator, judge, and military commander (NSO 2010 Philippine Yearbook, 2010). Aside from the *datu*, the *barangay* of ancient Philippines was generally organized through the presence of these essential leaders: the *babaylan* (priestess), the *panday* (blacksmith) and the *bayani* (warrior) (Salazar, 1989). While the *datu* served as the leader of each community, he consulted these important figures on matters pertaining to worship, agriculture, governance, and warfare. The *babaylan*, which will be discussed extensively later, is also known as *catalona* among the Tagalogs of Luzon. Since the *babaylan* was knowledgeable in astronomy, the *datu* considered the *babaylan*'s recommendations when to clear the forest for the planting season and the right time to harvest crops (Villariba, 1996). The *panday*, meanwhile, means “ironsmith” in Tagalog

(Velasco, 1997). The *panday* was important in pre-colonial society because he knew how to craft weapons that were essential in warfare. As a master in metallurgy, he combined mysticism and spirituality together with astrology in the practice of crafting weapons (e.g., *keris*, *kampilan*) to the point that these may take a long time to be finished (Mallari, 2009). Scott (1994) adds that the term may also refer to any craftsmen such as goldsmiths, carpenters and boat builders, who were highly respected in pre-colonial society. In contrast, the *bayani* is defined by the *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* (Vocabulary of the Tagalogs), compiled by Jesuit missionaries Juan de Noceda and Pedro de Sanlucar and published in 1754, as “someone who is brave or valiant” and “someone who works toward a common task or cooperative endeavor” (as cited in Ocampo, 2016). Thus, in the context of pre-colonial society, these were men who assisted and fought valiantly with the *datu* during warfare. The body of a warrior was decorated with tattoos, which was a rite of passage. These also depicted his bravery and social standing in the community. The Boxer Codex, a manuscript written in 1590, shows the significance of tattoos, especially among Visayan warriors called the *Pintados*, where each tattoo represented the warrior's social standing and valor (Ocampo, n.d., as cited in Baclig, 2020). For the ethnic groups in the uplands of Luzon (e.g., Bontoc, Ifugao, Kalinga), the number of tattoos on a warrior's body was parallel to the number of enemies they killed in battles (Baclig, 2020).

Domestic life and social hierarchies

Domestic life in the precolonial period is still reflected in present day Philippine society. Just like contemporary Filipinos, our ancestors maintained a close relationship with their families, which was the basic unit in the community. It was expected for children to show obedience and filial piety to their parents and accord respect to their elders. Often, parents set arranged marriages for their children.

The prospective groom was expected to give dowry called *bigay-kaya* or it could be in the form of land. In addition, *pamamanhikan* was also practiced where the groom would render service to the bride's household (NSO 2010 Philippine Yearbook, 2010). As a matriarchal society, women were highly respected. They could inherit land, own assets, serve as religious leaders in the community, and participate in combat (Mathkar, 2019).

Precolonial society had four social classes. The highest of which was the chiefs or the *datu*. If the *datu* had power and control large areas other than his *barangay*, he was given the title *Lakan* or *Rajah*, which originated from a Hindu word. Next to the *datu* was the nobility called *maharlika* from the ancient Sanskrit word "*maharddhika*," which means "a man of wealth, knowledge or ability." The *maharlika* was required to serve the *datu*, especially during warfare. If a *maharlika* wanted to leave the *datu's* service, he was required to conduct two things: host a huge public feast and pay the *datu* a total of 6 to 18 pesos worth of gold. The freemen known as *timawa* were free commoners. They could accumulate properties and they were not required to pay tributes to the *datu*. At certain times, they were required to render services to the *datu's* land and other community projects. They were, however, free to change allegiance from one *datu* to the next if they marry someone from another town or transfer to a new area.

The lowest class in precolonial society was the *alipin* or slaves, but it is quite different in the Western connotation of the word. An *alipin* was someone who had incurred debts. One could become an *alipin* either by birth as debts of parents could be inherited or when payment obligations was transferred from one master to the next, although freedom was possible if an *alipin* purchased such right. In precolonial society, there were two types of *alipin*: *aliping namamahay* and *aliping sagigilid*.

The *aliping namamahay* was not technically a slave as he was given a parcel of land by his master; in return, he had to offer tributes and work on the land of his master as needed. On the contrary, the *aliping sagigilid* was totally dependent on his master for food and lodging. They worked "behind and below the house."

The *aliping sagigilid* may attain the status of the *namamahay* or *timawa* by purchasing such title to his master (Morrow, 2009).

Religion and culture

Anthropologists and archeologists agree that precolonial Filipinos practiced animism (Reyes, 2015; Reyes, 1985; Macaranas, 2021). The term was first coined by Edward Burnett Tylor (1871). Tylor also listed the attributes or characteristics of animistic beliefs: "An idea of pervading life and will in nature far outside modern limits, a belief in personal souls animating even what we call inanimate bodies, a theory of transmigration of souls as well in life as after death, a sense of crowds of spiritual beings, sometimes flitting through the air, but sometimes also inhabiting trees and rocks and waterfalls, and so lending their own personality to such material objects" (Tylor, 1971, as cited in Reyes, 2015). In the words of Barfield (1988), "original participation" is inherent in the practice because, in the animist worldview, there is no separation between oneself and the world of phenomena – everything has supernatural interconnectedness.

The natives of precolonial Philippines believed in a supreme being called *Bathala* or *Maykapal* who created both man and the world. Reyes (1985) postulates that such monotheistic belief was probably influenced by Islam, which was brought to the Philippines by Malay traders even before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1521. For the natives, this god was unreachable, so sacrifices were not conducted, temples were not erected, and

organized religion was not established. Instead, rituals were a way of life and these were presided anywhere (e.g., rivers, mountains, fields, home) because the natives believed that all things in nature had souls and spirits (Reyes, 1985; Reyes, 2015). This is also the reason why early Filipinos believed in *dimata* (gods or goddesses), *engkanto* (nature spirit), *dumende* (dwarf), among others. Our ancestors believed that these supernatural beings dwell in nature. If pestilence, drought, famine, severe illness or even good harvest occurred, these were attributed to the power and potency of the said creatures and rituals were conducted either to appease or celebrate them.

The *babaylan* or *catalona* (priestess) was the primary figure who led the conduct of the rituals. Normally, they were women, but men could also serve as *babaylan*. One type of ritual that a *babaylan* conducted was a *manganito*, an act of honoring *Bathala*. After a communal meal, the *babaylan* chanted prayers while the natives offered food and wine to the *anito*, a totem representing an ancestor (Blair & Robertson, 1903). Although they were seen as mediators between men and the spirit world, they were highly respected because precolonial society regarded them as gatekeepers of local culture for they mastered not only religious rites, but poetry, oral traditions, songs, dances and even medicine (Reyes, 2015; Tamayo, 2022). Given that temples were not extant then for religious rituals, the *datu's* house served as the venue where the *babaylan* and the local community conducted certain rites (Tamayo, 2022). Ancestor worship was also practiced by the natives using the *anito* or *likha* for the Tagalogs. These statues were made through a variety of materials such as stone, bone, tooth of an animal, gold (Barrows, 2016). However, the most popular material was wood. In the uplands of Luzon, they call the *anito* as *bulol*, which represented either a nature deity, a granary god, or an ancestor. The ethnic groups in the Cordilleras used them in pairs as an iconography of fertility,

whereas those in Kiangán, Ifugao used the *bulol* separately (Tamayo, 2020). Filipino philosopher Ramon Reyes (1985) clarifies that one should view ancestor worship in Philippine precolonial society carefully. It is not merely worshipping one's ancestors, but it is a form of recollection or the "recitation of one's genealogy." For the natives, the past, present and future were one and the same; as such, human existence was viewed as "one sacred ritual of repetition, commemorating and reliving the sacred original past from which man and all things have come and from which, in truth, they have never left."

Archeological findings also proved that our ancestors believed in the concept of the afterlife. The Manunggul Jar, which was dated between 890 and 710 BC (late Neolithic Period), was excavated at the Tabon Caves in Palawan (Ronquillo, 2003). The jar was used as an ossuary and, above it, two men were seated on the boat of the dead. Both figures wore a band surrounding the face that secured the jaw, which was a common burial practice that still survives to this day among indigenous communities. The figure in front of the boat folds his hands across the chest, a typical method in arranging a corpse, whereas the figure at the back steers the boat (Chua, n.d.). According to Filipino historian Michael Charleston Chua (n.d.), numerous epics in the Philippines narrated how one's *kaluluma* (soul) is transported to the afterlife via boats that pass-through bodies of water. This *kaluluma*, for our ancestors, would return to earth after death, live in nature, and eventually guide their descendants. He adds that the Manunggul Jar has three faces – "the soul, the boat driver, and the boat itself" – and it implies an important facet in the natives' worldview: all things in nature have souls and lives.

Precolonial dances

Even before the arrival of the Spaniards to the Philippines, the country was already populated by

Indigenous Peoples (IP), who belonged to 110 ethno-linguistic groups. Majority of whom were residing in Northern Luzon (Cordillera Administrative Region, 33%) and Mindanao (61%) (United Nations Development Programme – Philippines, 2013). It is no wonder then that various ethno-linguistic groups had a fair share of traditional dances older than the Philippines. Dancing had been used by our ancestors to appease or gain favor from gods and spirits, celebrate a good harvest, imitate animals or other life forms, narrate their stories, conduct rituals, observe rite of passage, and recollect their local legends and histories (Crawford, n.d.). One significant characteristic of precolonial dances, even those that developed during the Spanish colonization, is the use of iconography and props to portray meaning in a dance. For example, to portray occupation and livelihood, some dances use local crops to accompany the dance routine.

In the ritual dance called *pagdivata* of the Tagbanua in Palawan, the *babaylan* use an *anabaw* as a *palaspas* (frond) to celebrate the harvest season (Buot, 2012). The ritual dance is conducted in the evening where the *babaylan* goes on a series of trances around an altar called *pagbuysan* containing a heap of rice at the middle to summon the spirits of relatives and ancestors as well as *Maguindusa*, the supreme being in the Tagbanua culture. The *pagbuysan* is also surrounded by various items (e.g., betel nuts, red cloth, candles, sweets, rice cakes in young bamboo stem, cigarettes, chicken). Accordingly, there is a belief that the *tabad* (rice wine) to be used in the ritual must be prepared in a particular manner or *Maguindusa* will not grace the community (Acero, 2020).

Bamboo is also a typical material represented in several precolonial dances. Aside from the fact that it serves multiple uses (i.e., construction material, mats, food, utensil), bamboo is well represented in Philippine folklore (Buot, 2012). The Tagalog's story of the creation dwells on the bamboo where a

hawk furiously pecked at it. Eventually, a section of the bamboo birthed a man and from another a woman (Cole, 1916). From this example, we can also deduce the significance of the bamboo in pre-colonial dances such as the *Tinikling* and *Singkil*. The *Tinikling* dance is a precolonial occupational and mimicry dance which originated in the island of Leyte. The dance routine exemplifies the attempts of farmers to catch the *Tinikling*, a bird (Slaty-breasted Rail) that is highly notorious among farmers as it feeds on rice grains (Villapando, 1986, as cited in Buot, 2012). Using two parallel bamboo poles controlled by clappers who hold and hit the poles at the same time, the couple or individual involved in the dance routine paces moderately to very fast as they continuously hop and leap between the poles (Buot, 2012). Our ancestors usually conducted this dance as a form of entertainment, so getting caught between the poles may result to laughter among the gathered crowd (Aquino, 1976). While this dance may be entertaining, it nonetheless depicted not only the Filipinos' sense of physical survival, but also of their emotional and psychological being (Buot, 2012).

In Mindanao, another notable dance that has precolonial roots is the *Singkil*. Just like the *Tinikling*, it maximizes the use of bamboo poles throughout the dance routine. In contrast, the *Singkil* is an indigenous dance of the Maranao and the Maguindanao people. Aside from the use of the iconic bamboo poles, it is a performance that narrates the Darangen, an epic inspired by the Ramayana, that has Hindu, Malay, and Islamic influences. In 2005, the UNESCO recognized the Darangen as a “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.” The epic as in the dance portrays the abduction of Princess Gandingan, who was rescued by Prince Bantugan from a supernatural creature (Panaraag & Inte, 2015).

The *Singkil* shows us the rich cultural heritage of the Maranao and the Maguindanao people through the elaborate costume of the dancers and distinct

paraphernalia (i.e., sword, shield, bamboo poles, parasols, fans, handkerchief). In the dance, the female and male lead, as well as the other dancers, step elegantly on the rhythmically striking bamboo poles. The *Singkil* is accompanied by the music produced by the *kotiyapi* (a set of musical instruments) that includes a bamboo guitar, bamboo flute, harp, and metal sticks (Tomar, 2018).

Philippine society during the Spanish colonization

Government and politics

The expedition of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan under the Spanish sovereign prompted the first contact between early Filipinos and the Spaniards. Instead of the Spice Islands in Indonesia, the fleet of Magellan reached the Philippines in 1521 where he conducted blood compact with various chieftains. In Cebu, he forged alliances with Rajah Humabon who had been hostile with another chieftain, Lapu-Lapu. Believing that he could conquer Lapu-Lapu's territory through the might of Spanish cannons and artillery, Magellan vowed for victory in the Battle of Mactan. His drastic actions, consequently, led to his untimely death. Magellan was shot by a poisoned arrow during the skirmish on 27 April 1521 (Pigaffeta, 1969; National Geographic Society, 2022). From the death of Magellan, it took another forty-four years before the Philippines was formally colonized by Spain in 1565 under the command of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi. Luis de Velasco, the viceroy of New Spain, instructed Legazpi to claim the Philippines for the sovereign, so he sailed from Acapulco, Mexico to the Philippines with five ships at his disposal. Legazpi established the first Spanish settlement in Cebu and, in 1570, after sending an expedition in Luzon and pacifying the conflict with Rajah Soliman, he founded the City of Manila. It

was also elevated to the status of a capital and Spain's primary trading port (Britannica, n.d.).

Governance of the Philippines during the colonization was highly modeled after the Spanish territories in Latin America. The Council of the Indies was an institution that drafted and passed all the laws for all Spanish colonies to adhere. In the same vein, the creation of the Supreme Court and municipal government in the Philippines was guided by the codes of the council. Until the early 19th century, the Philippines was administered by Spain through the viceroy of Mexico. This became controversial because the king of Spain failed to rule the Philippines directly. Even if the king had good intentions for the colony, it would never be felt because his subordinates or representatives in the islands had an agenda of their own (Bernard, 1904). Documents from Mexican sources point that Spain decided to retain the Philippines as its colony for "economic and strategic reasons." As the Philippines is surrounded by China, Japan and the Spice Islands, it was a strategic location to conduct trade that would eventually finance the Spanish empire through the colonial income called *situado* (Stošić, Marcović, & Smith, 2016).

Domestic life and social hierarchies

Domestic life in the Philippines before the conquest of Spain revolved around the *barangay*, which was administered by the local chieftain or *datu*. Peace and order were maintained through kinship relations and treaties with other chieftains. As such, there was no central power that governed the Philippine archipelago. This posed both as an advantage and disadvantage for the Spaniards. Compared to their experience in New Spain, there was no need to impose massive military conquest and they were able to requisition the lowlanders in a shorter span of time. However, for centralization to happen, they had to subdue one *barangay* to the next or one island to another island. In the early stages of the Spanish colonization of the

Philippines, the *encomienda* system was used as an instrument to govern the population. Those subjugated *barangays* that were closer to each other by proximity were fused together and this eventually formed an *encomienda*. Under the *encomienda*, vast tracks of land were granted by the sovereign to colonial officials and the religious orders (e.g., Dominicans, Augustinians, Franciscans, Jesuits) who were called *encomenderos*. In return, they were required to protect the people and to teach them the Catholic faith (Stošić, Marcović, & Smith, 2016).

The most important contribution of the *encomienda*, perhaps, was the establishment of the *pueblos* which forced the population living in scattered settlements to organize themselves in larger communities in the process called *reduccion* (Stošić, Marcović, & Smith, 2016). Historian Tamar Herzog (2018) highlights that the *reduccion* was an important policy of the colonial government because those who lived outside the *reducciones* were branded as dangerous and hostile. In fact, those who resided outside the *reducciones* were coined as *cimarrones* (untamed), *vagabundos* (vagrants) or *remontados* (people of the hills) (Gutay, n.d.).

Despite these stereotypes, many natives were hesitant to transfer to the *pueblos* because the majority were subsistence farmers or fishermen. This problem was solved by having the *visitacion* system where a small chapel (*visita*) was erected in distinct places outside the *reduccion*. The parish priest from the *población* (town proper) would visit these chapels at least once a month to administer the sacraments or conduct civil duties (Coseteng, 1972). Later, the *encomienda* had become an abusive system given that many *encomenderos* wielded so much power that they undermined authority. The Spanish king eventually limited the allocation of *encomiendas* and the power of the *encomenderos*. Instead, he appointed colonial officials and friars to govern the *pueblos* (Stošić, Marcović, & Smith, 2016).

The existing class structure during the precolonial period dissolved and changed during the Spanish colonial period. In general, the church became the central figure that administered the *pueblo* through the parish priest. Every decision whether it be civil, political, or religious was decided by the parish priest. Second to the parish priest was the *gobernadorcillo* or the chief magistrate. More so, the *datu's* position as the leading figure head of the precolonial days was changed to the position of a *cabeza de barangay*. This position was also hereditary. In the colonial days, the *datu* and his immediate family became the *principalia* (upper-class) and all civil positions available for the natives then were taken from this class.

Although the power of the *cabeza* or *gobernadorcillo* was heavily reduced by the authority of the parish priest and other Spanish officials, his opposition to their rule may be emphasized through this statement “I obey but do not execute” (Stošić, Marcović, & Smith, 2016). By the 19th century, another class of people developed – the *ilustrados*. Given the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the booming agricultural export economy, the *ilustrados* were offspring of middle- and upper-class families who were able to secure an education in Europe (Hernandez, 2015). These individuals helped enlightening Philippine society, particularly in the areas of art and architecture as well as social and political reforms, by bringing contemporary European ideas in the country at the time.

Similar to the precolonial experience, the role of women in the Spanish colonial period was significant more than ever. Bernard Moses (1904), an American political scientist, put emphasis on the role of women in Philippine society during the Spanish regime: “In the Philippines, woman is neither a useless ornament nor a beast of burden, but a rational being standing by her husband and contributing her part in the struggle for existence.”

Women in the archipelago during the Spanish colonial period can be pictured into three contexts.

Those who would like to become teachers were attending the normal schools and, later, they would help in maintaining the public schools. There were also those who were admired for their business acumen. Many of them were engaged in trading, particularly agricultural products. In addition, it was also common for women to be highly engaged in the church and other religious exercises (Bernard, 1904). These realities were seen as a deviation from the traditional concepts of womanhood in Oriental societies at the time.

Catholicism and colonial culture

Animism was deeply embedded in the psyche and identity of precolonial Filipinos. The belief in various spirits residing in nature led to feasting or offering sacrifices either to appease them or bring good harvest. Deep down this spiritual belief, totemism was practiced by the natives. The totem is any sacred object, a symbol or an emblem for a group of people, which functions as a reminder of the group's ancestry or mythical past (Goswami, 2018). For social scientist Henry Jones Ford (1904), it deals with the primitive concept of a family pedigree. Totemism was and still is practiced by the ethnic groups located in the uplands of Northern Luzon, particularly in Ifugao and the Cordilleras. The local totem is known in the vernacular as the *bulol*, which may be related to a granary god, an ancestor, or as a symbol of fertility. For the Tagalogs, they call their totem as the *larawan* (Tamayo, 2020). When conquistador Ferdinand Magellan arrived in the Philippines in 1521, a mass baptism was held and this included Rajah Humabon and his wife, who was given the Christian name Juana. Humabon's wife saw an image of the *Santo Niño* (Holy Child), which probably came from Flanders, and an image of the Madonna. Given that these statues were alike the idols that the natives worshipped, these reduced her to tears and implored the Spanish

conquistadors to give her the images, which they did (Pigafetta, 1969).

When Miguel Lopez de Legazpi arrived in Cebu decades later, he ordered the burning of some villages after a misunderstanding that erupted between him and the local chieftain, Rajah Tupas, who ordered Legazpi to pay *dinuggoan* (wharfage dues) to which he declined (Oaminal, 2018). In one of the large houses, they found the image of the *Santo Niño* residing inside a box made of pinewood wherein it was surrounded by dozens of flowers (Bautista, 2010; Del Castillo, 2015). In the intervening years between Magellan and Legazpi, a cult to the *Santo Niño* developed that made it popular not only in Cebu, but also in nearby islands. For three centuries of Spanish rule in the Philippines, the most successful mission was the Christianization of the native population. Even after they left the colony, Catholicism remains the stronghold of the Spaniards. The religious orders that came with Legazpi and those that came in succession even learned local languages to catechize early Filipinos. Their power was also sanctioned by Rome through the *Patronato Real*, which was made through the papal bull *Universalis ecclesiae*. This granted Ferdinand, the Spanish monarch, and the religious orders to erect churches in all Spanish colonies and to nominate candidates for colonial bishoprics and other ecclesiastical offices (Lee, 1971). More so, little to no resistance was experienced by the friars in indoctrinating the new faith. The natives probably saw certain parallels between their old spirituality and the Catholic faith. While their idols were burned, these were replaced with Catholic iconography, the *santo* (images of saints), which remains an important symbol in the religious and cultural life of modern Filipinos (Tamayo, 2020). Since the natives were ritualistic and had fondness for pageantry, ornate rituals and lavish churches were used as propaganda by the friars to attract and convert the people. The most anticipated activity in the *pueblos* was the town

fiesta, which centered on the patron saint. For ten days, elaborate novenas, mesmerizing processions, stage plays, festive music, and excessive feasting were observed to the delight of the townsfolk (Tamayo, 2022).

Perhaps, the most controversial aspect of Christianization in the Philippines was the eradication of the *babaylans* and their position in local society. The friars saw them as a threat that needed to be subdued. They smashed and burned the idols used in rituals and even asked young boys to defecate on the said images (Amoroso & Abinales, 2005). In the early phase of Christianization of the islands, the friars focused on the conversion of the *babaylans*. From being a spiritual leader, keeper of ancient traditions, folklore, and master of local medicine, the role of the *babaylan* in the Spanish colonial Philippines was reduced to assisting the parish priest during the mass and organizing the religious processions (Salazar, 1989). For some, they resumed their healing practices, but used Christian iconography to avoid the wrath of the friars. Others went to reclusion in the mountains because they were branded as witches or *mangkukulam* (Limos, 2019).

Outside the *reduccion*, something novel happened: indigenous customs morphed with Christian teachings, which then developed to what Filipino anthropologists coined as folk Catholicism (Jocano, 1967; Macaranas, 2021). Unlike the *pueblos*, those residing in the *barrios* of rural areas far from the parish church did not attain the full benefits of catechism as they were seldom visited by the friars. These communities were able to preserve many precolonial beliefs that became resilient and hid under the guise of Christianity. Take for example the Filipino virtue of *pakikisama* (to be with) being reflected in the controversial tradition of crucifixion and self-flagellation during Holy Week. In the lowlands of Luzon, some natives, especially the males, volunteer to be crucified or flagellate themselves in broad day light as an act of

pakikisama with the sacrifices of Jesus Christ. Many do this willingly because of *panata* (vow) brought upon either by an answered prayer or special intention and, at times, this *panata* could be inherited as well by one generation to the next. Although the practice of crucifixion or flagellation is heavily renounced by the Catholic church, it persists to this day. The macho culture attached to these practices also contributed to its survival.

Dances during the Spanish colonial period

Dance scholar Marisa Montoya (2018), who wrote an extensive study regarding the implications of Spanish colonization between Mexican and Filipino dances, proposes the term “transculturation” to understand how dances developed in the Philippines during the Spanish occupation. Transculturation means that the subordinate culture (the colonized) chooses certain cultural items from the dominant culture (the colonizer) that they want to be transmitted or retained perpetually as part of their cultural fabric. In short, the natives had the chance to control as to what extent these cultural items from the dominant culture gets absorbed and how these should be used in their own cultural context (Pratt, 1991). This transculturation can also be explained by the *mestizaje* phenomenon in the Philippines. In contrast to the colonial experience of Mexico, the *mestizaje* identity or mixing of bloodlines occurred differently for Filipinos. If the blending of Aztec and Spanish blood resulted to the creation of a new cultural group, the interaction between the natives and the Spaniards produced Hispanic influences that eventually altered rather than combining with Filipino culture. The Spaniards simply imposed traditions to Filipinos, but the later retained their cultural heritage and worldviews (Montoya, 2018).

European dances brought to the Philippines through the Spanish colonization is categorized and labeled in the contemporary period as the

Maria Clara suite. The Maria Clara suite contains a series of dances that had colonial underpinnings but were subjected to changes or transformation when Filipinos added a native flare and distinct style to fit their context and preference. Dances such as the Waltz, Fandango, Polka, Habanera, Cachuchas, Rigodon, Lanceros and Jota were introduced to native society that resulted to an array of styles and sometimes they differed from one region to the next (Montoya, 2018; Santos, 2019). The Christianization of the islands also had an impact on how these dances were performed. According to Basilio Esteban Villaruz (1994), who wrote an important article in the historical essay “Philippine Dance,” Christianity became a part of the native psyche to the point that it had been synonymous to the spiritual and communal expression of the natives. As such, these dances depicted “idealized and gender-based virtues” that evolved in the context of religion, courtship, love and even flirtation (Montoya, 2018, Patrick, 2014).

In the discussion of the Filipino precolonial dances, it shows us the fascination of locals in the usage of iconography and props to convey meaning in a dance form. When European dances were introduced to native society, a passion for ornamentation continued to ensue and transform these dances to be part of the Philippine dance tradition. Items such as bamboo, coconut, shell castanets, Christian icons, candles, scented handkerchiefs, *pamaypay* (hand fan), native gestures, among others, were inculcated. The same is true for musical accompaniment that maximized native instruments (Santos, 2019; Villaruz & Tiongson, 2018). In dances about love and courtship like the *Cariñosa*, it is expected for female dancers to exude modesty in their actions, whereas the male dancers need to be aggressive, resourceful and sometimes naughty. Hand fans, for example, are used by female dancers to flirt or even show a form of reservation. In addition, there were precolonial dances that had been Christianized like the *Turumba*, which is a

dance veneration in honor of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba* (Our Lady of Sorrows) in Pakil, Laguna, the *Pandanggo* in Obando, Bulacan that is performed by couples as a form of fertility dance, or the *Simulog* in Cebu that started as an indigenous dance and later had been associated to the veneration of the *Santo Niño*. If not for love, courtship and religious manifestations, dances in the Spanish colonial period were also used as an instrument to empower the elite, the *principalia* and *ilustrado* class. Affluent families would host grand soirees and they favored to showcase European than indigenous dances. The *Rigodon de Honor*, a French quadrille, was the most popular dance routine practiced by the wealthy. It was conducted to highlight the feast day of the town’s patron saint, celebrating the arrival of the galleons that traversed the Pacific, or to welcome a new governor general or bishop (Villaruz et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Based on the historical narratives of the precolonial and Spanish colonial era in the Philippines, we can ascertain four points about the kind of transculturation that transpired between two different cultures. Christianity efficiently penetrated the daily life of early Filipinos because it did not contradict the religious beliefs of the natives. The use of Christian iconography and ornate rituals in religious ceremonies were embraced by the locals. Despite these, the natives developed a unique kind of Christianity known today as folk Catholicism. More so, while the traditional social classes of the precolonial days were altered during the Spanish colonization, the same set of people who governed the natives in the past continued to hold the highest esteem in society during the colonial period. They were rebranded as the *principalia* and *ilustrado*, who greatly influenced the religious, social and political atmosphere of the country. The status and role of women in society was also given prime

importance in the two historical narratives. In the precolonial days, she was a priestess, a matriarch, and a respected citizen with rights and privileges. During the Spanish colonization, she was not merely a decorative element in the household, but a woman of substance: engaged in teaching, trading, and active in church affairs. The indigenous dances of the precolonial era show that the natives used it as a conduit to commune with the spiritual realm, to celebrate the harvest season, imitate animals, among others. In all these dances, iconography and props were used to convey meaning. When the Spaniards arrived and introduced European dances, indigenous dances stayed, but there was clearly a preference for the dances of the dominant culture. However, to make these dances their own, Filipinos added the same flair present in the precolonial dances: they adapted the usage of iconography, props, and an assortment of gestures.

Where does the *bati* traditions of Angono, Ibaan and Parañaque align with the precolonial and Spanish colonial narratives? I posit that parallelisms between the two historical narratives exist in the context of the *bati* and that transculturation is present. The first known *bati* tradition started in Angono, Rizal in 1870. The dance routine was developed by a woman known as Tandang Apang Gil, who gradually transmitted it to succeeding *kapitanas* (Matilac, 2018). As the *bati* was made in the last phase of the Spanish colonization, Christianity was already ingrained as part of the Filipino character. Leaving aside its religious connotations, it may have been derived from the *ilustrado* aspirations of promoting an aspect of the dominant culture, which was a dance containing European elements, but at the same time subject to indigenous preference and interpretation. For one, a social hierarchy could be deciphered in the *bati* as those *kapitanas* were normally chosen from the affluent *principalia* and *ilustrado* families in town. Moreover, the role of woman in the *bati* takes centerstage. The Bible tells us that Jesus first

appeared to a woman, Mary Magdalene. In the anthropological sense, however, the attention to the role of women in the *bati* is much more than its theological counterpart. In both the precolonial and Spanish colonial traditions, we see the importance of women in society, especially in leading religious rites. What makes the *bati* a truly Filipino dance is its usage of iconography, paraphernalia, and literature: the *bandera* (either inscribed with “Alleluia” or emblems of Jesus) to convey the victory of the salvific promise of the resurrection, the various gestures that depict the joy of Easter, and even the *dicho*, a poem recited by the *kapitana* in Angono that expresses the pain and triumph of the Virgin Mary in line with Jesus’s death and resurrection. These then give us a glimpse of how two cultures intertwined in the *bati* traditions through the process of transculturation.

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