

Upholding Indigenous Beliefs

RAINIER A. IBANA

ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

One of our contributors to this volume observed that the devotees of Quiapo's Black Nazarene believed that the statue of the Lord Jesus ("*Poong Jesus*") in the procession was posed to lift the cross instead of being drawn down by its weight.¹ The devotees perceived Jesus' bearing of the cross as an act of transcendence, instead of merely bearing the brunt of his tribulations. The popular religious practices narrated in this volume describe similar venerations as numinous experiences.

The first essay, Michael Demetrius Asis' proposal for a Filipino Christology, suggests that images of popular devotions emerged from the devotees' "peak experiences of God." In order to ground popular religious practices on the historical events of Jesus' life, however, Asis emphasizes the social dimension of Christ's mission. He points to the

¹ Mark Calano's interview with CNN can be viewed at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2111784405728114> (accessed 19 February 2019).

Filipinos' propensity for acts of heroism (*bayani*) and community spirit (*bayanihan*) as viable "honest appropriations" of Jesus' life-giving experiences of solidarity with the marginalized sectors of society. He further exemplifies this form of Christology by referring to Mary of the Gospels as someone who "should never be an object of veneration for her submissiveness and indifference in the face of patriarchal abuse and exploitation, but for her bravery and defiance in the face of social indifference and foreign domination."

The second essay, Mark Joseph Calano's "*Ginhawa* as Ethic of *Panata*: Body Politics and the Devotion to the Black Nazarene," articulates the underlying social ethos that permeates the devotion to the statue of the Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila. He claims that the devotees' linguistic and bodily expressions during the procession bespeak of their world-view. He compares the difficulties endured during the procession to the challenges encountered by the devotees in daily life. *Ginhawa*, being released from suffering, serves as the end-goal, in an analogous way, of both the procession and the vicissitudes of life. The procession requires physical endurance while life itself pleads for fidelity and sacrifice. The former aches for relaxation, while the latter longs for salvation. The article concludes that "Whether we like it or not, the devotion to the Black Nazarene is still a religious performance. As such, there is an other to the encounter—the sacred. This turns the devotion not only as something to be performed, but also as something to be celebrated."

The third essay, Jovino Miroy's "Discontinuity and Continuity of Devotion: the Virgin of Guadalupe from Mexico to Makati," traces the history of the Virgin of Guadalupe, from Extramadura in the Iberian Peninsula; through Tepeyac, Mexico; and to Makati, Philippines. Each stage of this story was marked by corresponding historic moments engendered by a community of believers: the Monarchs and Spanish conquistadors, Mexican revolutionaries, and the cosmopolitan population of the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. Miroy reports that in Makati's "Guadalupe Viejo is the confluence of colonists, Chinese, friars, and natives. The church, through the overarching framework of 'devotion,' has spawned a space for inclusion, globality, and multiculturalism." However, Miroy also raises the question: "Can a cultural interpretation be sufficient to explain what happens in Guadalupe, in Quiapo, in Antipolo?"

Prescinding from our articles on popular religiosity, Fr. Venusto Fullente Suarez reviews *Ang Maganda sa Teolohiya*, an anthology of articles on *mabathalang pag-aaral* (theological studies), edited by Jose de Mesa and his protégés. The book tackles the complicated relationship between theology and culture. Suarez appreciates de Mesa's project of theological reflection "from the ground up," and asks, "How do Filipinos think about life, living and life-sharing?" He then draws the readers' attention to Rebecca Cacho's essay, one of the contributions to de Mesa's collection, and evaluates her article as, "The summit of enculturation that finds the best in

Philippine culture, as shepherded unto fruition in Christ, is balanced with the manifest planting of the faith into the soil of Filipino culture.”

Heeding the popular Filipino saying: “*Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makararating sa paroroonan.*” (Those who do not look back at their origins will not reach their destination.), Leonardo Silos provides a glimpse of his forthcoming book, *The Human Organization. Science, not Scientism. Technology, not Technocracy. Language, not Linguistics.* This last article in the volume is a fitting recapitulation of the previous essays. Here, Professor Silos inspires readers to trace our cultural resources—“our music and dance, above all our languages, surely our national language”—to discover the thoughts and deeds of our ancestors.

The approaches deployed by the authors in this collection may be viewed as responses to Professor Silos’ challenge to reflect on our languages in order to understand ourselves. They have extracted valuable insights from indigenous Filipino terminologies, such as *bayani* (hero), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *pagtawag* (bidding), *ginhawa* (relief), *duda* (doubt), *ganda* (beauty), and *mabathalang pag-aaral* (theological studies).

This exploration of the linguistic foundations of our culture does not come to an end in this volume. Based on the contributions that we have received for the subsequent issues of our journal, there appears to be a continuing and deepening pursuit of this worthy research endeavor.



“Clutching Eternity”

(The Black Nazarene of Quiapo, Manila:
Photograph by Rainier Ibana, March 10, 2019)