

**LENT AND EASTER IN THE PHILIPPINES:
CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN THE DISCOURSE OF GENDER
PERFORMATIVITY**

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Abstract

Filipinos consider Holy Week as the holiest of days of Lent and Easter. During this time, the country is shrouded with centuries-old rituals and practices that persist in contemporary times. Using the framework of gender performativity, this study examines three forms of *pamamanata* (devotion): *pagsasanto* (taking care of a religious image), *penitensya* (penance), and *salubong* (Easter procession). The aim is to identify *pamamanata* practices that align with the feminine, masculine, gay, and those bordering between masculine and feminine tropes. The study maximized data from the author's fieldwork and ethnographic materials written by academics. This study found that the three *pamamanata* traditions are gendered practices and that these are affected by the agencies of the family, community, and religion.

Keywords: pamamanata, pagsasanto, penitensya, salubong, Holy Week, Philippines

Discipline: Cultural Anthropology, Ethnography

Absztrakt

NAGYBÖJT ÉS HÚSVÉT A FÜLÖP-SZIGETEKEN: KATOLIKUS VALLÁSI GYAKORLATOK A NEMI PERFORMATIVITÁS DISKURZUSÁBAN

A filippínók a nagyhetet a nagyböjt és a húsvét legszentebb időszakának tartják. Ez idő alatt az országot évszázados rituálék és gyakorlatok lepik el, amelyek a mai napig fennmaradtak. A tanulmány a gender

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performativitás kereteit felhasználva a *pamamanata* (áhitat, odaadás) három formáját vizsgálja: a *pagsasanto* (egy vallási kép gondozása), a *penitensya* (vezeclés) és a *salubong* (húsvéti körmenet). A cél a feminin, maszkulin, meleg, illetve a maszkulin és feminin típusok közötti határesetnek számító pamamanatagyakorlatok azonosítása. A tanulmány maximalizálta a szerző terepmunkájából és a tudósok által írt néprajzi anyagokból származó adatokat. A tanulmány megállapította, hogy a három pamamanatagyomány nemek szerinti gyakorlat, melyekre a család, a közösség és a vallási szervezetek is hatással vannak.

Kulcsszavak: pamamanata, pagsasanto, penitensya, salubong, Szent Hét, Fülöp-szigetek

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia, néprajz

The first Easter mass in the Philippines was held on April 16, 1521, on Limasawa Island in Leyte when Portuguese conquistador Ferdinand Magellan arrived in the archipelago in the name of Spain after a perilous sea voyage that lasted for more than a year (Regidor, 2021; National Geographic Society, 2023). Although this vital information is not exactly significant since the “systematic and durable evangelization” took place after forty years (De Castro, 2021, as cited in Regidor, 2021), it nonetheless gave a pretext of what was to come for the social and religious life of early Filipinos. Magellan's image of the Santo Niño (Holy Child) bequeathed to the wife of Rajah Humabon became a potent symbol of Christianity for the natives. When Miguel Lopez de Legazpi arrived four decades later in 1565 and fully colonized the country, evangelization took a footing. Early Filipinos were subsequently immersed in other forms of Christian iconography and the doctrines of the Church. In the contemporary period, aside from the revered image of the Santo Niño, the image of the suffering Christ evokes an enormous following among fervent Filipino Catholics. The *pasyon* (Passion of Christ), which narrates the life of Jesus Christ in didactic poetry and is chanted during Holy Week in front of makeshift altars across the country, may explain this fascination with the image of the suffering Christ. Iletto (1979) argues that the *pasyon* allowed Filipinos in the 19th century to identify

with the suffering of Christ at a time when expressing protest or discontent regarding abusive friars, the rich, and those in power was not an option. This consciousness is sustained until today as many Filipinos persistently endure hardships and social injustices.

The statue of the Black Nazarene, which is fondly called by devotees *Poong Itim na Nazareno*, perfectly exhibits the manifestations of suffering: half-kneeling, bearing the weight of the cross, crowned with thorns, looking at the skies in deep thought, and seemingly accepting the will of God. Even if Holy Week is still a few months ahead, the procession every January 9 in commemoration of the image's *traslacion* (transfer) from the Recollect Church in the walled city of Intramuros to Quiapo Church (now the Minor Basilica and National Shrine of the Black Nazarene) drew millions of devotees annually. It is also considered the “most massive procession in the country” (Calano, 2015, p. 168). During the procession, a suffocating number of mostly male devotees clad in maroon shirts ferried the *andas* (processional float) of the *Nazareno* in the streets of Manila – neither minding the heat nor exhaustion – with some eager devotees who braved the crowds to get close to the *andas* to wipe the *Nazareno* with their hand-kerchiefs. Filipino journalist Rina Jimenez-David branded the devotion to the *Nazareno* as “*Batya't Palu-palo* Spirituality” (washbasin and wooden club), which caters

to the marginalized and the urban poor (as cited in Calano, 2015, 167).

The Filipinos' high regard for the suffering image of Christ does not stop through the image and devotion to the *Nazareno*. It is simply the starting point that will reach a peak when the season of Lent and the Easter Triduum come into the picture. In the Christian tradition, Lent is a forty-day period that starts on Ash Wednesday and ends by sundown of Maundy Thursday. This season consists of fasting, abstinence, prayer, and almsgiving as preparation for the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2024). In contrast, the Easter Triduum is considered the most important season in the liturgical calendar as it completes the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which happens between the evening of Maundy Thursday and the evening of Easter Sunday (USCCB, 2024). The Paschal Mystery, in layman's terms, is the "process of dying and rising, death and new life" (Loyola Press, 2024), but theologically it is the accomplishment of Christ's work of redemption through "his Passion, death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1993, 1067).

In the Filipino tradition, the most important days of Lent and Easter begin from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. Filipinos call these sacred days "*Mga Mahal na Araw*," loosely translated as Days of Love, taken from the words "*mahal*" which means love, and "*araw*" referring to a day. There is no exact explanation for why Holy Week is termed "*Mga Mahal na Araw*;" however, it may be referential to the loving act of Christ as he sacrificed himself to be crucified and died on the cross to redeem mankind. During these holy days, rituals adorned with mysticism, folk practices, gore, and pageantry shroud the country's rural and urban centers.

The point of this article is not only to highlight the image of Christ's suffering through the rituals that abound in the Philippines during Holy Week

but to emphasize that many of these ritual traditions exist in the framework of gender performativity. As exemplified in the *Nazareno* procession, most devotees who wheeled the image back at Quiapo church were dominated by men.

The pervasive "macho" culture present in Philippine society aligns with the devotion to the *Nazareno*. Bonilla (2021, 42) explains that male devotees see the image "oozing with the masculinity of sacrifice." Such conception also falls with Van Genep's (1960) "rites of passage" wherein an act of initiation is largely part of transition rites. Tremlett (2006) adds that the *Nazareno* procession is an example of a critical occasion when lowland Filipino men experience the ritualized performance through their bodies. When it comes to gender performativity, Butler (1988) emphasizes that gender is not a stable identity that enables certain actions to proceed but it is something that is manifested through time by a "stylized repetition of acts" (p. 519). She furthers that "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" (p. 521). On the one hand, performativity is not concerned about the act being performed rather it concerns itself with how the act is conducted repeatedly (Ton, 2018). Moreover, while there are certain actions attached or expected with one's gender, these actions may either conform or oppose in the context of gender (Butler, 1988). Khan (2022) also emphasizes that religion is a gendered concept because it uses gender codes and allows the gendering of "other practices, concepts or peoples, labeled as religious" (p. 154).

As in the *Nazareno* procession, I argue that the rituals and associated traditions during Holy Week in the Philippines are gendered practices and fall under the dictum of gender performativity because they contain feminine, masculine, gay, or both masculine and feminine overtones. Rituals during Holy Week are also repetitive practices – an important component of gender performativity – as these

happen annually. As such, these rituals continue to be sustained because the locals are usually exposed to them starting from childhood. Aside from yearly observance, the custom of *pamamanata* (from the root word *panata*), a vow or a devotional pledge, is the starting point of why many of these rituals continue to survive in contemporary times. Macaranas (2021) elaborates that the act of *pamamanata* stems from the Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa*, a sense of fellowship, wherein *utang na loob* (the feeling of indebtedness) is crucial. Jocano (1967) identifies that *pamamanata* is a form of repayment between a subordinate (flagellant) and a superordinate (God). In this case, the penitent is expected to conduct his promises, which usually take years or even a lifetime, in exchange for God's protection against sickness, malice, and other untoward events.

From years of attending and observing Holy Week rituals in both the city and the province, I posit several ways in which locals become exposed to ritual practices that have been part of *pamamanata*. Starting as mere spectators, they eventually morph into actual participants in these ritual practices. There were those individuals who were asked by their parents to help in the preparations when they were young. Gradually, they were able to imbue the tradition and later, as adults, they eventually inherited the practice. This custom is common among those families who conduct the chanting of the *pasyon* every Holy Week or those families who take care of a *santo* (image of a saint) that joins the processions. More so, some individuals began observing a certain ritual from a distance (e.g., from other families, from friends, people from the church) when they were adolescents and eventually decided to conduct the practice later in adulthood out of personal interest. Some individuals experienced a miracle in their lives (e.g., a cured illness, passing an exam) or they had special intentions that they wanted to achieve. The prevailing question now is how these *pamamanata*

traditions in the Philippines become gendered practices. What Holy Week ritual traditions do align with the feminine, masculine, gay, or bordering both feminine and masculine tropes? This study seeks to shed light on this question by reviewing available ethnographic data derived from my fieldwork and those written by academics on three ritual traditions during Holy Week: *pagsasanto* and *prusisyon* (caretaking of a religious statue and procession), *penitensya* (penance), and *salubong* (Easter procession).

Pagsasanto and prusisyon

Conducting a *prusisyon* (procession) is a passion of Filipinos. Every fiesta commemorating the memorial of the town or patron of village saint is not complete without a procession after the liturgy in church. Central to the procession is the image of a saint called *santo* dressed in rich velvet and embroidery, regally enthroned on a *carroza* (processional float) decorated lavishly with flowers and made more dramatic by iridescent lighting powered by generators. The longest and most ostentatious processions in the Philippines happen every Holy Week. Some towns conduct processions almost all days of Holy Week featuring *santos* or *pasos* (tableaus) that depict solitary images or themes from the passion of Christ. These sacred images are cared for by well-to-do individuals and families termed *camareros* (custodians of *santos*). These *camareros* are required to maintain the upkeep of these images and make sure that they participate in the annual processions. Meanwhile, the term *pagsasanto* is a generic term that describes the beliefs and practices aligned with the care-taking of the *santo* (Romerosa & Antonio, 2021). The practice of *pagsasanto* was introduced by the Spaniards through the imposition of Christianity in the archipelago. The first *camareros* recorded in the annals of Philippine history came from Santo Domingo Church in Intramuros in Manila, who served as

cus-todians to the image of *Nuestra Señora del Santísimo Rosario de La Naval* (Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of La Naval) as early as 17th century. These *camareras* were old rich women from influential families who devoted their time and financial capacity to maintain the image of the *Santo Rosario*; however, documents from the Dominican archives also suggested that men also became *camareros* to the image (Galang, 2013).

Traditionally, *pagsasanto* was exclusively performed by affluent matrons or families who wielded political or financial prestige in the community, given the elaborate preparations behind the custom that consumed plenty of resources (i.e., bedecking the *carroza* with decorations, usage of gas and generator, embroidered garments of the *santo*, feeding the people joining and pulling the *carroza*, payment for brass bands). These matrons or families were active in church and were usually known for their philanthropic works. In the study of Tamayo (2020), *pagsasanto* was regarded as a practice of the landed gentry or the *hacienderos*, and their influence also extended to the religious life of their servants and tenant farmers. There was also an indigenous belief that the potency of the *santo* could only be achieved if the rituals offered to it were lavish (Jocano, 1967). *Camareros* were then expected to conduct ornate rituals for the *santo* to grant their supplications. In Guagua, Pampanga, Mrs. Romana Limson-Reyes, who came from a line of distinguished ancestry, reflects the *pagsasanto* tradition in the context of the landed. Having a rich provenance, Mrs. Reyes inherited the statue of the *Mater Dolorosa* (Sorrowful Mother), which until today has a fivehectare agricultural land. Before the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991, this agricultural land supported the expenses for the upkeep, processions, and related rituals of the *santo*. The family also holds an annual *pabasa*, a time when family members go back to the province, reunite, and participate in the processions during Holy Week (Tamayo, 2020).

To put it in context, the practice of *pagsasanto* was already present in Filipino culture even before the Spaniards colonized the Philippines. Our ancestors practiced animism as part of their culture. During rituals, statues called *anito*, *likeba*, *larawan*, or *taotao* which represented the spirits of the dead and various deities were central to the celebrations (Gatbonton, 1979). These idols were carved using different materials including stone, wood, bone, the tooth of an animal, and precious metals like gold (Barrows, 2016, as cited in Tamayo, 2020, p. 117). In addition, a system of sponsorship already existed in the precolonial tradition. As rituals consumed numerous resources, the local elite was expected to shoulder the expenses, whereas those below them practiced volunteerism (Calma, 2009). While the Spaniards tried their best to eliminate traces of pre-colonial beliefs, the use of idols in religious services migrated and disguised in the veneration of *santos* in the Catholic Church. Macdonald (2004) calls this process “transformative continuity,” which happens when there is a transposition of “a preexisting structure into a new idiom.” Given that the natives saw parallelism between their idols and the *santos*, the veneration of the saints became palatable and easily digested as part of the cultural fabric, which survives until today. This is the reason Filipino anthropologist, Fernando Zialcita, highlights how *santos* are worshipped and treated as if they are ancestors (1998, as cited in Macdonald, 2004, p. 89).

Over time, traditions related to *pagsasanto* gained another transformation, but still retained aspects of transformative continuity. Since the early 2000s, there has been an increasing interest among gay men in practicing *pagsasanto* and becoming *camareros* of *santos*, including those that joined Holy Week processions. The studies of Piamonte et al. (2020), Romerosa and Antonio (2021), and Sestoso and Madula (2019) explored this aspect of *pagsasanto*. Sestoso and Madula (2019) cited the cases of Reggie and Marvin who both hailed from Malabon

in Metro Manila, referred to themselves as gay men, and owned processional *santos* for Holy Week. Their findings revealed that the environment where Reggie and Marvin grew up, the people surrounding them, and the religion of their families influenced their interest in becoming *camareros*. While Reggie admitted to creating makeshift altars on their rooftop and offering flowers to small statues, Marvin was always with his grandmother in the parish church who was part of a lay organization, and when at home he used his robots to reenact processions wherein his toys served the equivalent of *santos*. In today's parlance, Marvin's child's play is called *karu-karuban* (like a processional carriage), which has been accepted by some parishes to encourage evangelization among adolescents. Initially, Reggie was requested to take care of a processional image of the *Mater Dolorosa*, but the original owner eventually decided to bequeath it to him after observing how he passionately kept the image. In contrast, Marvin inherited several *santos* from his family; however, he also commissioned images of his own including a processional image of *Santa Cleofe* (St. Mary of Clopas) when he started earning.

In the study of Romerosa and Antonio (2021), they found that *pagsasanto* among gay *camareros* became a platform where they could “exercise their agency, cultivate their capacities, and negotiate their identity” (p. 60). Alluding *pagsasanto* tradition among the affluent, they posited that the current practice is a form of repositioning aligned with the role and identity of gay *camareros*. Coming from the periphery, gay *camareros* now assume a central role in the practice of *pagsasanto*, which is a form of *pama-manata* in the Catholic church. Both authors also acknowledged that *pagsasanto* is part of gender performativity combined with elements of identity construction and negotiation, which is reflected in three related practices regarding *pagsasanto*: *pag-aalaga* (caretaking), *gayakan* (decorating), and *pag-sama sa prusisyon* (joining the procession). In the

interviews they conducted, the families of some respondents were hostile to gay *camareros* when they played with dolls during their adolescence but tolerated them when they played with statues of female saints, Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, especially when they performed *karu-karuban*.

Moreover, Piamonte et al.'s (2020) study determined the agents of socialization in Philippine society that guided the way for gay *camareros* to practice *pagsasanto*. They reveal that family, school, and community are three agents of socialization that highly influence gay *camareros*. Family as an agency indicates that gay *camareros* were already immersed early in various practices related to *pagsasanto*, citing family members who were either conducting a *pabasa* or practicing *camareros* themselves. The school is also an important agency in the process of being a *camarero* since many of the respondents were products of Catholic institutions that exposed gay *camareros* to devotional acts. In addition, the local communities allowed them to reinforce their exposure to *pagsasanto* as they lived in locations where there were strong inclinations to the rituals and practices of the Catholic church.

While many may conceive the active participation of Filipino gay men in the traditions and practices of the Catholic church as a recent phenomenon, I argue that it is simply a resurgence of an old tradition deeply rooted in the pre-colonial context of the Philippines. Even before the Christianization of the Philippines, religion was already a gendered practice in the archipelago. The *babaylan* (also *catalona*) led the rituals conducted by our ancestors and they were also respected figures in pre-colonial society. While women usually assumed the position of *babaylan*, men were also allowed to become one for as long as they performed and dressed like women. Garcia (2004) notes that these “gender crossers” were referred to then as *bayoguin*, *bayok*, *agi-ngin*, *asog*, *bido*, or *binabae* to describe their feminized state. Like the native women, they obtained the same rights such as getting married to a man

and performing sexual relations with him. Despite the *babaylan's* limitation of not bearing children, they were considered concubines and allowed their partners to have children with other women (Garcia, 2004).

When the Spaniards arrived, the missionaries saw this tradition as vile and did everything to annihilate the practice. As a result, the *bailanes* experienced hardships: fleeing to the mountains and being branded as witches, assisting the *datu* (chieftain) to ward off the colonizers, or forcibly converting to Christianity (Salazar, 1996; Limos, 2019). Those who converted to Catholicism assisted the priests during liturgies, maintained the church, and helped prepare for processions (Salazar, 1996). In a way, the *bai-lanes* who converted seem to be the first ones to practice *pagsasanto*, given their roles in preparing for processions. The practice of the Christianized *bailanes* transformed in the contemporary period in the context of *pagsasanto* wherein Filipino gay men have now the agency and opportunity to continue what the *bailanes* initially started.

Penitensya

When I talk of *penitensya*, I am reminded of a time when my cousin brought her Korean students to our province in Hagonoy, Bulacan one Good Friday to witness the flagellations and a crucifixion. As we observed how the posterior of half-naked men was being punctured by shards of glasses attached to a wooden frame or metal blades, one of her male students was so petrified that he eventually collapsed. For an outsider, this tradition may be something gruesome but for Filipinos, especially those living in the countryside of lowland Tagalog areas, such practices are ordinary and part of the cultural practices during Holy Week. *Penitensya* is a form of penance that is widely practiced in the Philippines, particularly on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday when dozens of flagellants parade through the streets of mostly rural areas and a series of crucifixions on designated locations. As

someone exposed to these practices every Holy Week between my childhood and teenage years, I observed that these acts of *penitensya* were commonly practiced by men.

In Hagonoy, there were several types of *penitensya* that I encountered. There were flagellations called *hampas-dugo* (to strike and then bleed) where a long line of penitents walking along the streets at midday hit their backs with thin bamboo sticks attached to a cord. As they hit their backs, blood oozed from their punctured skins that heavily stained their white pants. There were also those groups composed of teenage and mature men wearing white shirts who carried white or black wooden crosses called *mamamasan*. In the evening, some male penitents crawled the streets and they stopped at every *kubol*, a makeshift chapel along the streets where the *pasyon* is chanted, where they were beaten by an assistant using *tsinelas* (slippers) attached to a wooden pole. Throughout my time in our province, I only observed one crucifixion as this practice was more common in Kapitangan, a barrio in Paombong, Bulacan, and Cutud, a barangay in San Fernando, Pampanga. Prudente (2017) notes that the motivations why penitents conduct these practices are to atone for their sins and thanksgiving for the graces they received (as cited in Wight & Victoria, 2021, p. 2).

While self-mortification was introduced by Spanish missionaries between the 16th and 17th centuries (Tiatco & Bonifacio-Ramolete, 2008), flogging was already used during the pre-colonial period as a lighter penalty instead of enslavement (Mintzs, 2006, as cited in Moratilla, 2018). As Christianity spread on the islands, the missionaries elevated the meaning of self-mortification when they associated it with purifying both body and soul from sin. The natives adopted this practice for they believed that their sins would be atoned and that their souls would reach potency by corporal punishment (Moratilla, 2018). The position of the Philippine Catholic Church today regarding *penitensya* is

contrary to what the early missionaries taught early Filipinos. Although not condemning those who conduct *penitensya*, high-ranking clerics expressed that such practices are redundant because – by theology – Christ already endured death on the cross to redeem mankind from sin. They furthered that too much attention to the “physical pain” during Good Friday limits the faithful from appreciating the message of Christ’s resurrection on Easter. More so, some penitents believed that self-mortification is a substitute for the sacraments of the Church such as confession and communion (Bautista, 2011).

The study of Alejandrino Jr. and Reyes (2019) may give a possible explanation why men are usually the participants of *penitensya* rites. In their study, the authors conducted in-terviews with five penitents who started to join the *penitensya* rites when they were between 14 and 21 years old. The study found that family is an important agent in why the penitents decided to conduct the practice. Primarily, some penitents started to conduct *penitensya* when a family member became seriously indisposed. If not, the practice served as a family tradition that was passed on from father to son. In Cutud, a *barangay* in San Fernando, Pampanga, a man named Tatang Temyong was the first known Filipino who was crucified on the cross in 1962 (Barker, 1998, as cited in Tiatco & Bonifacio-Ramolet, 2008, p. 64). Instead of being tied on the cross for several minutes as part of the act in the *sinakulo* (a play reenacting the passion of Christ), he requested to deepen his *panata* through the act of crucifixion. The study of Tiatco and Bonifacio-Ramolet (2008) agrees with one of the findings of Alejandrino Jr. and Reyes (2019) regarding illness as some of their respondents pledged to be the *Kristo* (penitent to be crucified) in Cutud due to their health-related intentions, particularly on family members who were sick.

While further studies are needed to identify why *penitensya* is mostly attributed to men, an alternative

explanation probably lies in how Filipino men perceive the notion of *pagkadalaki* (manhood). Aguilin-Dalisay et al. (1995) inquired about how Filipino males from three cultural groups (Tagalog, Ilonggos, and Mara-naw) perceived *pagkadalaki*.

Their inquiry found that men in the three cultural groups see an aspect of manhood in terms of physical strength. The respondents cited that men were stronger, could lift heavy objects, and were prone to last longer in physical activities. They also emphasized that manhood was about responsibility, highlighting their obligations to help their families and communities. Connecting this finding to the context of the penitents, the environment where the penitents belong became an agent for them to perform the “male gender” through constant exposure to family and community traditions.

This is reflected when the penitent inherits the tradition from his father or when he is motivated to perform his *panata* because of his family. The concepts of *lakas* (strength) and *tapang* (courage) are also embedded in *penitensya*. *Tapang* is seen here through the example of Tatang Temyong who was not satisfied with his *panata* and valiantly decided to be crucified. *Lakas* reflects on the penitents’ capacity and endurance to lift heavy objects such as a wooden cross or to walk barefoot for some kilometers amidst the scorching heat and the searing pain brought by flagellation. Despite the morbid representations of *penitensya*, the penitents felt a sense of being *maginhawa* (lightness of being) because, by overcoming extreme pain, the “heaviness” they felt in their hearts was finally emancipated (Bautista, 2011).

Salubong

The epitome of Holy Week rituals in the Philippines is achieved during Easter Sunday. Compared to the somber rituals that happened in previous days, the celebration of Easter is commemorated with a festive rhythm. Aside from the liturgy that happens inside the church, the most

anticipated event is the *salu-bong*, a ritual procession conducted at dawn where the image of the Resurrected Christ (*Cristo Resucitado*) meets the image of the Virgin Mary (*Virgen Alegria*). This *salubong* or meeting is usually held at the church patio and many locals attend to witness the event. The two images will come from different places (usually a chapel in a nearby *barangay*) and, by the end of the procession, both images will meet at the parish church. As the processions commence, fireworks called *kwitis* are released in the night's air to wake people up and signal that the *salubong* rites already started.

The *salubong* can be categorized as a gendered performance because men and women are traditionally separated during the processions. In our province and even in the city where I lived, men customarily joined the image of the Resurrected Christ while the women followed the image of the Virgin Mary. Upon reaching the church, the crowd converges, the images approach the *Galilea*, a platform, and prayers are presided over by the parish priest. The *Regina Caeli* (Queen of Heaven), a musical antiphon, is sung by a child dressed like an angel. After which, the black veil covering the face of the Virgin Mary that symbolizes sorrow is detached usually by the same child who sang the antiphon. In some towns, it is still a tradition to burn an effigy of Judas Iscariot.

The effigy contains an assortment of fire-crackers and will produce intoxicating sounds once lit.

The origins of *salubong* are not mentioned in the Scriptures. However, Antonio and del Castillo (2021) mention that it may have originated from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which circulated in the 16th century through the Jesuits who conducted missions in the Philippines. Given the creative techniques of the Jesuits in evangelization, they add that the Jesuits may have used “dramatic and semidramatic forms as valuable pedagogical methods to spread the Catholic faith” (Nshimirimana, 2019, as cited in Antonio & del Castillo,

2021, p. 78). Out of all the rituals during Holy Week, I argue that the *salubong* has the most feminine overtone. First, the Filipino value of being “*makainá*” (maternal or motherly) is depicted in the celebration. While the Scriptures mentioned that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, the *salubong* refocused the attention on the mother of Jesus. This was a popular Filipino interpretation of the resurrection wherein Jesus would have appeared first to the Virgin Mary instead of the apostles and Mary Magdalene. In addition, the parishes in some towns also maximize an all-female ensemble during the *salubong*. The parishes in Sto. Tomas and Minalin in the province of Pampanga, for example, have an all-female choir that sings the *Alleluia* while the two images are fronting each other (Antonio & del Castillo, 2021).

Viray's (2019) study on the *sayaw ng bati* (dance of greeting) in Boac, Marinduque and Angono, Rizal focused on the dancerly attitudes of the performers. This dance ritual is characterized by the waving of a flag, which symbolizes the triumph of Jesus through his resurrection. In Boac, the dance is performed by a pair of male and female dancers, whereas the one in Angono is strictly performed by two female dancers – the *tenyenta* and the *kapitana*. According to Viray, the choreography of the *sayaw ng bati* is influenced by the devotion to the Virgin Mary. Miriam Miciano, one of Viray's interview respondents in Boac, expressed that the movement of the female dancer should be ladylike comparable to Maria Clara, a fictional character from the book of Jose Rizal characterized as delicate and conservative. She added that this Maria Clara attribute of the choreography could also be attributed to the traits of the Virgin Mary who was soft-spoken and humble. In contrast, Viray found that the *tenyenta* and *kapitana* in Angono should embody the following traits associated with the Virgin Mary: “*babaeng matimtiman* (decorous woman), *maganda* (beau-tiful), *matapat* (honest), *marunong* (wise), and *malinis* (clean)” (p. 104).

As can be observed with the rituals associated with the *salubong*, the tempo of the Holy Week rituals shifted from themes of pain and suffering, which evoke a highly masculine trope, towards joyfulness that features several feminine undertones. Culturally, it shows the affection of Filipinos for the Virgin Mary as a maternal figure. The *salubong* underscores the prominence of motherly love and the Filipinos' sense of being *makaina*. These are reflected in the belief that Jesus first appeared to her mother, the presence of an all-female ensemble in several towns, and the choreography of the *sayaw ng bati* that contains the traits of the Virgin Mary. Likewise, the "female gender" is felt through these varied performances.

Conclusion

Drawing from Butler's (1988) framework on gender performativity, this study proved that *pamamanata* in the Philippines during Holy Week in the context of *pagsasanto*, *penitensya*, and *salubong* are gendered practices. These traditions are repeatedly performed annually which allows the participants to be exposed early as many of their families are practicing different forms of *pamamanata*. The communities where the participants live also contribute to the deepening of their awareness, given that the places where these communities reside strongly practice Holy Week-related traditions. Moreover, these agents contribute to how the participants understand gender and gender identity construction in various *pamamanata* practices.

In *pagsasanto*, the transformation of the practice from being matron-centric to gay men who are now at the center of being *camareros* is a resurgence of a custom dating back to the pre-colonial period. These gay men reflect the position of the *bailanes* in doing religion. It also proves that Filipino gay men contribute to the sustainability of *pagsasanto* and that they play a significant role in the Catholic Church in the Philippines today. In *penitensya*, the notion of *pagkalalaki* surrounds the characteristics

of the male penitents. *Lakas* and *tapang* are embodied by male penitents who are motivated to conduct their *panata* because of their families, community, and their faith. In *salubong*, the embodiment of the female gender in several Easter rituals is highlighted by the Filipino value of *makaina*. This value becomes an agent in framing the *salubong* rites as can be exemplified by the role being played by certain participants and even in the choreography of the dance performers.

As a reflection, the *pamamanata* practices in the Philippines during Holy Week show us that tolerance is at the forefront of all ritual traditions. As Pope Francis expressed, "Who am I to judge?" (2013, as cited in Chappell, 2013).

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