Women, Religion And Social Change In The Philippines

:Refractions of the Past in Urban Filipinas' Religious Practices Today

by

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I certify that the thesis entitled:

**Women, Religion and Social Change in the Philippines**

: Refractions of the Past in Urban Filipinas’ Religious Practices Today

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the result of my own research except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis in whole or in part has not been submitted for an award including a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: ________________________________

Name: Mary Therese Drum

Date:
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Abstract

This research is an exploration of the place of religious beliefs and practices in the life of contemporary, predominantly Catholic, Filipinas in a large Quezon City Barangay in Metro Manila. I use an iterative discussion of the present in the light of historical studies, which point to women in pre-Spanish ‘Filipino’ society having been the custodians of a rich religious heritage and the central performers in a great variety of ritual activities. I contend that although the widespread Catholic evangelisation, which accompanied colonisation, privileged male religious leadership, Filipinos have retained their belief in feminine personages being primary conduits of access to spiritual agency through which the course of life is directed. In continuity with pre-Hispanic practices, religious activities continue to be conceived in popular consciousness as predominantly women’s sphere of work in the Philippines. I argue that the reason for this is that power is not conceived as a unitary, undifferentiated entity. There are gendered avenues to prestige and power in the Philippines, one of which directly concerns religious leadership and authority. The legitimacy of religious leadership in the Philippines is heavily dependent on the ability to foster and maintain harmonious social relations. At the local level, this leadership role is largely vested in mature influential women, who are the primary arbiters of social values in their local communities. I hold that Filipinos have appropriated symbols of Catholicism in ways that allow for a continuation and strengthening of their basic indigenous beliefs so that Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices are not dichotomous, as has sometimes been argued. Rather, I illustrate from my research that present day urban Filipinos engage in a blend of formal and informal religious practices and that in the rituals associated with both of these forms of religious practice, women exercise important and influential roles. From the position of a feminist perspective I draw on individual women’s articulation of their life stories, combined with my observation and participation in the religious practices of Catholic women from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, to discuss the role of Filipinas in local level community religious leadership. I make interconnections between women’s influence in this sphere, their positioning in family social relations, their role in the celebration of All Saints and All Souls Days in Metro Manila’s cemeteries and the ubiquity and importance of Marian devotions. I accompany these discussions with an extensive body of pictorial plates.
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Introduction

Beginnings and Research Focus

In a review of over twenty five years involvement in the study of women and religion, Gross (1994:327-330) recounts how she first became involved in 1967\(^1\) in this area of study through a desire to find out whether the position of women in other contexts was as poorly represented in scholarship pertaining to the study of religion, as is the case in Western religions. Although my own foray into this area of scholarship comes three decades later, my initial interests had some similarities to those of Gross. I had lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for over a decade\(^2\) during which time I was in close contact with Melanesian women who were very actively involved in Christian religious practices, and who indicated in differing ways a certain discomfort with Western beliefs and concepts in the spiritual domain. Thus I became interested to know more about what was the pre-Christian spiritual base and heritage of these Melanesian women that informed and enriched their present spirituality. Initially, I turned to what had been written about Melanesian religion, to examine the conclusions of the experts, so to speak, and found as Gross (1987:41) did, that the prominent anthropological texts were either silent with respect to women’s religious lives or concluded that women were peripheral and not significantly involved in that which pertained to the religious domain. I found this difficult to accept at face value, and all the more so after becoming familiar with Annette Weiner’s (1976) work, which was conducted half a century after the completion of Malinowski’s classic fieldwork, and in many ways was a ‘reconsideration’\(^3\) of this work from the alternative perspective of sustained attentiveness to the perceptions of women, as well as men, of Trobriand Islands’ culture. What began as an initial cursory interest developed into a more scholarly one during my honours year as I did an in-depth reading of Melanesian ethnography throughout this century. In this I sought to

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\(^1\)Through writing a graduate studies paper concerned largely with the role of women in tribal religions in Aboriginal Australia and to a lesser extent with women in Melanesian religion.

\(^2\)During the years 1979 to 1991.

\(^3\)“Reconsideration” to the limited extent that such is possible within the confines of a significantly different historical time frame and changed social and economic environment.
examine the inter-relationship between the way in which women are represented in ethnography with respect to religious practice, who does the representation, and whether evidence exists to suggest the possibility of Melanesian women themselves holding alternative perceptions to the conclusions drawn in the main reference texts in the literature on religion in Melanesia. I found that much of the early ethnography, particularly that written by women anthropologists like Powdermaker ([1933] 1971), Blackwood (1935), Wedgwood (1934; 1937-8), Kaberry (1941) and Reay (1959) contained a wealth of information about women’s lives and the ways in which they participated in religious activities, sometimes in co-operation and at other times, in domains separate from that of men’s religious practice. Significantly, these ethnographers reported that their information had been obtained from men and women. A careful reading of the work of these female anthropologists and other concurrent ethnography by male anthropologists such as Fortune (1935), Hogbin (1939) and Bateson ([1936] 1958) led me, (see Drum, 1993), to question the claim, that in the Melanesian context it is men who have “ultimate control over all major ritual”, which Lawrence and Meggitt (1965:15) made in their text Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia.5

As my honours research had been a study of the place occupied by women and the ways in which they had been represented in the literature on religious beliefs and practices in traditional Melanesian societies, I was planning to do further in-depth fieldwork on this subject in Melanesia. I had made application for a scholarship to do a higher degree by research and submitted a research proposal to conduct this work in Papua New Guinea where I already had eleven years experience. In connection with these plans I had been invited to address a conference of women religious in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands on the theme of “Women and Religion in Melanesia from an Anthropological Perspective”. This conference was in preparation for the tenth Asian-Pacific Meeting of Religious

4Where double dates appear with the earlier one enclosed as follows [ ], the date so enclosed refers to the date of initial oral presentation of later published work, or more commonly to the initial publication of later republished work as here in the case of Powdermaker’s ethnography.


6Women who are members of religious institutes of consecrated life in Catholicism are commonly referred to as “women religious”, in differentiation from the term “religious women” used more broadly to refer to women of any background and state of life who are perceived to be devout followers of certain religious beliefs and practices.
women (AMOR X)\(^7\) to be held in Manila in May 1994 on the theme of “Self-empowerment of Women” which I, and others, had been invited to attend as part of a delegation from Papua New Guinea. In a sense these conferences pointed to a deepening juncture in my life where experiences sometimes gelled reassuringly but other times collided violently leading to fragmentation and disorientation. This was because although I was an aspiring anthropologist about to embark on my ‘rite of passage’, this was not my sole, or even primary identity at this point in my life’s course, I was also a member of a women’s international religious community.\(^8\) Other female fieldworkers, (Behar, 1993b; Bell et al. (eds.) 1993; Ganguly-Serase, 1998; Golde (ed.) 1986a; Hughes, 1989; Panini (ed.) 1991; Whitehead and Conaway (eds.) 1986), have written about their identities as mothers, wives or partners; as married women unaccompanied by partner, husband or children; as divorcees, widows and single women; or even as sisters, daughters, granddaughters and elders; and how these affected their establishment in the field and the lines of inquiry they could and could not pursue. Likewise my identity as a religious sister is of import here as it influenced in both positive and negative ways my choice of a research locality, the ways in which I commenced my work and subsequent developments. This was particularly so in respect of my choice of a research locality, as my personal circumstances changed before I came to attend the Manila conference. I was requested, rather unexpectedly, by my religious community’s central administration to accept an appointment in charge of the establishment of a new international community in Manila. Given that my move into anthropology had been from a desire to gain a deeper appreciation of cultural differences as a basis for more respectfully and equitably negotiating the realities of cross-cultural living, I accepted the appointment, notwithstanding that I had reservations about the timing and my preparedness for such an undertaking. With this turn of events I arrived in Manila, not simply to attend a conference, but to make my home there for the indefinite future.

\(^7\)Although officially these referred to Asian Pacific meetings held in different venues, the majority of the participants came from Asian countries on the Pacific rim with minority representation from Pacific Island countries and thus the meetings held on a two to three yearly basis were referred to in abbreviated form as AMOR (Asian Meetings Of Religious) events, with a roman numeral signifying chronology. The tenth meeting, AMOR X, was held from May 7th-19th, 1994 in the Philippines partly in Metro Manila, (MM), and partly in Tagaytay approximately 50 kms to the south of Manila.

\(^8\)See later in this chapter p. 12 ff. for further detail.
Given my interest in women and religious contexts, questions again arose for me in terms of contemporary women in the Philippines, “How did they see their own lives and in what way did these perceptions intersect with religious and spiritual concerns?” These questions seemed particularly pertinent as, in the Asian context, the Philippines has been somewhat of an anomaly for the last four centuries in terms of the widespread acceptance of Christianity among its peoples, an attribute to which attention is frequently drawn. According to 1990 Census data, 93.88% of the Philippine population claimed Christian affiliations, while 4.57% indicated their religious affiliation was Islam. Of the remaining 1.55%, only 0.33% did not state a particular religious affiliation, leaving 1.22% having other religious affiliations (refer Figure 1: at end of this introduction). Filipinos are ranked “No. 1” in their religiosity according to a social survey bulletin, (Mangahas, 1996a) discussing the findings of a 1991 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) studying religious beliefs in several countries (Greeley, 1993a). But what do these claims really mean? What is known about the religiosity of contemporary Filipinos? What is known about the influence of religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines particularly at the level of an individual’s lived experience and worldviews? Has there been work done on gender differences in religiosity, and where are contemporary urban women located in terms of religious beliefs and practices? What is the nature of the influence of religion in their lives? These are the questions with which I am primarily dealing in this thesis.


10I have worked on the basis of the 1990 census figures (National Statistics Office, 1992:22) because although a national census was conducted in 2000, communications with NSO, prior to examination of thesis and up to the time of the library copies being prepared at the end of 2001, indicate that detail on the breakdown of the religious affiliations of the population in the Philippines, NCR and Barangay All Holies will not be available for release until June 2002. The 1995 intercensal data was not able to be used because the questionnaire used in the 1995 intercensal survey of population was of an abbreviated format to that used in the 1990 census of population and did not include a question asking respondents for information on their religious affiliation.

11See p. 21.

12By way of clarification, throughout this thesis I use the term ‘Filipino’ in four distinct ways depending on context. It is used as a noun referring to both male and female citizens of the Philippines, i.e. in a non-gender specific manner. At other times it is used as a noun referring to a male citizen of the Philippines in contrast to the term ‘Filipina’, the noun for a female citizen of the Philippines. In other contexts the term ‘Filipino’ is used as an adjective meaning of, or belonging to, the Philippines. Further the term ‘Filipino’ is also used to refer to the national language of the Philippines.
Christianity was introduced to the islands that form the present day nation state of the Philippines as an integral part of the social change process precipitated by colonisation. For over four hundred years there has been a continuous Christian missionary presence in the area (Phelan, 1959; Bolasco, [1990] 1994a). There have been anthropological studies on the religious beliefs and practices of non-Christian peoples in the Philippines and on various indigenous religious movements. While there has been some anthropological analysis on religion and change in the Philippines, there has been little anthropological analysis of the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary urban Christian Filipinos, and particularly not specifically from the perspective of women’s experiences. This is despite the evidence from historical studies that in pre-Spanish ‘Filipino’ society women were the custodians of a rich religious heritage and the central performers in a great variety of ritual activities, (Infante, 1975; Salazar, 1989; Mananzan, [1987] 1991; Santiago, 1995; Geremia-Lachica, 1996; Andaya, 1994), in addition to having had an active role in a variety of capacities in the social change process in the Philippines, (Policarpio, [1924] 1996; Gonzalez, [1987] 1993-1994; Cruz, [1989] 1991; Camagay, 1996; Apilado, 1996; De la Cerna, 1996). Although I only make passing reference to these historical studies here, my discussion of ethnographic material in chapters four to seven is preceded by a discussion of this work and related literature in chapters two and three. This wide ranging discussion of literature forms a necessary backdrop for drawing out the refractions of the past which exist in the religious practices of contemporary urban Filipinas as I illustrate in connecting the present to threads of the past in my four

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14See for example the work of Lewis (1970), Arens (1982), Lawless (1983), Lopez-Gonzaga (1984-86), Perttierra (1988), See (1990), Gonzalez (1991b), Sontonot (1994), all of which are concerned with ethnography in localities outside of MM. Jocano’s (1981; 1978) work provides a general overview of change and continuity in Filipino religious beliefs and practices incorporating very brief snippets of ethnography, some of which pertains to the MM milieu while McCoy’s (1982) research provides an overview of the subject of change and continuity in the religious beliefs of Filipinos and other Southeast Asian peoples principally from an ethnohistorical perspective.

15Lynch (1975b), and Jocano’s (1981) work on Filipino religious beliefs and practices touch briefly on the urban milieu but do not specifically focus on women’s experiences. While Mulder (1992), pays some attention to gender issues in his comparative study of ‘Thai, Javanese and Filipino interpretations of everyday life’ he does not specifically explore the religious experiences of Filipino women and the ways in which they articulate meaning in their lives.

16The term ‘Filipino’ is used for convenience here while recognising of course that its use with reference to the pre-Spanish period is anachronistic as more properly there is need to speak of Tagalog, Visayan, Pangasinan, Ilocano, Waray societies etc.
core ethnographic chapters. Cross-cultural studies from a feminist perspective relating to women and religion, (Holden, 1983; Carmody, 1989; Bowie et al. (eds.) 1993; Broch-Due et al. (eds.) 1993) have indicated that there exists an overall lack of cultural analysis incorporating data drawn from the experiences of women. In recognition of the need to redress this imbalance, the research presented here centres on women, religion and social change through a back and forth discussion of past religious practices of Filipinos in general, and women in particular, connected to observations of present religious experiences of various urban Filipinas. In this way I explore the nature of the influence of religious belief and practice on the worldviews of contemporary urban Filipinas.

As Carmody (1989:3) highlights, the present has roots in the past, women are influenced in their daily lives by “what their religious traditions think of them”. She observes that religious influences impinge on women’s lives in so many ways such as, “how they raise their children, attitudes to divorce, whether they would have an abortion, whether they would work outside the home” and one could add, what their aspirations are, why they structure and manage a diverse range of social relations in particular ways, what their image of femininity is, and their conception of good and evil, etc. Therefore, Carmody postulates, “it seems fair to say that if we are to understand where today’s women are coming from, we need to include religion among the main objects of our study”. This accords with Miles’ (1985:2) contention that “the area of intersection of religion and culture provides a fruitful nexus for exploring women’s lives” because religious traditions mould the fabric of women’s lives and yet at the same time frequently provide avenues through which women are able to critique various cultural mores. Carmody (1989), Miles (1985) and Gross (1994) have all noted that there has been, and still remains in many quarters, a dearth of “primary or secondary sources making available women’s own voice”, (Carmody, 1989:5). This primary data is considered crucial because a holistic understanding of the place of religion in women’s lives cannot be obtained only by a consideration of “the official, usually male voices of the traditional writings and authorities”. From a review of the literature on Filipino religious practices, and women’s role in them from pre-colonial times to the present, a gap in our knowledge base appears to exist. There is a lack of information pertaining to women’s perceptions of the nature of the influence of religion on the worldviews of contemporary urban Filipinas.

\[17\text{I am also citing Carmody (1989:5) here.}\]
Filipinas. It is with a view to furnishing primary data from the life experiences of contemporary Filipino women that this research is directed, so as to shed light on the meaning and place of religion in these women’s lives.

There is a growing body of literature, informed by feminist perspectives, that focuses primarily on women’s experiences and voices and describes the particularities of women’s cultural world in specific social contexts, (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Ardener (ed.) 1992; Behar, 1993b; Belenky et al. 1986; Bowie et. al. (eds.) 1993; Christ, 1986; Gluck and Patai (eds.) 1991; Shaaban, 1988; Wikan, 1990). In my exploration of urban Filipino women’s articulation of meaning in their lives via the medium of holding life story conversations with them, I am seeking to contribute to this broad genre of writing focused around personal life experiences. Further, although my research into the lives and experiences of a number of different urban women living in a section of Quezon City, Metro Manila (MM), is very concerned with the micro dimensions of their lives, the work also has a macro focus in that attention is paid not only to the immediate, local, urban Philippine context but also to the wider prevailing global context. There is recognition of how the interplay of historical, political and economic circumstances within the society under study and the life situation of myself as an anthropologist influence and shape the character of the resultant ethnographic text.

Multiple Identities and Research Focus

The women whose day to day lives I shared to varying degrees, some of whom shared with me their life story conversations, were at one and the same time holding together and operating out of a great multiplicity of identities. In one scenario that of mother, wife, grandmother, teacher, administrator, college graduate, student, daughter, in-law, only child, home-owner, neighbour, co-worker, church committee executive, group member of multiple civic and church organisations, cross provincial immigrant, friend, community leader in religious worship, etc.; or in another scenario, mother of six children, deserted wife,

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18See Map 1: National Capital Region (NCR), taken from Africa et al. (1993:7), given at end of introduction, (p. 23), which shows the geographical boundaries of the eight cities and nine municipalities that constitute Metro Manila, also sometimes referred to as the National Capital Region (NCR).
tricycle\textsuperscript{19} driver’s Mum, casual domestic help in the neighbouring private subdivision, or interim door to door sales representative, neighbourhood co-operative member, group member of civic and church organisations, school leaver, squatter, friend, sister, buy and sell business operator, neighbour and so on; or in yet another scenario, sister, aunt, single, youngest of thirteen siblings, unemployed, volunteer worker, babysitter, active church group member, friend, confidante, college graduate, interprovincial immigrant, kin of overseas contract workers and so forth. Each of these identities may be understood not just in one stereotypic way but rather there are multiple ways in which women live an identity of mother, wife, neighbour, friend, parent, housewife, sales representative, teacher etc. I cannot go into a lengthy teasing out of the specifics of their identities in this chapter, but I will provide a deeper consideration of it in chapters four, five, six and seven as I move into analysis and discussion of the particularities of my interactions with these women and their interactions with one another and others. Just as the urban Filipinas with whom I worked were each operating out of multiple identities in a state of flux, I also brought to this research a number of identities from which I operated. In acknowledgment of my positionality I will discuss here some elements of my multiple identities as a foreigner, a migrant resident, a Catholic, and a member of a women’s international religious community. It is not that these are the only faces of my identity, but they are aspects that may be considered of significance to the focus of this research.

\section*{Outsider and Insider Research}

I came to my research work as a foreigner, an outsider, a non-Filipino, and an Australian citizen even though in colloquial Tagalog and Filipino\textsuperscript{20} I am always, “\textit{Amerikana}”.\textsuperscript{21} However for those assigning me this identity, it was not always

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19}Tricycle here refers to a Filipino mode of public transport in which up to five passengers ride in a sidecar and pillion behind a motorcyclist. In MM it is usually used to ferry passengers over short distances only.
\item \textsuperscript{20}The term Tagalog refers properly to the common ‘lingua franca’ of lowland Luzon Filipinos particularly in the locality of Metro Manila and adjoining provinces; whereas the term “Filipino”, in respect of language, refers in general to the national language of the Philippines as this became its officially adopted nomenclature in a nationwide plebiscite of February 2, 1987 (Perdon, 1996). However at times the term “Filipino” (by which name the national language was previously known) is still used, even in recently published literature, e.g. Ramirez (1995). Although the two terms Filipino and Tagalog are occasionally used interchangeably when reference is made to the national language, the entities are quite distinct as Filipino is only partially based on Tagalog, (cf. Perdon 1996:x-xi).
\item \textsuperscript{21}Rarely in colloquial parlance in Metro Manila are the more formal Tagalog terms “\textit{dayuhan}” and “\textit{banyaga}” used in direct reference to Caucasian foreigners.
\end{itemize}
as I initially assumed. Sometimes I was simply being called “Amerikana”, to indicate that I belonged to that collective category of white non-Filipinos. For others, however, it did seem that the assignment of “Amerikana” identity to me carried with it the assumptions and expectations that I would act like, and have tastes, values and agenda similar to other Americans of their acquaintance and thus for these Filipinos, in particular, I was initially a ‘stranger’ in ways unexpected. Although I spoke English, I did not speak English in the way most readily understood by bilingual and multilingual Filipinos. I was perceived to be in the world of academia, or rather in the ‘academe’, but was not well versed in “sophomores, freshmen, frats, hazing, term papers, comprehensives or graduate studies (which for me meant ‘postgraduate studies’) etc.”. Because of my identification as an American at the level of popular consciousness I was also aligned automatically in many people’s minds with positive and negative attributes of the American colonial experience in the Philippines. I was assigned expectations, likes and dislikes, capacities, and to be in possession of a certain range of knowledge and experience. I was positioned culturally in the perceptions of others as a citizen of the former colonial power with all the implications attendant upon this in terms of how people interacted with me and how they expected me to respond even though, as an Australian, I lacked the appropriate details of life to synchronise with the identity accorded me. Ashworth (1995:373) writes about this type of problem as being one connected with a lack of “attunement to the others’ stock of knowledge at hand”. Obviously there is need for non-Asian anthropologists like myself to heed the Asian “emic” perspective, but by the same token no community today lives in isolation from other perspectives and influences. And so attention has to be paid to the transformative effect of perspectives interacting upon and engaging each other. Thus I have had to listen through my own multiple identities to the multiple identities of the women who have entered with me into the research discussed here.

Although clearly, my work was research abroad, in certain respects it was also paradoxically research at home because I had come to the Philippines, in a sense as a migrant, to stay for the longer term. My contacts were established and relationships formed with a view to long term engagement of myself and others in the local milieu and so this thesis flows out of four years of direct lived experience in the Philippines and another sixteen months of relationships maintained at a distance, even though not all of this time was able to be dedicated fulltime to the research work due to other responsibilities and commitments. This
positioned me differently from anthropologists who come to an overseas country for twelve to eighteen months intense fieldwork and then return to their country of origin to complete and submit their theses (Cannell, 1999; Hilsdon, 1995; Brewer, 1996), or to those doing anthropology at home be that in Australia, (Bruenjes, 1998; Bell, 1983), the Philippines, (Israel-Sobritchea, 1987) or elsewhere, (Panini, 1991; Back, 1993; Gefou-Madianou, 1993).

A focal concern of this research is religious belief and practice, and much of the research has been conducted among Catholic women, mainly because of the large numbers of women in the Philippines, especially in MM espousing a Catholic religious affiliation. Thus being myself a Catholic I was researching essentially as an insider in this context, with a shared heritage of the ritual life of Catholicism. Such a context gives rise to all the dilemmas of the ‘indigenous anthropologist’ as to how much this very familiarity facilitated or hindered my ability to interpret and analyse levels of meaning. Did our common experience of religious practice bind us per se into a like perspective and dissolve the boundaries between us? Was I any better positioned to understand the meanings derived by my co-participants from this experience than a researcher without any lived experience of Catholicism? Could I even expect in any way that rituals having the same external forms but enacted in differing social, economic, historical, and ethnic milieu may have at base similar meanings for myself and the different Filipino women participating? Was there necessarily any commonality either by virtue of our Catholicity and/or our womanhood? Was there necessarily

22Although in terms of categories used in the 1990 Census of the Philippines, the religious affiliation of the majority of the Filipino population is categorised as Roman Catholic, I have purposively used the term “Catholic” rather than “Roman Catholic” throughout this thesis. I have done this for two reasons. Firstly because in my experience when I asked people about their religion those with Catholic affiliation most commonly responded “Katoliko ako” (I am Catholic) not “Katoliko Romano ako” (I am Roman Catholic). In common usage the term ‘Roman Catholic’ in the Philippine milieu tends to be coupled with Church, religion or clergy in a way which more usually identifies it (Roman Catholicism) with the clerical, hierarchical governing body of the worldwide Catholic Church institution located in Rome (or those exercising governance in a direct chain of command with this body), rather than with the ordinary Catholic lay person who as Catholic belongs to the broader umbrella of Catholicism. The Catholic laity are linked to the governing body but not completely identified with such an entity, as indicated in articles in the popular press, (see for example, Rodriguez (ed.-in-chief) 1996; Foronda, 1995; Urlanda, 1995; Rodriguez (ed.-in-chief) 1995). This issue of different understandings of “the Church” in the Philippine context is further discussed in chapter three. My second, and in some senses more important, reason for refraining from using the term “Roman Catholic” in reference to the adherents of Catholicism in the Philippines, and in respect of myself, is that the term is potentially internally self-contradictory, depending on the manner in which the word “Roman” is being understood. This makes the term problematic from an anthropological perspective as I highlight in chapter three.

23From Figure 1: Religious Affiliations (refer to end of introduction p. 21) it can be seen that almost 91% of the population in the National Capital Region (NCR) which comprises Metro Manila (MM) gave their religious affiliation as Catholic in the 1990 census. Of the Catholics in MM over half (51.5%) were female.
any shared understanding, in this respect, between different Filipino women, let
alone between them and me? Was the expectation of commonality simply the
consequence of stereotyping experiences, or alternatively was not to admit to the
possibility of commonality to fragment unitive experience and seek to establish
artificial boundaries constitutive of a researcher / other divide? These questions
all have to do with underlying assumptions that bear upon the meanings
experienced in social interaction and modes of interpretation. They cannot be
answered in the general but have to be addressed in the particular, in the research
analysis and discussion in later chapters of this thesis.

Although attention to the detail of certain religious practices revealed that many
areas of resonance can be found between my perceptions and those of other
women participating together with me in these ritual experiences, there remained
many other rituals for which there was no precedent in my experience. What was
the “Salubong” procession, a “Pabasa”, or the “Santo Niño” fiesta?24 I was
familiar with the practice of communal rosary recitations in May and October but
not with “Flores de Mayo” or “Santacruzan” celebrations.25 I had an
understanding of the meaning and mode of celebration of the Feast of All Soul’s
Day but the experience of this celebration in MM on November 1st, and its
conflation with that of All Saint’s Day was different from anything that had
previously constituted my experience, with the exception perhaps of the feel of
life on Melbourne Cup day in Flemington on the first Tuesday of November.26
Had I come to this research as a Mexican, or a Mediterranean Catholic, especially
of Spanish cultural heritage, then these ritual devotions may have been familiar
and the minutiae of my observations have been very different, but this was not
where I was positioned. In the context of these particular rituals I was not
researching from within but from without. For some of the Filipinos who

24 The ‘Salubong’ (lit. the meeting) procession is one of the myriad of Marian devotions practiced in the
Philippines. It is an Easter Sunday pre-dawn celebration re-enacting the meeting of grieving Mary with
Jesus, her risen son. ‘Pabasa’ (lit. the reading) refers to a religious practice performed during Holy Week,
(see Plates 36 and 37 inserted after p. Error! Bookmark not defined.) involving the ritual chanting,
usually over a twenty-four hour period or longer of an indigenously composed text of Jesus Christ’s
passion (referred to as the ‘Pasyon’ or ‘Pasiong Mahal’) incorporating various legendary embellishments
as discussed in later chapters, (see pp. Error! Bookmark not defined. ff., Error! Bookmark not defined.
ff., Error! Bookmark not defined. ff., p. Error! Bookmark not defined. ff.). ‘Santo Niño’ devotions
refer to practices honouring the child Jesus, whose image is much revered and celebrated with special
fiesta days in the Philippines (see Plates 29, 38 and 39 in chapter six).

25 ‘Flores de Mayo’ (see Plate 62 in chapter seven) and ‘Santacruzan’ (see Plate 34 in chapter six)
celebrations are religious practices that formed part of the cycle of Marian devotions celebrated in parts of
the MM neighbourhood in which my research was conducted, and briefly discussed in chapter seven.

26 For more elaboration on this point see relevant discussion in chapter five.
participated in this research, especially those with deep devotion to the ‘Santo Niño’ and no direct experiential links to the practice of Catholicism outside the Philippine milieu, a Catholicism without the celebration of the Feast of the ‘Santo Niño’ is, I expect, inconceivable. Therefore surely if I needed to ask questions about the practice, meaning and significance of this celebration, then clearly I was positioned outside the boundaries of Catholicism from their perspective. Just where I was to be located possibly was problematic, maybe simply an aberration, or perhaps no more than just another of the contradictions experienced daily in Filipino life. Together with other Filipinos, I was living through the contradictory type of relationships that resulted from being inside one group and outside another. In this regard there appear to be some overlapping similarities between my research context and that of Anne-Marie Fortier (1996) who describes herself, in like manner, located on the boundaries and in ambiguity in her work among Catholic Italians in London.

**Religious Positionality and Anthropological Research**

A further dimension of my Catholicity was my identity as a religious sister. I belong to the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, a Catholic women’s international religious institute with members originating from twenty-seven different nationalities, serving in eighteen countries on all continents. We most commonly live together in small community households, often comprised of members from different nationalities and different ethnic backgrounds. Worldwide we are engaged in very diverse occupations and spheres of work in a mixture of voluntary service and paid employment, commonly referred to as ministries, where the particular type of work engaged in is not of paramount importance. What matters more than the type of work is the way in which we engage in this work. The process is more important than the outcome. This is because from our initial foundation, one hundred years ago, we never were committed to a specific work, but rather “to respond to the needs of

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27For example, in health work as doctors, nurses, dentists, radiographers, anaesthetists, hospital chaplains and in health education and training as well as care of the acute, chronically and terminally ill including the aged, aids sufferers, those with mental illness, drug addictions, and physical disabilities. Other fields of work include all levels of education work from preschool to tertiary; spiritual direction/counselling as well as retreat and parish work; also involvement in legal aid agencies, work with various minority indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, homeless persons and other economically and socially disadvantaged persons as well as prisoners and their families. Others are engaged primarily in home-making and craft activities, and agricultural work.
our day and assume the risks of this challenge" using whatever be the gifts, talents, skills and training of our particular members. Where the particular manner of engaging in our work is a way of ‘being’ in which we endeavour to be open and welcoming towards others whatever their religious, cultural, ethnic, social, economic, or political background. We seek to live in such a manner that we communicate through our way of interaction our beliefs and values in a way which is respectful of difference and welcoming of interaction, interchange and dialogue while seeking not to be judgemental of others’ ways of being even while at times acknowledging a lack of shared vision with others’ understandings and perspectives on life. We seek to witness through the manner of our social relations in our own households and in our interactions with the wider community at large, unity in diversity, respect for differences directed towards harmonious relations.

Although the members of women’s congregations or institutes of consecrated life do not form an homogenous group, we are nevertheless, in common with other marginalised social groups, still frequently perceived to have a singular, static identity. But there is, in fact, great variation in the life styles, social values, political persuasions and cultural identities of religious sisters today and many religious sisters know at first hand the experience of life in a state of flux and of boundaries constantly shifting. In my own case there has been some degree of diversity in my life experiences as a religious sister in an international congregation in which I have spent over twenty-five years living in cross-cultural communities in Australia and abroad. I have lived in cities and remote rural localities and engaged in a variety of work contexts, including employment in state public service, in private business and in non-government and church based

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28. This refers to an excerpt from article 8 in the section on mission in the constitutions of our Institute.

29. Although cultural and ethnic are sometimes equated, in my understanding both are frequently inter-related but not necessarily equivalent to each other. People’s self ascription of ethnicity and others’ ascription of ethnicity to them may vary considerably with criteria such as language, race, culture, religion or nation of origin being used as means by which people designate themselves or others as belonging to this or that ethnic category, (cf. Seymour-Smith 1986:95; McCready, 1983; Jakubowicz et al. 1984)

organisations. In addition to my anthropological research, essentially my ministry in Manila, from the perspective of my religious missionary institute, was concerned with administration and facilitation of the process of cross-cultural living at various levels. I was assigned to facilitate the formation of the first international community of our sisters in the Philippines, which meant locating a place in which to live and to carry out, the various negotiations with church and civil authorities, connected with the legal and ecclesiastical establishment of our religious institute in the Philippines. Additionally, my work involved obtaining clearances from immigration authorities etc. for the arrival of other community members from Korea, Namibia, Papua New Guinea and Germany. My ministry involved working together with these community members, most of whom had not previously lived in communities outside of their own countries, to develop a form of living together, respectful of our differences and of the local Philippine milieu. I assisted other community members in learning English as an initial common medium of communication and commenced learning Tagalog myself. I was responsible for establishing contact and networking with various church and government organizations, acting as a representative of our wider international institution in the Philippine context in the general management of business affairs on behalf of our community. In the Philippine milieu I experienced that a number of disjunctures existed between my own sense of self-identity as a religious sister and ‘other’s’ perceptions of who I was, and their expectations about the form of my lifestyle and the values I would hold. I address this issue further in chapter one and cite some examples of these disjunctures. It suffices to say here that certain of my life experiences as a religious sister partially “attuned me to others’ stock of knowledge” but by the same token it positioned me outside of other women’s experiences as mothers and wives. But my experience of having been stereotyped into a marginal ‘other’ position, on occasions, left me more sensitised to the insidiousness of such practices with an aversion to putting others too hastily into such boxes, and consciously grappling over an extended period of time with the issue of multiple identities.

Religious praxis in the Philippines is connected intimately and in complex ways, with a colonisation process involving an extended and intensive Catholic missionary presence, (Bolasco, 1994a; Rafael, 1988; Phelan, 1959; Schumacher, 1979; 1990), especially from Spain and America, but also from other parts of

31Refer Ashworth’s (1995:373) work mentioned earlier, see p. 9
Australian missionaries have only been in the Philippines from around the time of World War II and their number has always been relatively small. The assumption has often been made that missionaries have an homogeneous subcultural identity, or at least constitute a united ‘other’ group perceived to be in cultural opposition to the ‘native’, the indigenous inhabitants whose culture they are viewed as having come to irrevocably change. This assumption has led to a long running critique of missionary practices by anthropologists. The aforementioned image of missionaries may not have been too far removed from a simplified picture of the context in the colonial era, in locations such as the Philippines where there has been a sustained missionary presence under a long period of colonial governance. But it cannot be generalised that this was the position of all missionaries, and it is often a poor fit for Catholic missionaries today who frequently belong to international communities. Such missionaries come not at the behest and in collusion with the government, but often to take up work which involves aligning themselves with counter hegemonic positions in solidarity with the marginalised, oppressed and exploited social classes, sometimes in ways that certainly do not privilege them in terms of power. Sometimes under these circumstances, missionaries are positioned even more vulnerably than the ‘local/home’ population. Much of the past long running missionary/anthropologist debate hinged on the mythical conception of the non-subjective, detached, unpositioned status of the non-missionary anthropologist.

Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Ireland in particular.

The main lines of the argument are traced in Stipe’s (1980) article and associated comments by eighteen scholars, with ongoing debate in following issues of the same journal (Delfendahl, 1981; Feldman, 1981; Delfendahl, 1982; Feldman, 1983; Da Fonseca, 1983; Hvalkof, 1984). See also Whiteman and Headland (1996), Whiteman (1983), Salamone (1983), Van der Geest (1990; 1991; 1992) and Rapoport (1991). A number of other works have been written which make contributions in different ways to the debate, in particular see the following on anthropologists’ disquiet with missionaries (Hvalkof, 1981; Beidelman, 1982; Stearman, 1989; Tonkinson, 1974) and for a less critical appraisal by anthropologists, and in some instances very positive assessment, of missionaries contributions see Boutilier et al. (1978), Keeling (1981), Miller (1981), Canfield (1983), Bonsen et al. (1990), Beck (1992) and Clifford (1992).

Some past missionaries have been prejudiced, biased, ethnocentric, oppressive, and exploitative in their actions and attitudes frequently being closely linked and incorporated into the governance structure of the colonial powers. But the recounting of this history is rarely moderated by recognition of the deep empathy and felt experiential understanding of other missionaries borne out of, and imbibed through a lifetime spent immersed in the complexities of intercultural living.

Aragón (1969:18) has demonstrated in his study of the controversy over Spanish rule that “it is clear that there was a divergence of opinion among religious in the Philippines on the temporal or political authority of the Spanish king over the islands. The Augustinians and Jesuits maintained the legitimacy of this dominion, based on papal concession and the opposition of the natives to the preaching of the gospel. The Dominicans, led by Bishop Salazar, rejected this legitimacy as insufficiently established according to law.”

Whiteman and Headland (1996) provide an overview of the missionary / anthropologist debate in a recent treatment of both its history and current status, especially in respect of human rights.
vis-a-vis the perceived very biased status of the missionary anthropologist. The myth of the anthropologist's neutrality is exposed for what it is in the changed milieu of attention to reflexivity and the political nature of anthropological research as I discuss further in chapter one. In my experience, post-Vatican II Catholic missionary approaches involve an ever deepening changing understanding of the ways in which people from different backgrounds express the meaning of their lives and the values by which they live. Such approaches necessitate developing a growing appreciation of bi- and multi-directional change, as missionaries and people in the local population interact with one another. In many respects this understanding of mission is very closely aligned with the anthropological enterprise. It has to do with the very considerable complexities of intercultural living and the ethical and moral dilemmas associated with it; dilemmas, which are connected to issues of advocacy, social justice and human rights. Such living involves give and take in such a manner as to try to arrive at a way of living together which allows each person to live out their life as fully and as meaningfully as possible.

A further gloss that is frequently made in the missionary/anthropologist debate is the assumption that missionary equates with being male, especially in reference to Catholic missionaries. Discussion of Catholic missionary activities has proceeded almost entirely with respect to the work of Catholic priests, possibly only reflecting the view of the institutional Catholic Church hierarchy (cf. Goldman 1996). Bowie et al.’s (eds.) (1993) work takes up this issue of the

37 Although critical of such a position Hughes (1989:105) sums up succinctly the nature of this perception when she writes that: “it is a basic anthropological premise that missionaries change cultures undesirably and that, secondly, any other expertise they may have is neutralised by the fact of their being a missionary”.


39 When Frances Cabrini in 1880 “wanted ‘Missionaries’ in the title of her religious congregation, she was told only men were missionaries. At that time there was no feminine form of the masculine word missionari” in the Italian language, (Goldman, 1996:593). However there were in fact sisters already engaged in ‘missionary work’, without bearing the official title of missionary, in as far distant places as Australia from Ireland by the year 1838, (Carey, 1996:109). And in the case of the Philippines nuns arrived from Japan as early as 1614, and from Spain from 1621 onwards, (Santiago, 1995:172, 177-8; Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines 1997:577). However, these first religious women in the Philippines lived a cloistered way of life with limited contact with the general populace. From the latter part of the 17th century onwards Filipinas were directed in a semi-cloistered form of religious life by some male clerics. In the subsequent mode of religious life which developed these indigenous women, known as ‘beatas’, were more actively involved with the general population in exercising works of mercy than in the case of the more contemplative Spanish religious women, (Santiago, 1995:168). In chapters three and six I discuss how some Filipinas became ‘beatas’ as a consequence of the shifts and continuities in women’s religious role in Filipino society. The active cross-cultural female missionary type of institutes only arrived in the Philippines during the 20th century.
invisibility and silencing of women’s presence and contribution as missionaries and seeks to open the way to alternative anthropological perspectives on mission work, both in terms of accounts of women’s work as missionaries and through attention to the effects of missionary activity on women’s lives in the ‘receiving’ or ‘targeted’ cultures. Bowie (1993) contends that male and female missionaries frequently worked from very different conceptions of what they were about. Usually female Catholic missionaries have been little involved in direct preaching, rather they have been most frequently engaged in various types of service occupations. Bühlmann (1979:161) also identifies similar differences in the modes of interaction with the general populace of female and male members of religious institutes in the Philippines during the period of Martial Law. My own experience was that in the contemporary milieu many of the ordinary people, common ‘tao’ (person), seemed to distinguish this type of approach and interaction, in which members of religious orders or congregations immersed themselves more directly in people’s ordinary lives, engaging with them in their own homes, along the way, at the market and ‘sari-sari’ store, at neighbourhood events as being ‘misyonari’, (missionary), in contrast to a more enclosed, or cloistered type of lifestyle wherein interaction normally took place in the institutional settings of the school or the parish church in a highly structured mode which more properly constituted one as being a ‘madre’, a nun. However the differentiation was not clear cut, or necessarily exclusionary, as layered conceptions of the ‘madre’ identity appeared to exist, sometimes inclusive of activist religious sisters, or those classified as ‘missionary’, at other times not.

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40The term ‘sari-sari’ is Tagalog for local neighbourhood, small variety store.

41Term derived from Spanish used in everyday Tagalog conversation to denote religious sister or nun.

Santiago (1995:164, 167) claims that originally the term ‘beata’ was used to mean “blessed woman” but that in time Filipinos “began to apply the term ‘beata’ to any woman who lived a saintly life” and then “in the vernacular languages the word which evolved for both nun and ‘beata’ is ‘madre’ (the counterpart of ‘pare’ or ‘padre’, the word for priest)”.

42Possibly the origins of such a differentiation in the Philippines connects in part with the general population observing, with the arrival of various groups of religious sisters whose self identity included within it the missionary title, e.g. Maryknoll Missioners (officially called Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic but because they have the congregational initials of MM they frequently refer to themselves as ‘Maryknoll Missioners’ see Harriman, 1994), or Medical Mission Sisters, a different mode of lifestyle than that previously modelled by the women belonging to women’s religious orders established by foreigners in the Philippines. These early religious Congregations (Catholic institutes of consecrated life) of Spanish women in the Philippines lived a ‘monastic’, ‘cloistered’ model of religious life and were properly referred to in Spanish as ‘monja’, strictly meaning a nun, a feminine equivalent of monk, and implicitly referring to a person who lives in a rather secluded manner. In contrast female members of Catholic institutes of consecrated life who normally live in a setting in which they are more openly engaged with people in the surrounding population are usually referred to as religious sisters rather than as nuns.
**Summing Up**

In this chapter I have explained how I initially came to be interested in the cross-cultural study of women and religion and how I situated my research. This thesis is one effort to discern both particular and general values, different but also similar centres around which life revolves for a variety of contemporary urban Filipinas, and the place of religious belief and practice in their worldviews. I use the multiple lenses of observation and participation in different life experiences; coupled with individual women’s articulation of their life stories; a commitment to feminism, and attention to the social, political, economic, historical, ethnic and religious location of those involved in the research including myself. I recognise that another anthropologist undertaking similar research, but differently positioned to myself, might explore other avenues of analysis, utilise different modes of interpretation and reach variant conclusions to mine. I concur with Jackson (1989:2) that all study and analysis of human experience and social interactions is of its very nature partial, because “lived experience overflows the boundaries of any one concept, any one person, or any one society”. It is not simply a case of relativity, one perspective being as good as another, but rather that all perspectives in interaction with each other contribute essential elements of transformation of understanding and ‘truth’ to a whole, which is greater than any particular perspective or the summation of any number of separate perspectives.

Central to my analytical approach in this thesis is the recognition that power is conceived of and operationalised in a variety of ways by people positioned differently in a community and society, in terms of their class, social standing, gender, age, education, occupation and religious beliefs. Additionally, power can also be operationalised in very contrasting ways by the same people in differing contexts in their life situations. Further these varying conceptions of power do not operate in isolation from each other, rather the various relations of power in which each person is engaged have an interactive influence upon each other. Thus, I have, purposely, not confined myself to the analysis of power from a single epistemological framework because I regard such an approach as an artificial theoretical construction, wherein the analyst becomes divorced from the diverse experiential realities of people’s actual life circumstances. I readily acknowledge that because I hold that power is so differentially conceived and operationalised, competing and often irreconcilable tensions will result but I also hold that it is with this tension that the great majority of people must live. As I emphasize at many points in discussing my research, people’s lives are not lived
out in an ‘either/or’ context but in an ‘and-and’ milieu. Integral to my analytical approach in this thesis is an ongoing exploration, throughout the text, of varying dimensions of the differing approaches to understanding and exercising power in the Philippine milieu, in particular settings and time frames.

In keeping with this overall backdrop of multiple perspectives, I discuss, in chapter one, ways in which my research was ‘located’ and various aspects of my methodological approach. In chapter two I discuss what can be gleaned from the literature about Filipino religiosity and the positioning of women in respect of religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines and why consideration of the past is necessary for an understanding of the contemporary milieu. This is followed in the third chapter by a discussion of theoretical issues in connection with the particular situational parameters of my ethnographic research. In particular I discuss the implications for my research of differing understandings of colonial interchange, sources of and avenues to power, gender conceptions and religious cultural interactions. In the fourth chapter I draw on the content of women’s life story conversations to illustrate Filipinas’ diverse experiences of modes of family relations, and the influence and leadership exercised by women in harmonising familial social relations. In particular I illustrate how women repeatedly connected the influence and inner strength of their mothers and grandmothers to their ability to access and harness spiritual powers. This spiritual empowerment, paradoxically, enabled them to prevail over those whose relations with them were marked by power derived, primarily, from coercive force, material wealth and status. In the fifth chapter I discuss the way in which women’s influence in family relations extends beyond the living, to relations with the dead through a description of women’s involvement in All Saints and All Souls’ Day celebrations in public and private cemeteries in MM. I connect my observations and analysis to both historical accounts of indigenous and pre-Hispanic Filipino beliefs and rituals for the deceased, and other anthropological research on the ritual celebration of death and the regeneration of social life. To complement my discussion in this chapter, and the succeeding two chapters, I use photographs that I have taken\textsuperscript{43} in the course of my research. In the sixth chapter, I discuss the role of Filipinas in local level community religious leadership. I illustrate how Filipinos have appropriated symbols of Catholicism by realigning, in part, their

\textsuperscript{43}Of the eighty-four pictorial plates used I have personally taken all the photographs with the exception of four black and white photos reproduced from newspapers as acknowledged, and one each black and white and coloured photo reproduced from magazines as indicated.
forms of religious practice, while still retaining their belief in feminine personages being primary conduits of access to spiritual agency through which the course of life is directed. I highlight the way in which women position themselves and exert local level religious influence. I also explore dimensions of women’s involvement in formal and informal religious practices. In the seventh chapter I discuss both personal and communal Marian devotions and suggest possible reasons why these devotions have such prominence in Filipino religious practice. In my discussion of local level communal Marian celebrations I illustrate that these practices are an important component of the social relations of the wider neighbourhood, having an important role in both delineating and consolidating community identity. Finally, in the conclusion I draw together my overall findings and major points of emphasis arising from this research. I also point to areas in which future research could be conducted.
Figure 1: Religious Affiliations

Percent of household population by religious affiliation in Philippines, National Capital Region (NCR), and Barangay All Holies as per 1990 Census figures, (National Statistics Office, 1992:22) base data used to construct chart.

PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD POPULATION PER RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Christian Religious Affiliations</th>
<th>Total Affiliated</th>
<th>Non Christian or no given affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>Aglipayan</td>
<td>Iglesia ni Cristo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>82.92</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>90.62</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay</td>
<td>90.07</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[44\]NCR comprises 8 cities and nine municipalities that constitute Metro Manila, (MM), see Map 1, p. 23.

\[45\]For further information on this Barangay name see p. Error! Bookmark not defined.

\[46\]Plus unpublished data from 1990 Census in respect of Barangay All Holies obtained directly from National Statistics Office, Sta. Mesa per Ms. Elizabeth Go. My presentation of data here reflects the manner in which information obtained from the Census has been summarised during analysis. The religious affiliation of the Philippine population was broken down into 34 categories (refer also to the notes on the page following Figure 1) of which the greatest proportion were classified as ‘Roman Catholic’, followed by ‘Islamic’, ‘Aglipayan’ and ‘Iglesia ni Cristo’, of the remaining categories those 27 which can be classified as Christian in orientation I have grouped together under the one umbrella of ‘Other Christians’. This leaves three other categories - those who classified themselves as being Buddhists and those who indicated that they had another religious affiliation but were not specific as to what it was and those who did not state whether or not they had any religious affiliation. The first two of these remaining categories I grouped together as ‘other’ outside of Christian religious affiliation. However no clear indication was given in the Census as to the number of adherents of Filipino indigenous religious movements and whether in some instances people consider themselves to have more than one religious affiliation.
Notes:

1. Aglipayan refers to the Iglesia Filipina Independiente founded in 1902 and headed initially by Fr. Gregorio Aglipay.

2. Iglesia ni Cristo47 founded by Felix Manalo Ysagun in 1914.

3. The category “Other Christians” refers to those having the following religious affiliations:
   United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Jehovah’s Witness, Lutheran Church in the Philippines, Philippines Benevolent Missionaries Association, Seventh Day Adventist, Born Again Christians, Philippine Episcopal Church, Presbyterian, Baptist Conference of the Philippines, Bible Baptists, Southern Baptists, Other Baptists, Iglesia Evangelista Methodista en Las Filipinas, Lutheran Church, United Methodist Church, Wesleyan Church, Other Methodists, Alliance of Bible Christian Committees, Assemblies of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Four Square Gospel Church, God World Missions Church, Nazarene Church, Salvation Army Philippines, Other Evangelical Churches, Other Protestants.

4. The category “Other” refers to those who either gave Buddhism as their religious affiliation (0.04% nationally), or classified themselves as belonging to another, but unspecified, religious affiliation as distinct from those who did not state whether they had any particular religious affiliation or not.

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47Iglesia ni Cristo spelling as used in 1990 Census of Population and Housing Report, (National Statistics Office, 1992) which Elesterio (1989:n.1 p.110) claims is more commonly in current usage even though Iglesia ni Kristo is the spelling used in the organization’s Articles of Incorporation.
The National Capital Region (NCR) of Metro Manila (MM) consisting of the eight cities of Kalookan, Makati, Mandaluyong, Manila, Muntinlupa, Pasay, Pasig and Quezon City together with the nine municipalities of Las Pinas, Malabon, Marikina, Navotas, Paranaque, Pateros, San Juan, Taguig, (occasionally also written Tagig, as in map below), and Valenzuela.
Chapter 1:

Methodology

Introduction

In literature dealing with general trends and recommended strategies for approaching various facets of anthropological ‘fieldwork’\(^{48}\), many texts incorporate personalised accounts of various researchers’ experiences of the data gathering and analysis processes constituting their research methodologies, (Agar, 1980; Bell et al. (eds.) 1993; Crick and Geddes (eds.) 1998; Panini (ed.) 1991; Perry (ed.) 1989; De Pina-Cabral and Campbell (eds.) 1992; Spindler (ed.) 1970; Whitehead and Conaway (eds.) 1986). This literature is often extremely helpful to anthropologists during their own ‘fieldwork’ phase in affirming steps they have taken or are planning, in alerting them to potential pitfalls to be avoided, and in stimulating them to try new or alternative approaches. However valuable the contribution from such literature may be, it is ultimately only a guide to a different researcher, or even the same researcher in new or changed circumstances. My description and discussion of methodology here is primarily given as one key, among many, to interpret the meaning of the research outcome and as such, is an integral and inseparable contribution to understanding this qualitative research in its own right.

Methodology as I am discussing it here, is at base a continuous, ongoing process. Each piece of qualitative social science research is contingent on the unique mix of prevailing circumstances operative in the research location, circumstances encompassing the full range of social relations of all those involved, including the researcher. My particular research focus developed over a period of time from

\(^{48}\)I use this term with reservation in view of Gupta and Ferguson’s (1997b) argument that an uncritical continued use of such terminology feeds into the maintenance of entrenched, but only partially appropriate, criteria for evaluating much contemporary anthropological research, (see further discussion on this point later in this chapter, p. 50 ff.).
the coalescence of personal and academic interests with planned and unplanned happenings, within a milieu of ongoing reflection, questioning, discovery, and reassessment. In the following sections of this chapter I discuss my methodology in terms of research engagement and location, the complexities of engaging in research in the ‘post-colonial’ urban milieu, language learning, participant observation, life story conversations and ethics. Included in this discussion is some consideration of the limitations that exist in the work and the reasons for these. In what he describes as ‘an examination of the underside of qualitative methodology’, Fine (1993:268-9) argues that in the process of doing and reporting anthropological ‘fieldwork’ “it is crucial for us to be cognizant of the choices that we make and to share these choices with readers” because all anthropologists “are caught in a web of demands that compel them to deviate from formal and idealistic rules”.

**Research Engagement and ‘Location’**

In this section I will discuss the ways in which I entered into my research and describe how the boundaries of its geographical location were highly permeable so that the site of my research was at one and the same time both ‘grounded’ and fragmented in its locality. There are marked contrasts in the way in which anthropologists have written about becoming engaged in their research, for some this facet is glossed over as mere ‘fait accompli’, (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Reay, 1959; Strathern, 1988). In these accounts researchers note, in the briefest way, that on arriving at the place or locality where they intended to do their research or ‘fieldwork’, they spoke with some people occupying positions of leadership and/or influence in the local community, which led to introductions at various levels through which they gained access to informants and proceeded with the data accumulation phase of their research. With respect to method, little in the way of a particular researcher’s choices and decisions at this important stage of their work is opened to inspection and critique. At the other end of the spectrum are anthropologists, (Bell, 1993; Fordham, 1998; Geddes, 1989; Gilsenan, 1996; Golde, 1986c; Lareau, 1996; Taylor, 1995), who provide considerable detail concerning the sequence of planned and unplanned events at the beginning of their ‘fieldwork’, occasionally as part of their main ethnographic text, but more often as separate monographs or chapters in edited works. These researchers include reflections on the ways in which the paths they followed and didn’t follow were a mix of happy co-incidences, and carefully initiated moves. Very
occasionally, they also provide glimpses of the disappointing and frustrating “muck-ups” and false starts, which are all par for the course in research into people’s life contexts and meanings.

Since I came to Manila for reasons other than primarily for anthropological research, I did not initially have very definite ideas about my exact research topic. This is in contrast to some anthropologists who embark on research with a very definite question in mind, because already they have carefully scrutinised relevant literature. In retrospect, this was not as serious a disadvantage as I first envisaged it to be, as others before me report having dramatically changed their research focus after arriving 'in the field'. At least there was a certain flexibility and open-endedness to my research beginnings that allowed scope for the research to be moulded and focused by the surrounding and prevailing social conditions. This was an advantage, given that on arrival I did not know where in Metro Manila, (MM), I could expect to be taking up residence, and what kind of environs would constitute my neighbourhood. While the openness of my initial research focus and lack of boundedness was a positive in some respects, it did give rise, in other ways, to difficulties in terms of closure in the research. Initially everything was potentially ‘grist for the mill’ in my desire to remain open to unanticipated avenues and leads emerging from the local milieu so that the questions I explored frequently shifted as I tried to grasp the many facets of the milieu in which I was immersed.

**Initial Networking and Patronage**

I arrived in Manila with little in the way of established contacts but carried with me two main letters of introduction. One letter was to the Cardinal Archbishop of Manila certifying to my bona-fide status as a member of a canonically established congregation of religious women, seeking his authorisation of the establishment of an international community of our sisters in the Archdiocese of Manila. The other was from the Research Director, (Professor Bill Logan), of the Graduate School of the Faculty of Arts, Deakin University Australia, attesting to my standing as an anthropology Ph. D. researcher on an Australian Government

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49 For instance Taylor (1995) intended “to study the social and economic aspects of fishing” but ended up researching Irish Catholicism, while Weiner (1976) did in depth research on the lives of Kiriwina women and their age-old traditions even though she records that her initial research proposal was “to study the wood carvings fashioned by Kiriwina men in response to the growing tourist trade”.
scholarship. These letters were symbolic of my entry into the Philippines being on different but interconnected levels. Always, I was conscious of these circumstances and never sought to disguise my identity. However, I often had to mediate and negotiate my way through, in whatever manner I judged most appropriate, the multiple identities I occupied and/or was assigned in my relations with people from a diverse spectrum of social, political, economic and religious backgrounds. It was fortuitous for me that prior to my arrival in the Philippines I was offered temporary accommodation with the first indigenous women’s religious community in the Philippines. Fortuitous, because it was not an arrangement that I, personally, had negotiated even though this community was very well situated to assist me and facilitate my initial passage into life in the Philippines. The offer had come as a consequence of our General Superior and the Superior General of this community of sisters being involved in joint committee work in Rome on the UISG (Union of International Superior Generals) of women’s religious congregations worldwide. Thus I was accommodated at the Congregation’s central administrative base for operations in the Philippines and overseas. This was particularly advantageous as it opened up to me more initial contact points than I could ever have planned or envisaged. Not only did my host community, as the largest and oldest Filipino women’s congregation[^50] in the Philippines have over three hundred years of continuous presence in Manila, its members had extensive contacts with church, government and business personnel at many levels of Philippine society.

In my initial entry phase, members of this community became in a very real sense my patrons, through their multiple networks, and because I had been referred through personal contacts at the highest level of our respective institutions. As I soon came to learn, having patrons in Philippine society, is extremely advantageous, without which, it is a considerably more difficult and lengthier process to enter into new circles of social relations, as I was to later experience as I tried to build other networks in my local neighbourhood. While a letter of introduction was an important and indispensable element of correct protocol, it was of limited value if I was unable to obtain the ear of the right people at the right time. There are similarities and differences in the way in which patronage type relationships are managed in the Philippines and in other societies having

[^50]: Religious of the Virgin Mary founded in 1684 in Manila. Some older congregations of women religious exist but these were originally foreign, not indigenous Filipino foundations.
similar patterns of social relations, (Boissevain, 1974; Lynch, 1975a; Schmidt et al. (ed.) 1977; Tellis-Nayak, 1983; Kahane, 1984; Norris, 1984; Azmon, 1985; Roniger, 1985; Shore, 1989; Robben, 1994; Dumont, 1994; Kerkvliet, 1995; Pertierra, 1997:24-32; Sidel, 1997). For example Roniger’s (1985:150-151) description of the operation of clientelism in Latin America is in many respects applicable in the Philippine context, namely that:

People expect to be treated not as citizens equal before the law, but as individuals having special links with other persons, either the bureaucrats themselves or certain intercessors who mediate in otherwise impersonal contacts with a bureaucrat so that the latter will play his role in a more “interested” manner and accelerate administrative procedures….Wide sectors of the population….resort to relatives and ritual kin, acquaintances and professional mediators, friends and “protectors,” to intercede in their behalf and effect a jeitinho (literally, a “twist” or bypass of formalities: Rosenn, 1971), or, in the absence of such persons, they resort to……other worldly means, such as the cult of saints or the Catholic-fetishist orixá-cults in Brazil.

As I highlight later in this thesis, patronage relations, through which people position themselves and are positioned in a hierarchy of social relations, are an integral part of the meaning of various religious ritual celebrations, providing differing avenues to material and spiritual influence and prestige in the Philippines and in other societies. Although I discuss further aspects of patronage relations in later chapters, in the context of this present discussion of my methodology, the significant point is that the extent to which I had access to patronage varied in the course of my research, and affected the progress of my work both positively and negatively. At times the patronage of others was of great assistance in opening up avenues of contact, but at other times patronage obligated me in ways which left me less free to pursue some alternative lines of enquiry or to align myself with particular groups. Patronage can be considered as a form of management of social relations. I found this to be particularly so because my research involved engagement with women in very different socio-economic neighbourhoods. As relationships became established some of the groups of women with whom I was engaged felt that they had a primary claim to my time and my presence with them and as a consequence I was to some degree being managed by each set of persons with whom I was engaged in different

51 For examples of the interplay of patronage in religious ritual celebrations in contexts outside the Philippines see the work of Boissevain (1965), Brandes (1988) and Gilsenan (1996).
neighbourhoods. In a partially similar context Caplan (1994) makes some insightful observations about the ways in which she was managed by the middle and upper class women belonging to the women’s charitable organisations she was researching in Madras. While I became indebted in certain respects to those who extended their patronage to me, I experienced a lack of patronage in other contexts. This was because I was initially on the borders of some people’s social relations, and in other instances remained marginally positioned for the duration of my research. This meant that although the path of negotiating personal interactions was more difficult, my circumstances enabled me to connect and establish relations with members of basic community groups in ways that may not have occurred otherwise. As I discuss later in this chapter, this was particularly true of my experiences of entry into my local neighbourhood, which took place without the privileged patronage I received from my initial host community.

Ashkenazi (1997), in reflection on his research experiences in a small Japanese town and with Ethiopian immigrants in Israel, contrasts two situations where he occupied very different social locations in respect of the people with whom he was engaged in research. Ashkenazi discusses how his social relations were managed in different ways in each context by persons whom he terms “go-betweens” (Ashkenazi, 1997:475). However, in each respective research context there was a relatively consistent pattern of social interaction operative because although a degree of internal variation existed among the people with whom Ashkenazi was engaged in both the Japanese and the Israeli contexts, each set of people still remained a largely homogeneous group in relation to the anthropologist. Each group’s internal differences were of less significance in terms of the overall research interaction than the difference between Ashkenazi, as a non local in terms of both the Japanese and Ethiopian communities, and the set of persons with whom he was engaged in either the Japanese or the Israeli context. The difference, between Ashkenazi’s situation and mine, is that Ashkenazi’s research contexts were clearly separated in time and space. In effect what he describes are two different research engagements, whereas I found that within the setting in which I was engaged, different research contexts were collapsed into each other in the one research experience, and had to be constantly negotiated through. In the neighbourhood in which I was residing communities existed within communities. And as I was very differentially situated in terms of social class in relation to various of these communities, I was at one and the same
time ‘studying up’ and ‘studying down’ to borrow in part from Nader’s (1969) and Caplan’s (1994) terminology.

In my first five weeks in the Philippines I was assisted in multiple ways through my host community’s patronage, although at the time I did not fully appreciate the significance of their mode of social relations. Via personal contacts, community members assisted me to set up meetings to present my letters of introduction to Cardinal Sin and to the head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of the Philippines, (hereafter referred to as UP). This latter meeting enabled me to be affiliated with the university as a visiting research associate. In addition, community members provided me with advice and introductions to appropriate people in church agencies, government departments, and financial and legal institutions to aid me in the process of obtaining necessary authorisations and accreditations. Also I was given invaluable help in getting my geographical bearings in the city and learning to negotiate the extensive MM public transport system, which is very dependent on local knowledge for its successful navigation, having no published timetables or mapped out routes. As I reflected on my experiences with my hosts, I came to see and understand how they modelled the operation of many core values in Filipino social relations, in particular: the importance of protocol, formality, hierarchical structures; the place of deference and persuasion, avoidance of conflict and confrontation, intertwining of personal and business concerns, and women’s exercise of their influence. The contacts made, links established, and networking commenced at this time were extremely valuable interactions, as these took me on an express journey to many important “bridge” people in webs of social relations which may have taken me months to penetrate without the patronage of my hosts. Still my circuits of movement were very limited, as part of the dynamic into which I was being drawn, was the reality that one step forward necessitated several steps sideways to link to a supporting ‘side-rail’ of persons without which progress in the forward direction could not proceed. Even then entry at one level was no guarantee of access to transition points between the different operating levels of the complex matrix of interrelated and sometimes juxtaposed webs of social relations that constitutes Philippine society. The patronage that enabled me to penetrate part of a level of society, and some inter-connected social networks, was not necessarily advantageous or even desirable in other circumstances. If such a connection was emphasised, there existed the potential that it could position me in a relationship of animosity in respect of other persons whose assistance and co-operation was
sought. This meant that, practically speaking, no social relation was ever completely transparent; a situation recognised and accepted by people in their constant reference to ‘intrigues’ in people’s conduct of their relations with one another. Much of the consequence of this is further teased out in other sections of this thesis but warrants a mention here, in so far as it had methodological implications. A careful negotiation and interaction with persons from different ethnic, social, religious, political and economic strata of society was necessitated so as to avoid offending the sensitivities of individuals. Even so, I still desired to work within the most acceptable mode of operation, namely that of going through some persons to other persons; and yet trying to avoid blatantly exploiting others for my own ends, or being seen to be so influenced and indebted to certain persons so as to preclude other avenues of social interaction.

Locating and Identity Assignment

Like most of my predecessors embarking on anthropological ‘fieldwork’ in a new location, my early days were spent searching for the availability of appropriate accommodation. I was assisted in my search for a suitable place in which to live by my hosts and other religious communities with whom our congregation was inter-related. Either directly, or via their friends, relatives or business contacts, I was alerted to places available for rent or long-term occupancy through legal sponsorship arrangements with local congregations. I was looking for somewhere suitable for medium to long-term residence in a non-institutional environment, with public transport accessibility to Manila’s University belt and spirituality institutes. This was because initially household members would be involved in either English language learning, spiritual or professional studies with a view towards some later ministry\(^52\) in the surrounding neighbourhood. Although the exact composition of our community had not been finalised, it was anticipated that there would be between four and eight sisters\(^53\) who would originate from different cultural backgrounds to myself. I needed to find a suitable place in which to establish an independent household. Thus my situation was more akin to the female ‘fieldworker’ and household head arriving in advance

\(^{52}\)The term ministry refers to the type of work in which the religious sisters of our institute engage. This work may be in any one of a wide range of service occupations of the kind which I indicated, in my introductory chapter that our members are most commonly involved in, see footnote n.27 p. 12

These activities are not directed towards ‘converting’ people to a particular religious viewpoint.

\(^{53}\)The term ‘sisters’, here, does not mean sibling or consanguineous relationship but rather that of sisterhood referring to women members in the one international organisation.
of other household members seeking on one hand to establish myself in my research locality with non-anthropologist adult ‘kin’, while in other respects I was the leader of a team not primarily orientated to anthropological concerns. I was seeking to locate myself as part of a household of migrant adults making the transition to a new home, in a new country where we hoped to locate with a degree of permanence rather than primarily for a ‘field’ visit. Although I would be brought together with other household members in the relational idiom of kinship we began our living together essentially as strangers to each other on the personal and cultural level. While such is a very common experience for anthropologists at the start of their ‘fieldwork’, my context did have a twist to it that made my entrée into the wider community a little more difficult. Getting to know each other at the household level with our different personal, cultural and language backgrounds within a milieu new to all of us was exceedingly time consuming. However time spent in this manner did not necessarily carry with it the bonus of opening the way into wider or more in-depth interaction and acceptance in the local community neighbourhood as is normally the case for new anthropologists negotiating and forging relationships within their new adopted households. I could not immerse myself as an anthropologist in the local neighbourhood in the same way that a single ‘fieldworker’ who rents a room (Conaway, 1986; Fordham, 1998) or becomes an adopted son or daughter (Angrosino, 1986; Turnbull, 1986; Karim, 1993a) or fictive sibling (Ganguly-Serace, 1998; Macintyre, 1993) in a local household or family lineage (Briggs, 1970) could be relationally integrated.

In my role as household head there was work to be done in terms of acquainting those with whom we were interacting, especially church agencies, businesses and the wider neighbourhood, with our household’s identity as a community of religious sisters. There also was a need to clarify my own identity as an anthropological researcher and what helped to establish credibility on one level did not necessarily help in other circumstances, and occasionally, gaining acceptance in one way actively worked against my being accepted in an alternative role or identity. My experience in this regard was in some respects parallel to that discussed by other female anthropologists who have gone into the ‘field’ with their husband, partner and/or children and had to choose the extent to which they would conform to prevailing gender roles within marriage, and the child rearing and socialisation practices of their host community, (Oboler, 1986; Schrijvers, 1993). Golde ([1970] 1986b) discusses the tension which exists for
anthropologists in trying to gain acceptance in their host cultures by acting in accord with local expectations, and thus in ways able to be managed and controlled by the local community, and yet, retaining a certain degree of independence of action necessary for the crossing of boundaries and delving below the surface of commonplace experiences.

I was conscious that in the Philippines there has been an extremely long association, sometimes amiable, sometimes antagonistic, between the political elite and the leadership of religious communities, both foreign and indigenous. This linkage had led to a privileging of members of religious communities in ways that have alienated them from significant sectors of the general populace. My very purpose for being there as part of an international cross-cultural religious community and as an anthropologist, was a desire to work towards the establishment of social relations to bridge this gap of separation caused by such privileging. The desirability of working towards the creation of a new image and model of religious communities of women, was reinforced by my participation in AMOR X where I became aware of the existence of other groups trying to break similar ground and so partially my choice of our place of residence was influenced by these considerations. I wanted to find a place in which to reside where our community would not be exclusively identified with any one particular socio-economic grouping as, I had observed, tended to happen with many religious communities in Manila. The places of residence of many of these communities were located either, inside fenced off private subdivisions in middle and upper class neighbourhoods, or inside high walled compounds in older established sections of the city. At the other end of the social spectrum there were also some small community households of religious sisters or of seminarians living in rented accommodation in squatter neighbourhoods. In each instance the involvement of the various religious communities appeared to be largely confined to the socio-economic group of their immediate neighbourhood area. I was looking for a place of residence in a locality where there would be potential to participate, at least to some extent, in the daily life of middle, upper, and squatter class neighbourhoods by the actual physical positioning of our residence helping to open the way to a level of acceptance in all of these types of neighbourhoods.

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54This was on the basis of my observations during a previous four-week visit to Manila in Dec. ‘92 to Jan. ‘93.
In Barangay All Holies I was fortunate enough to find a home, which largely satisfied this criteria. The Filipino owners had migrated overseas and through a legal sponsorship arrangement with a local Filipino religious community we were able to occupy the residence.

Our house was in a private but unfenced subdivision which permitted free passage of persons in and out of the locality. Our subdivision was partially adjacent to private fenced-in subdivisions each with manned guardhouse entry points. Located in one of these enclosed private subdivisions, was the Parish church, the Parish priest’s residence and the convent of another group of religious sisters. These sisters were in charge of a Catholic private elementary and high school, also located in the same subdivision. This school was attended primarily by children of middle and upper class families. The neighbouring subdivision in which our house was located also was adjacent, in part, to several overlapping crowded squatter settlements in which the working class and urban poor resided. While our house was fenced, it was of a low open style in the front that allowed free discourse with people passing by on the street and some of our squatter neighbours across the way. However, I found that establishing my identity in the surrounding neighbourhoods, both as a religious sister and as an anthropologist, was a slow and gradual process.

Many people in the Philippines still have very stereotypical images of communities of religious sisters, most probably as a consequence of their religious affiliation and long history of occasional association with a particular mode of a

55 According to Scott (1994:4-6), the term barangay originally occurred “as either ‘balangay’ or ‘barangay’, with the same meaning, in all the major languages of the Philippines” at the time of the arrival of the Spanish colonisers. The word, Scott claims, was not only used to refer to “the smallest political unit of Tagalog society” but also as a term denoting “boat” and thus emphasising, Scott argues, “two important characteristics of the sixteenth-century Philippines not characteristic of the twentieth -- dependence on boats and highly localized government.”

56 Pseudonym for the actual locality name but indicative that the name is one which we would normally associate with a religious, not a civil entity. The local Catholic parish has the same name although the geographical area covered by the two administrative entities is not conterminous. There is an historical precedent from the Spanish colonial period of commonly assigning saints names to municipalities, (Luzentales, 1998). However the practice does not appear to be confined to this era but is still commonly practiced even in current times as evidenced by the establishment and naming of this and other Barangays in a similar vein within the last two decades.

57 See Map 2: Research Locality, p. 70, for an overview of the key features of our neighbourhood.

58 As noted in the introduction, (see Figure 1, on Religious Affiliations, p. Error! Bookmark not defined.), according to the 1990 National census, approximately 91% of the National Capital Region household population are classified as having ‘Roman Catholic’ religious affiliation (National Statistics Office, 1992:22).
religious sisters community, even though alternative forms of these communities have existed for several years now in the Philippines (see the work edited by Kristina Gaerlan 1993). Their image of religious communities tends to be in terms of expecting large institutional places of residence; the wearing of a distinctive form of dress; particular types of occupation; a very collective way of life and particular daily routine. Some of the externals of my lifestyle were initially perceived to be unconventional for someone who genuinely belonged to a community of religious sisters. At the beginning I was the sole member of the community group to have arrived in the country, and I was not residing in an identifiable convent but a normal house in the neighbourhood. In terms of dress I wore no distinctively religious garb, just ordinary clothing. Furthermore, although I regularly attended Mass in the Parish church, it was not on a strictly daily basis because as a result of my on-going networking and engagements beyond the immediate neighbourhood, I frequently availed myself of the opportunity to attend one of the many other Mass centres located throughout the city.

The unconventional is a threat and at times I felt that this lack of fit was a problem, as it is important for people to be able to find a comfortable relational niche into which to situate the new arrival in their midst. On the other hand, because I clearly broke the stereotypical mould of what constitutes a religious sister in Filipino popular consciousness, the way was opened to a new construction of my identity on the basis of actual rather than presumed modes of relationship. The element of existing ambiguity that facilitated interaction across different strata of society, which would have been closed off to me if I were perceived to be unmistakably located in a role with which Filipinos had long associations and expectations. Through various strategies I tried to distance myself to some extent from automatically being accorded a privileged status in one way or another, due to the fact of being a foreigner and being a religious sister. For this reason I chose to live in a locality which was not automatically of limited access to people from low socio-economic classes. I visited people and accepted invitations to participate in activities in all of the surrounding neighbourhoods. I utilised the ordinary jeepney and bus public transport system rather than the more usual mode of taxi and private vehicle transport of most

59 Jeepney refers to the most common form of public transport in the Philippines. A locally built vehicle, so named because its design is a modification of military jeeps used during World War II.
foreigners. I dressed simply and casually, and other than a small cross on my clothing, I chose not to wear a distinctive form of dress marking me out as a religious sister, although I could have been so attired if I had wished. However, I had noticed that those who did wear religious attire were often accorded preferential treatment over ordinary people, being served first, or in crowded public transport being offered seats ahead of others in need, such as the elderly or mothers with young children, or else offered discounts etc. not readily extended to others - all practices which I wished to avoid as far as possible. Although we had a Filipina who assisted us in our household, we also shared the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and gardening work with her, and attended to most of our own marketing and shopping. I realised that in some ways these practices were regarded contrary to the norm, when after a fiesta gathering in one of the local neighbourhood chapels I was squatting down by a basin on the floor washing dishes with other women and one of those present said “You know sister, this is the first time I have seen a ‘madre’ washing dishes like this, all the sisters who taught us at school all had housemaids to do this for them”. As facilitator of our newly developing international community I tried to foster an environment where respect for difference was encouraged. Although we were all foreigners, each of us was different, and even though we had a common identity as religious sisters we were not all uniformly attired, some choosing a distinctive religious garb, some not. Filipinos and foreigners from all different socio-economic backgrounds were welcomed into our home and shared our table with us. Even so I found that I was not able to completely distance myself from being incorporated into the network of privileging that exists and still retain my credibility as truly being a member of a community of women religious in the Philippines. This was because there are several avenues through which people accrue prestige in the Philippines, one of which is connected with women and religious practice as I explain in chapter six. My experience was in tune with Golde’s ([1970] 1986b:9) observation that:

though the researcher may try to create a role for herself that is to some extent new to the host society, any viable creation must be an amalgam of the new with previously existing duties, activities and expectations. The society then can adapt by making the fieldworker the sole exemplar of the innovated role, or it can simply assign her an existing variant or deviant role.

I found that, in time, a reconciliation of sorts of my identity was able to be achieved. A number of factors contributed to this sense of change in others’ perception of me. Other community members arrived, some of whom wore a
religious habit, and we were seen to reside together and at times be attending the same services in the Parish church. An official house blessing was held at which some other members of religious communities were in attendance, and two other new groups of religious sisters arrived to settle into the Parish in ordinary neighbourhood homes. With the arrival of a new parish priest I was also invited to regularly attend Parish council meetings as leader of our religious sisters community. But there were also some who appeared to assign me in a variant or deviant role. By some of these I was questioned as to why it was that as a ‘madre’ I did not wear a distinctive form of dress and live in the same type of ‘kumbento’\(^{60}\) as the religious sisters who had taught them at school. While others at times addressed me by the title “sister”\(^{61}\) at the same time as asking me whether I lived with my family, whether I had a husband living or working somewhere else, and whether I had children.

My experience, in respect of my anthropologist identity, was similar. Some people who came from an academic and research background themselves appeared to have no difficulty in their positioning of me in this respect and related to me in a relaxed manner, responding readily to my questions about their life experiences, their beliefs and the religious practices in which they and others were involved. Whereas in the case of those people with no professional academic background the label anthropologist carried little meaning of itself, but there was some sense that I was a newcomer and a foreigner living in their neighbourhood, who wanted to learn about their way of life because I was in some way studying this through my connection with the university. However, my questioning and seeking explanations about religious beliefs and practices cut across my efforts to establish my credibility as a religious sister because if I was genuinely a ‘madre’ then I would not need to ask such questions because I would already know and understand such things and be able to tell them, as ‘ordinary people’, all about these matters and explain the ‘right’ meanings to them. Paradoxically this doubt that existed about my credentials as a ‘madre’ was mitigated in part by the fact

\(^{60}\)Term derived from Spanish used in everyday Tagalog conversation to denote community house of priests or religious sisters, also written ‘convento’, (English, 1977:200)

\(^{61}\)A term I took at first to be a form of address for a religious sister, in the same way that the word sister has frequently been employed in everyday usage in Australia. However, over time, it became clear to me that in the Philippines the word sister was being used in such instances in a much broader, more inclusive sense to refer to someone of the same gender, meaning more the sharing of a common female human identity. It was particularly used of those engaged in some type of common activity or enterprise, especially religious association, (see chapter six, footnote n. Error! Bookmark not defined., p. Error! Bookmark not defined.) and thus in this instance the term sister was being used more as an attribution of fictive kinship.
that, rather than doing my research in connection with one of the many Catholic universities in the Philippines, I was affiliated with UP. This proved advantageous because, in popular Catholic consciousness, the State University of the Philippines with which I was affiliated was perceived to be an academically prestigious but nationalistic and in some respects anti-religious establishment. Thus it was conceivable and more understandable that a foreign religious sister doing research in connection with such an institution would have to show evidence of having obtained data about religious beliefs and practices direct from Filipino people, rather than presume to have such knowledge from her own Catholic institutional background.

In times past, when anthropologists studied in colonial societies, their ethnographic reports revealed little about their relations with the colonial administration and how this affected the manner in which they were conceived by the indigenous population with whose lives their ethnographies were primarily concerned. The contemporary urban environment in the post-colonial milieu in which I was engaged in MM meant that I had to address the considerable complexities as a non-Filipino, popularly characterised as an ‘Amerikana’, of maintaining social relations with Filipinas from very different social classes. Aguilar’s (1988) work touches on some of the complexities involved in these type of social relations. Women in a society which has experienced the effects of colonisation and its aftermath do not occupy only a female position in such a context, they also occupy a position as people, within a whole society, who have experienced oppression and been denied self expression and self determination. Thus, as a consequence of this experience and its ongoing effects, these women have predominantly become united with other members of their society in common opposition to the experience of totalising external oppression containing within it multiple forms of gender oppression. In this vein Aguilar (1988) argues that women in ‘Third World’ economically exploited societies do not focus first on their position as women but more predominantly on their national identity in a united opposition to their economically privileged external oppressors, and in the espousal of a position that seeks to overturn their experiences of economic

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62 This perception had its roots in the opposition of the religious elite, especially the foreign religious orders and their leadership to the nationalist movement spearheaded by the secularly educated elite.

63 The terms “Third World” and “First World” are value laden, subjective terms that I prefer to avoid using except when they form part of the terms of the discourse of another’s argument which I am citing as in this case.
oppression and exploitation. Similar economic class positionings can also unite people across national identities in ways that subordinate gender solidarity, and similar economic class positionings can also deeply divide and alienate people of the one national identity in ways that also subordinate gender solidarity. Aguilar (1988:17-19) speaks about her experience in an academic milieu, as one of a minority group of “women of color” of diverse national origins in interaction with ‘First World’ feminists’. Aguilar and her companions felt alienated from the majority of the group because they could not assent to the underlying theoretical stance, namely, “the assertion of the lived experience of white professional women as universal”, that is to say that patriarchy is the primary and foremost form of domination in social life (Aguilar, 1988:18). It was Aguilar’s experience that there existed a total lack of understanding and empathy between the two groups of women deriving from their differing positions in the political and global economy. It did not mean that the ‘women of color’ were unconcerned about feminist issues. The identity of these women is not simply that of feminist or non-feminist, nationalist or not, Marxist or not, it is not an either/or position but an and/and position more clearly differentiated in its shades of concern in certain contexts than in others. In the different milieu of the study sub-group of the ‘women of color’, feminist issues could come to the fore. However, in Aguilar’s experience, the ‘First World’ women were totally unable to comprehend the dimensions of the oppression which Aguilar and her companions had suffered at the hands of colonisers and ‘First World’ imperialists. Part of the journey towards comprehension necessitates reading the present through the reflected light of some understanding of women’s standing in social relations and religious practices at the advent of colonisation.

Research Setting

My neighbourhood, in Barangay All Holies, Quezon City, was not a neatly bounded discrete unit such as the ‘village’ community of anthropologists in times past and as a consequence a different form of pursuit of my research question was necessitated, an approach not confined to a single, geographically closed, ethnically homogeneous site. Even at first observation it was obvious that the people living in close proximity to my place of residence came from very mixed socio-economic backgrounds, some of whom marked themselves off very visibly from other nearby persons in private fenced in subdivisions with their armed guards and control gates marking off street after street of cement walled homes. Other persons were less intent on separating themselves from others, in contrast
they sought to attach themselves, to expand, extend and dissolve the boundaries of the fingers of their squatter homes, with their indeterminate boundaries, one overlapping the other with their shared walls, reaching in from multiple directions, bulging around the perimeters of the patchwork of fenced in private subdivisions. These were the eye-catching, easily visible, physical demarcators in the immediately surrounding geographical locality in which most of the women with whom I related most intensely in my research resided, and I was positioned on the boundaries of these contrasting geographical locations, both literally and metaphorically. I was residing in neither the spacious homes of the influential upper-class in their fenced off private subdivisions, nor in the makeshift crowded dwellings of the squatter population but literally on the borders of both. Our modest brick dwelling fronted recently constructed townhouses across the street, but had a common back wall sheltering our household on one side and neighbouring squatter dwellers on the other side.

The arena of social relations of the Filipinas, among whom I was engaged in research, extended far beyond their immediate residence locality. In fact many of these women, or other members of their household, were multi-local, alternating periods of residency and work in different parts of the city, in different parts of the country and in different countries. In a core group of fifty to sixty women, I conducted in-depth life story conversations with approximately thirty percent and maintained regular contact with sub-chapel group activities and related engagements of the remainder. These women had either periods of personal lived experience or close kin links and contacts in approximately half of the seventy-three Provinces of the Philippines, outside the National Capital Region (NCR), and in at least twenty-six overseas countries. All of the women had

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64 Jocano (1973:224) in one of the earliest accounts of anthropological fieldwork into the urban poor neighbourhoods of Metro Manila observes that in “a slum neighborhood, the locality is never defined in terms of identifiable boundaries”.

65 Via parents, siblings, affines or children.

66 The list is not exhaustive as I did not always establish in the course of life story conversations the present localities of all the participants’ parents, siblings or children, and many of those with whom I interacted, in group contexts, were not directly questioned in this regard but nevertheless furnished a significant amount of unsolicited information in this respect. Map 3 (see p. 71) indicates known Provincial kinship links of core group of women engaged in this research.

67 The National Capital Region (NCR) of Metro Manila (MM) is comprised of nine municipalities and eight cities, one of which is Quezon City, (refer Map 1: National Capital Region (NCR) at end of introduction, p. Error! Bookmark not defined.), which is divided into one hundred and forty Barangay areas, of which Barangay ‘All Holies’, where I was residing, was one of the largest in terms of total population.

68 USA, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Denmark, Germany, Thailand, Britain, India, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Canada, Brunei, Jamaica, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Korea, Hong Kong, France, Portugal, Spain and South Africa.
links with at least some of the other women, as well as with multiple other permutations of persons, so that intermeshing with these wide and narrow geographical space boundaries, that were constantly being configured and traversed, were other boundaries of groups and personal experiential positionings. Further, there existed boundaries within boundaries, less obvious to my eye, that demarcated neighbouring women from one another and linked them to others in their nearby surrounds and beyond. These were boundaries of ethnicity and regionality that drew some of the women into cyclic fiesta celebrations in MM and the Provinces, boundaries of age and civil status, that were often at one and the same time both constraining and liberating. Constraining in the sense that being in different age cohorts or changing one’s civil status was frequently linked with different sets of social obligations and responsibilities. These dimensions of people’s lives can be conceptualised as boundaries but also in other ways as partial identities and personae, as phases of life, networks of social relations or connecting pathways in time or space, on occasions deliberately accentuated at other times glossed over. There is fluidity to life experience. I was located in a complex mesh of communities within communities, some of which linked with each other, others of which were discontinuous and juxtaposed to one another.

I found that efforts to network in my local environment proved much more difficult than in my first few weeks under a local host community’s patronage. As I had not been able to locate in a part of the city in any close proximity to their established communities, I was now essentially on my own as a complete stranger. I began my network approach in the local neighbourhood with the assumption that an overarching frame of social organisation existed, one in which all the levels of the local community were successively connected through clear lines of linkage. I was approaching my social milieu in Barangay All Holies as being composed of discrete, replicable building blocks that could be either summed together to make a whole, or that a whole existed which could be step by step separated into its constituent units. In the light of these assumptions I began the introduction of myself at the local level by visiting the administrative personnel at the local Barangay hall and the priest in the Parish church. At the time this seemed to me to be quite an appropriate course of action, primarily because I had read in numerous ethnographic accounts, (Bell et al. (ed) 1993;
Panini (ed) 1991; Perry (ed.) 1989; Romanucci-Ross, 1985; Spindler (ed.) 1970; Whitehead and Conaway (ed.) 1986), about anthropologists seeking out the village headman and/or the local government, town or religious official so that the researchers could acquaint such persons with their intentions regarding their proposed stay in the locality. I had first become acquainted with the Barangay as the local political unit during AMOR X when I had briefly stayed with a low-income family whose son was a candidate in the election being held for the local Barangay level of government. However, I did not realise that Barangay population size varied enormously from less than 100 persons in parts of the inner city, near where this family resided, to more than 100,000 persons in the areas of the city near where I was located, (National Statistics Office, 1996). Without understanding this and other facets of personal relations in the Philippines I had expected that introducing myself to those whom I assumed were the local community administrators would open pathways of access. Instead, these visits proved to be of little help to me because my approach had been quite the wrong way around. The level at which I was trying to connect into a set of established social relations was inappropriate.

Even though Barangays were used as the base enumeration unit in the conduct of the Philippine national census, the people grouped together for such enumeration purposes did not conceive of themselves as possessing a close common identity. The local Barangay or Parish level was in no way equivalent to the local authority level in a close knit, small village or rural community where the stranger makes a difference, here I was operating in the environment of large city anonymity. My difficulties stemmed, in large part, from the fact that neither the Barangay nor the Parish were unitary, tightly bound civil or ecclesiastical polities as I had envisaged. In reality the Barangay and Parish boundaries marked off government and ecclesiastical administrative areas on maps in much the same way as was the case with colonial borders from which artificially unified nation states were later constituted. Boundaries here were being used as instruments for the acquisition of power and exercise of political and social control through efforts to homogenise and render unacknowledged and unrecognised internal division and differentiation. In fact both the Barangay and the Parish were recently created entities, having been constituted as official administrative superstructures within the last two decades. Both had only partial and tenuous links to the shifting
population within their geographical boundaries. The Parish and the Barangay only represented an upper, externally imposed superficial level of community. Subchapel worship centres and neighbourhood associations formed the natural foci around which people clustered in networks of social relationships with each other within the official Parish and Barangay localities, they were the hub of closer-knit community units. It was with women within these base units that I needed to connect, if I was to engage in research into the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary urban Filipinas. To make contact with women at this level I began walking the neighbourhood and at weekends successively attending various small subchapel venues in the surrounding neighbourhoods, one or two at a time, over a period of two months until I had visited eleven chapels, either within the Parish boundaries, or in nearby adjoining localities still within Barangay All Holies. In these experiences I was a stranger in a small local community and someone from within the group almost always took it upon themselves to establish contact in a welcoming manner with me, to ascertain who I was and what I was about within their milieu. My presentation of myself in this context was that of being a co-resident in the area who wished to participate in their activities in a local worshipping community so as to get to know them. I also explained that I was a religious sister and involved full-time as an anthropological researcher with links to the nearby national university, although I sensed that these latter identities remained rather nebulous to most people. Through my walks, conversing here and there along the way, people became familiar with my being in their neighbourhood and positioned me in a kind of mixed identity of being a foreign local resident with some type of work commitment linked to the university and interested in religious activities in the area. From my visits to these local chapels it became clear that the main focus of my participant observation work would centre around the activities and events taking place in connection with these sites. Thus, I decided it was not possible to maintain contact with all the sites I had contacted so far. If I was to get to know some women from these communities better and seek their assistance and participation in my research, then I needed to limit myself to regular contact with a few communities and in-depth work with a few women at most from each setting.

Refer Map 2: Research Locality, (p. 70) for an indication of the spatial configuration of the Barangay and Parish boundaries. During the time frame of my research the population of Barangay All Holies was growing extremely rapidly. In the period between the two censuses of 1990 and 1995 Barangay All Holies had an annual population growth rate of 8.02% compared with a 2.32% annual growth rate for the Philippines overall and an annual percentage growth rate of 3.30% for the NCR overall and 3.34% for Quezon City overall, (as per National Statistics Office 1990; 1992; 1996; 1997; Africa et al.1993).
Initially I chose to pursue a pattern of participant observation in the lives of two of these chapel communities in addition to maintaining contact with some facets of the life of the larger community group centred around the Parish church. I chose these two chapels on the basis of differences in the composition of people who regularly attended these subchapels, which contrasted with the characteristics of those who frequented the Parish church. In the first subchapel, ‘Santa Maria Birhen’, services were conducted in Tagalog and the people who regularly attended were from the lower working class and urban poor socio-economic strata of society. They lived in either rented shared accommodation, or crowded semi-permanent housing constructed, in the main, on land for which they did not possess a title and thus were under the constant threat of possible eviction and demolition of their dwellings. Even so some people had managed to reside in the area for fifteen to twenty years, in some cases by moving from residence to residence as their socio-economic status marginally improved over time, or as dwellings in one or other location were demolished to make way for a private or government building project or some form of land development project. In contrast, others had been in the locality for only a few months. The chapel was similarly constructed on untitled land with largely donated building materials. There was great variation in the quality of the houses in this area. Some dwellings were very solidly constructed from concrete blocks and/or new timber, while others were put together in makeshift manner from refuse corrugated iron, plywood and synthetic ‘hessian’ sheeting. Most homes were connected either legally or illegally to electricity supply but many did not have piped water, having to fetch it either in buckets from neighbourhood wells or collect rainwater in varied receptacles via ad hoc homemade systems. Either way, very little of this water was potable, being usually only suitable for washing and cleaning purposes. We shared water from our deep well with some of the squatter population in our neighbourhood who resided on the fringes of our unenclosed private subdivision and along one of the tentacle extensions of Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood. There was a degree of fluidity in the locality’s boundaries so that at times homes encroached on the official land area of other unenclosed neighbouring, private subdivisions. Some of the population had regular salaried or professional employment, others were self-employed and many had only irregular or part-time employment.
The second chapel, ‘Santo Jesus’, was a permanent structure on titled land belonging to a regional Visayan ethnic association with services being held in English and Tagalog. The regular congregation, some of whom resided in the local Barangay neighbourhood, was composed of people of mixed socio-economic background, from all over Manila, with some degree of kinship affiliation to members of the ethnic Visayan group responsible for the chapel’s establishment. In the course of maintaining this network of contacts I was recruited, by one of the women whose main community base existed in another of the Parish chapel localities, to also become a regular participant in a third chapel community. This third chapel, Holy Mary’s Blessings, was situated in another small, private, enclosed subdivision of upper middle class, inter-generational households of heterogeneous ethnic origins. Many such households are headed by retired or semi retired professionals or business entrepreneurs, whose adult children, some of whom are married, continue to reside with them while working, or in pursuit of educational qualifications, similar to those of their parents. In fact as my research progressed, my main arenas of involvement were with women from Santa Maria Birhen and Holy Mary Blessings chapel neighbourhoods rather than with the wider Santo Jesus chapel community. Thus most of the religious practices described in this ethnography are drawn from participation in the religious life of these two communities. However, in addition to my regular involvement with members of these chapel communities, I also maintained contact with some women residing in the large, private, enclosed subdivision in which the All Holies Parish church was located. Residents in this subdivision were middle upper class, married professionals with families, from mixed ethnic backgrounds. In the majority of the cases both partners were in paid employment, although not always fulltime, and sometimes one or both were retired. Length of residency in the locality varied from less than one year to over twenty years, with most residents owning their house and lot. Most homes were spacious and fully serviced with electricity and also water from underground wells and large water storage tanks fitted with booster pumps as part of the subdivision infrastructure. This was also the case in the subdivision in which Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel was located. The regular services in Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel and All Holies Parish church were mainly conducted in English. I also participated in occasional activities in some of the other chapel communities due to the existence of various cross-linkages to persons and events in these localities, especially as one of my informants in the Santo Jesus chapel community belonged to squatter area 9. In addition to her involvement with the Visayan regional association and the Santo Jesus chapel in
Barangay All Holies this woman was very active in local level leadership in another small *Santo Jesus* subchapel[^70] in her immediate squatter neighbourhood in the neighbouring Parish and Barangay.

Like the Parish and Barangay neighbourhood in which I was located, so also Quezon City and Metro Manila were diverse entities with many levels of organisations and people involved in different facets of the research question I was exploring. Thus in another dimension of locating my research I discussed my work with a wide range of people[^71], both anthropologists and non anthropologists, who were conducting research into women’s lives and/or religious beliefs and social values in the Philippines. Sometimes my discussions led to attendance at lectures, workshops, meetings and religious ceremonies which assisted me to become more conversant with the ways in which Philippine society operated. Through this networking I was intent on learning different viewpoints about the culture in which I was immersed. Further, in establishing various professional affiliations, I was also seeking ways in which to shore up some currency of social standing that I might draw upon for personal introductions to help me link into various levels of social interaction. Because I had come to appreciate that even though the behaviour modelled for me by my initial host community patrons had been one of direct contact with people of influence in the different circles into which they introduced me, my initial efforts to network at the Barangay and Parish administrative levels had not been particularly successful because my social location was very different from that of my initial patrons. The crucial difference was that my patrons had already established levels of personal relations in influential circles with a considerable currency of social

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[^70]: I use the term subchapel here to differentiate this smaller local neighbourhood chapel from the multipurpose meeting hall and function centre in Barangay All Holies bearing the same name that also served one of the Visayan ethnic associations of MM as a chapel. The other context in which I use the term subchapel in this thesis is in reference to a small chapel in the *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel neighbourhood in which regular formal religious services are no longer held, except for an annual Mass on the feast of the subchapel’s Marian patron. However the subchapel is still regularly used for other less formalised religious activities, for example ‘Pabasas’, neighbourhood wakes, and Marian devotions in May and October.

[^71]: These included in Quezon City: persons from the University of Philippines Departments of Anthropology and Sociology, University Center for Women’s Studies, Asian Center, Institute of Islamic Studies, Movement for Muslim-Christian Dialogue; staff of Ateneo de Manila University Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Institute of Philippine Culture, East Asian Pastoral Institute; personnel from the Women’s Desk, Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Philippine Social Science Center, Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, MaryHill School of Theology and Inter-Congregational Theological Center; and beyond Quezon City: Institute of Women’s Studies, Malate, Social Development Research Center, De La Salle University, Manila; Union Theological Seminary, Dasmarinas, Cavite; and Isis Resource Center and Library.
standing operational in the relationship. Entry into new sets of social relationships in the Philippines hinges around connections with link persons who are able to perceive each other as sharing in some common medium of interchange, examples of which might be kinship, ethnicity, occupation, educational, business or professional relations; religious association or the ability to demonstrate connectedness via a mutual friend or associate. In my initial efforts to network at the Barangay and Parish level I was perceived as having come to introduce myself without being in possession of any appropriate, demonstrable, common medium of interchange, without a link person who could vouch for me and assist in the management of the social relations I wished to negotiate.

As I linked up with people beyond my immediate neighbourhood and participated in activities and events in other parts of the metropolis I experienced at first hand a variety of the daily constraints of life in MM, trying to manage a household while simultaneously pursuing an occupation necessitating frequent travel negotiating Manila’s crowded public transport system. It was a methodological approach that, despite its demands, brought its own particular returns by deepening my appreciation at another level of the reality of the life experience of my neighbours. Those among whom I lived and worked at the local level were also engaged in differing degrees in the pursuit of their livelihood occupations beyond the confines of Barangay All Holies, in other diverse locations in the city negotiating Manila’s horrific traffic and coping with its toll on their time and energy. They too needed to balance the honouring of commitments and obligations in diverse and sometimes competing contexts. I was encountering here in Marcus’ (1995:111) terms “ethnographically situated awareness among subjects of doubled or multiply constructed selfhood”. Ethnographic practice became a process of threading my way through the dispersions of women’s religiosity in multiple ‘identities’, configurations of relations and locales, both within and beyond the Barangay’s confines. It became impossible to follow up all threads and strands in the manner and depth I desired. Choices constantly had to be made between staying with the continuity of a thread and exploring in greater depth a locale through which a thread passed.
Post-Colonial Urban Complexities and Situated Knowledge

The complexity of doing anthropology in the urban milieu has long been recognised. Earlier methodological approaches in urban anthropology, for example Boissevain’s (1974) work, have been primarily directed towards unpacking and unravelling diverse roles and networks of relations in order to piece together a whole, to ‘see the big picture’. Whereas Wolf’s (1982) work was more directed towards making explicit the need to incorporate into anthropological research a much stronger ethnohistorical approach. Wolf advocated reading the present in the light of the past which always has to be considered from diverse angles as it is the outcome of competing interests and alliances between many different individuals and groups of people. In the Philippine context Jocano (1973:224, 226), writing over twenty-five years ago of his experiences in conducting some of the earliest MM urban anthropology, argued that the complexity of the milieu necessitated a team approach, noting that:

In the urban area, you encounter new faces, you make new acquaintances, and you cope with new situations almost every day...[having observed earlier that]...there are hundreds of roles, resulting from specialization and occupational pursuits, all demanding attention at the same time....[but notes of their husband/wife team]....we could not be everywhere, despite our desire to cover wider areas of interaction with the people.

The manner of ‘reading’ boundaries re-positions people not only in relation to one another, but also in relation to the shape of the whole, even more than this, multiple and alternative ‘readings’ of boundaries calls into question the very possibility of there ever being a whole rather than ever changing configurations of partiality. Further, Appadurai (1996) observes that various cultural forms circulate across regions while being domesticated into local practice. There are obvious implications here in terms of my research in respect to Catholicism, as a cultural form of religious belief, circulating across regions through the processes of colonisation but simultaneously being localised to a cultural expression within more than one cultural form. Bowen (ed.) (1998b) draws similar links in recent work in which he highlights the ways in which the focus of both Sahlins’ (1985) and Wolf’s (1982) research is concerned with “the ways in which world historical
changes take on local accents......[through which] people appropriate and transform the ideas, objects, and institutions offered by international commerce and colonialism” (Bowen, 1998b:1). Bowen contends that the same process is involved in religious conversion and thus it is crucial that the “analysis of religions in practice...be attentive to the differences [which]......the social contexts of specific societies, and cultures, in particular historical moments” (Bowen, 1998a:19) make to the shape and form of religious practices characteristic of particular religious traditions. I take up this point in greater depth in chapter three in the section on religious cultural interactions in the Philippine milieu.

Before continuing my discussion of the specific details of my particular research context, it is necessary to tease out some of the implications of changing local and global configurations in respect to the manner in which culture is conceptualised, and the resultant questions which arise in respect of the contours of knowledge construction in contemporary anthropological analyses. This consideration forms a particularly pertinent backdrop in respect of my research into women’s lives in the ‘post-colonial’ contemporary urban milieu of metropolitan Manila. Culture is process, not a bounded entity, and thus “anthropology’s cultures” Gupta and Ferguson (1997d:3) contend “must be seen as less unitary and more fragmented, their boundedness more of a literary fiction - albeit a serious fiction - than as some sort of natural fact”. This problematizes the concept of ‘culture’ in anthropology which has long been defined in terms of shared understandings. People are both very differently positioned in one society, and part of larger societies in relationship across local and immediate boundaries of nationality, ethnicity and geography that are in themselves constructed demarcators of identity. Appadurai (1996:11-16) suggests inverting our understanding of culture from the static perspective of objectified commonality to a focus on difference in which there is space for “unequal knowledge and the differential prestige of lifestyles” (Appadurai, 1996:12). From this, various problems arise in anthropological research, problems of authority with respect to certain interpretations and problems concerning how to deal satisfactorily with difference, multiplicity and partiality without factoring it out of anthropological discourse. In relation to this Marcus (1995:98) argues that:

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72Italics original emphasis.
For ethnographers interested in contemporary local changes in culture and society, single-sited research can no longer be easily located in a world system perspective. This perspective has become fragmented, indeed “local” at its very core. The distinction between lifeworlds of subjects and the system does not hold, and the point of ethnography within the purview of its always local, close-up perspective is to discover new paths of connection and association by which traditional ethnographic concerns with agency, symbols, and everyday practices can continue to be expressed on a differently configured spatial canvas.

Part of coming to terms with this ‘differently configured spatial canvas’ necessitates examining some of the presuppositions that commonly exist in relation to the nature of anthropological research. Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) suggest that the practice which has developed in the anthropological discipline of referring to anthropological research as being conducted in a ‘field’ leads to a way of thinking about anthropological research that privileges certain forms of work over others. In particular they (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b:8) contend that

the word field connotes a place set apart from the urban.......[And that] what stands metaphorically opposed to work in the field is work in........urban settings - in short, in civilized spaces that have lost their connection with nature.

As a consequence certain types of research are adjudged to more authentically qualify one as being a ‘true’ anthropologist than other types of research because a hierarchy of field sites is held to exist so that certain “places are much more anthropological than others (e.g. Africa more than Europe, southern Europe more than northern Europe, villages more than cities)” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b:13). Particularly devalued has been urban anthropological research among people with whom the anthropologist has at least, in part, shared values such as in the case of my research in MM among predominantly Catholic women, some of whom were from a middle class professional background, others not. Anthropologists’ continued preoccupation with ‘the field’ leads to undue concentration on a bounded physical locality and frequently detracts from sufficient focus on the wider ways in which our research work is situated. This means that the ways in which we construct knowledge, as anthropologists, may remain largely

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73 As I noted earlier in this chapter (see footnote n. Error! Bookmark not defined., p. Error! Bookmark not defined, and my associated discussion of my research location and setting), I have refrained from referring to my research locality as a ‘field’, noting its complexity of communities within communities and people with multiple identities and cross linkages with people across space and time.
unexamined because “certain kinds of research questions, methods and textual production [continue to be endowed] with excellence”\textsuperscript{74} in the anthropology discipline while other approaches are devalued because the work is not deemed to be in an appropriately remote or exotic location or sufficiently “an exploration of Otherness”. Passaro (1997) who conducted research on the homeless people of her home city of New York City, through close association with, but not through directly sharing their lifestyle, and Weston (1997) who as a lesbian researched the gay community in the US, contend that this was very much the tenor of their anthropological colleagues assessment of their work. The whole issue of the construction of ‘the Other’ in anthropological research has been extensively discussed in anthropological literature.\textsuperscript{75}

This dilemma of ‘the Other’ has come into sharper focus because of greater interchange between researchers and those being researched. In part this can be attributed to the interplay of globalization processes resulting in much greater volume and frequency of cross-cultural interchange. But it is also linked with the increased prevalence of anthropologists engaged in the praxis of anthropology “at home” (Panini, 1991; De Pina-Cabral, 1992; Loizos, 1992) and to more and more scholars from perspectives previously deemed marginal, especially researchers from ‘indigenous’ non Western cultures\textsuperscript{76} and feminist researchers,\textsuperscript{77} ‘taking voice’ in order to question anthropology’s own hegemony. Continuously, questions are being asked concerning whose interests are primarily being furthered in certain modes of research practice and preparation of professional literature? In discussing interactions between European and Asian scholars, Karim (1995b:22-24) highlights the tensions which can result when researchers, with differing perceptions, experience that their viewpoints and theoretical perspectives are not accorded equal respect. In particular Asian scholars

\textsuperscript{74}Original emphasis.

\textsuperscript{75}See Clifford (1986); Abu-Lughod (1991); Trouillot (1991); De Pina-Cabral (1992); Loizos (1992); Pitt-Rivers (1992); Gefou-Madianou (1993); Jakubowska (1993); Van Wetering (1994); Salmond (1995); Appadurai (1996); Bhabha (1996); Fillitiz (1996); Kloos (1996); Gupta and Ferguson (1997b); Gupta and Ferguson (1997e); Passaro (1997); and Weston (1997).


frequently indicate that they experience the ethnocentrism of “Euro-centricity” and/or “American imperialism” of European and American scholars. In a similar vein Perttierra (1994:135-6), straddling the Euro-Asian divide, in a sense, in his own person through his Filipino, Spanish and Australian cultural ‘identities’, ventures that:

The new ethnography, with its emphasis on reflectivity rather than on earlier distancing objectivity, may turn out to be yet another way in which the West continues to assert its positioned and superior subjectivity........Subjects are differently positioned and this difference confers an inter-subjective authority which allows some to decide within which narratives Others must express themselves.

Who should be the arbitrator as to what constitutes sound research practice and admissible data for analysis in the first instance? This is particularly relevant in the study of religion. Writing from the Philippine perspective in this regard, Talisayon (1994:124) claims that:

a proper study and appreciation of the belief and value systems of indigenous Filipino spiritual groups is often obstructed by the application of the Western concept of validity

He goes on to explain that for Filipinos and many other Asians, truth is not so much an external objective reality able to be verified and corroborated by independent witnesses, as that which is internally and personally experienced as valid. What seems most necessary is to seek to create that milieu in academic discourse where multiple voices are given space to be heard, in order to move closer to appreciating the richness of social relations and cultural interactions. The issue is complex. This is because we are so used to dualistic thinking. We most commonly think in terms of either or, and in this or that category, employing either contrast or complementarity and similarity or difference. We do not really have a satisfactory way and suitable linguistic expression to readily locate ourselves beyond this dualism. We are not able to adequately give expression to that which is, at one and the same time, differentiated and yet unitary, complementary and yet complete, dissimilar and yet alike, etc. No single perspective deserves to be so elevated as to diminish alternative understandings to irrelevancy. Mongia (1996:1-18) explores the ways in which a re-examination of colonial interactions highlights the ambiguities surrounding notions of “representation, identity, agency, discourse and history” (Mongia, 1996:3).
Further, she emphasises the need to acknowledge the unresolved areas of debate and disagreement regarding the aftermath of colonisation processes, especially what state, if any, constitutes “post-colonisation”. The difficulty of dealing satisfactorily with multiple cultural representations in anthropological studies of colonial interactions has been explored in depth in Thomas’ (1994) work which exposes the partiality of cultural representations in the discourse of studies of colonialism. Thomas critically assesses colonialists’ representations of the peoples they colonised as well as fragmenting representations of the coloniser’s unitary identity. With particular reference to colonisation and evangelisation, Beidelman (1982:30) also cautions against a generalised representation of missionaries during the colonial period noting that we cannot characterize a simple colonial type and certainly cannot generalize about missionaries as a single group. It even seems doubtful that we can easily do so regarding ethnic type or religious denomination, for English Catholics differ in important ways from Germans and Italians, and low-church Evangelicals are not the same as high-church Anglicans.

In addressing the issue of theory and knowledge construction, McCarl Nielsen (1990b:15) argues that theory “depends at least partly on one’s social location, social identity, and research purposes”. Further, she contends that where there is an asymmetry of power in people’s position or social location, the more powerful and the less powerful will have inverted world understandings. She claims that the subordinate group may potentially have a more complete worldview than the dominant because of the need to be conversant with the latter’s position as well as their own in order to survive. Obusan (1994a:33) makes a similar point in discussing, from a Filipino perspective, indigenous knowledge and evolving research paradigms claiming that “today [it] is generally accepted, that those from below [have] a different perception and expression of reality from those of the learned and the elites”. This concern with position in relation to theory and knowledge construction was also taken up as a central concern by Grosz (1988:97-102) in her article on “the in(ter)vention of feminist knowledges” where she argues that it is impossible to have position-less theory and that claims to such are merely denials or refusals to recognise the influences operative that limit and restrict knowledge construction in any context. In particular, Grosz sees it as

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78 Original emphasis.
crucial that feminists raise consciousness of the “masculinity of knowledges” in order “to clear a space within the ‘universal’ and to reclaim women’s places in it”. Cook and Fonow (1990:89) take up a similar concern in their focus on the need to be attentive to the ways in which language is used, noting that, “certain vocabulary and styles of presentation can be used to discount or distort women’s experiences” but that feminist methodology can offer a corollary to this by harnessing “the transformative power of knowledge....so that attention is paid to generating information that can be used to create alternatives to oppression”.

Further both Grosz and McCarl Nielsen observe how feminist theory and subsequent research approaches are concerned with the contestation of absolute knowledge in enabling and fostering the articulation of multiple perspectives. At the same time, both grapple with the issue of relativism and the attitude that there is either one absolute truth and incontestable knowledge or else that there is only relativism where one position is as good as another. Such a conclusion is seen as too simplistic because it does not come to terms with the relational nature of knowledge construction. This particularly applies in the religious sphere as I illustrate in chapter three. It is not that some Filipinos with Catholic religious affiliation are ‘truly’ Catholics and others emphasising different aspects of one continuum of belief are not ‘fully’, or only partially Catholic. What can be seen as true and having validity under one set of prevailing circumstances may need to be modified or adjusted in another time and another place. Women and others occupying a subordinate or oppressed position in society have frequently been sensitised to this. A further dimension of multiple perspectives is the recognition that there is not one particular and universal ‘women’s’ or ‘men’s’ experience but rather that all human experience is always a collage constituted from the complex interplay of a myriad of factors, at both a personal and cultural level. Of importance are factors such as social status, possession of and/or access to economic resources and power domains, political consciousness, race, birthplace and religious orientation. In conjunction with these factors, people’s social education also frequently affects their access to those areas of knowledge and expertise most highly valued within any particular culture. And in turn this may impact on their language fluency, and the effect on them of cultural mores and norms, especially in respect of gender assignment and gender roles, which along with the forms and degree of social control exercised, influence life choices.
Language Learning

On my arrival in MM I had no prior preparation or study in Filipino and was not even sure how much this would be necessitated. Especially as I had been given to understand prior to my arrival that the use of English was widespread as the language of educational instruction and that for non English speaking people of Asian background the Philippines was fast becoming the place of choice for English language learning. On locating in the Philippines I found this to be only partially true. Certainly there were many Koreans and Indonesians and to a lesser extent Thai, Japanese and Chinese students learning English and pursuing studies in other subject areas in Universities and Colleges largely using English as the medium of instruction. However, since the introduction of a policy of bilingual education in the seventies, the practical medium of instruction in MM, has been a mixture of Tagalog, English, Filipino and more usually in practice, Taglish. This has given rise to an ongoing public debate being waged about the desirability of such a state of affairs and whether in national education one language should take precedence over others, (Hidalgo, 1994; Pacis, 1997a; 1997b; Zulueta, 1994). Certainly many Filipinos have bilingual and multilingual competency and so some level of interaction in English is possible with most persons who have had at least partial exposure to the high school education system which is a very significant proportion of the adult population in MM (see Figure 1: Highest Formal Educational Attainment at end of chapter one, p. 72). Still in the National Capital Region, Tagalog is the most commonly spoken language of the majority of the people, being the Mother Tongue of over 75 percent of the household population, (National Statistics Office, 1997:81). Given this, I took steps, soon after locating in my neighbourhood, to begin to learn Tagalog through a variety of modes including some formal classes at language school; interaction

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79 The interspersing of Tagalog with English vocabulary and terminology in the one conversation, plus the use of a number of hybrid words derived from Tagalog and English roots.

80 Officially the bilingual education policy mandates that elementary school is taught in Filipino and in the regional languages with high school and college being taught in Filipino and English with the constitution mandating that Filipino and English are the official national languages. Still many Cebuanos are not happy with this state of affairs given the heavy reliance of Filipino on the Tagalog language for its base.

81 This figure shows that in the NCR over 78% of the population aged 20 and over, as per 1990 census figures, have had high school or higher formal education (and over 74% in Barangay All Holies) compared with just over 50% for the Philippines overall.

82 I took a short introductory beginners level course at CLSC (Christian Language Study Centre) Pantranco, Quezon City and later an intermediate level course at Corporate Academy for Language Learning, Inc., Quezon City.
with the local population in the base community groups I was contacting; plus using the Tagalog newspaper, ‘Balita’, and Tagalog Scriptures and comics for reading practice. In addition to these steps directed towards assisting me to acquire some everyday vocabulary and grammar, I also arranged to receive some sessions of home tutoring,\textsuperscript{83} especially to assist me in working on the translation of research literature papers frequently written in an older form of the Tagalog vernacular than that in common usage in everyday Tagalog conversation. As with many people learning a new language in the second half of their life, I understood more than I could easily articulate, but I could manage to haggle at the local roadside market place, exchange pleasantries and maintain a basic conversation, in addition to following the general thread of conversations being enacted in my presence on public transport and in meetings etc. The population who participated with me in the research were not of homogeneous ethnic composition. Some were Visayan, others Bicolano, others Waray, some Ilocano, others Pangasinan, Tagalog and Zamboangeno speakers originally, so in practice I worked in a mix of Taglish, Tagalog and English according to what seemed most appropriate at the time, taking account of the background of people with whom I was working and the length of time in which I had been engaged in the research. I prepared written information sheets, respondent profile base data forms and letters of confirmation of participation in life story conversations in both English and Tagalog. In addition I employed one of the staff members of the University Center for Women’s Studies, Ms. Wilma Rojas, as a part-time research assistant some weekend and evenings during my initial work on Tagalog life story conversations. She was an excellent help in this work but unfortunately, due to time constraints arising from changed life circumstances, she was unable to continue with this part-time work. Efforts to identify a suitable replacement through other university contacts proved unsuccessful at the time, so I began work with another research assistant referred to me through a link person of one of my informants. However I did not continue this arrangement beyond a temporary basis, as it did not prove satisfactory. This was due to the inclination of this assistant to contest informant’s viewpoints and values contrary to her own, in ways that sometimes proved disconcerting for participants. She was a Catholic and in interviews with some women who had converted from Catholicism to Islam, she intimated to these women that this was not good and she reinterpreted some of their responses in ways that she deemed more acceptable from a Catholic viewpoint. So I then worked without any formal research assistant but in practice

\textsuperscript{83} Some tutors from ‘BPB Tutorial Center’ in Quezon City conducted these sessions.
I was never solely in one on one situations in the lower income, predominantly Tagalog speaking neighbourhoods where everyday life was much more a communitarian affair. Frequently there were young people around, either family members or neighbours, who offered spontaneous interpretation assistance whenever problems were encountered in getting by in Tagalog/Taglish. Only in the more affluent private subdivision neighbourhoods did I find that some interactions and life story conversations took place without others automatically in attendance and making at least occasional contributions to the discourse. In these situations the participants most frequently chose to converse with me in English.

**Participant Observation**

In terms of qualitative research methodologies, participant observation has come to be regarded as anthropology’s ‘stock in trade’. Perhaps this is because it is the methodology that most characterises anthropological ‘fieldwork’ as a ‘rite of passage’ (Wengle, 1984). As every anthropologist discovers sooner or later, the potentially rich data leading to penetrating insights and deep understandings which the practice of this methodology yields, is frequently purchased at the price of many personal and ethical dilemmas and tensions (Agar, 1986; Ashworth, 1995; Fox (ed.) 1991; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Hastrup and Hervik (eds.) 1994a; Kirk and Miller 1986; Okely and Callaway (eds.) 1992; Spradley, 1980). Participation and observation exist, at best, in an uncomfortable alliance with each other. While not precisely polar opposites, participation and observation encroach upon one another as states of being, in ways that make the wholehearted embrace of one only possible at the cost of the renunciation of the other. My own particular path of discovery in this regard had to do with the fact that a large proportion of my participant observation centred around activities connected with the celebration of religious ceremonies and devotional practices which meant that I was often caught between identities in ways that presented me with methodological difficulties. From a research perspective my primary reason for being present at such events was to gather anthropological data. This role required that I keenly observe and make detailed notes of all that I witnessed from the moment I arrived until the minute I departed. I was to record details of the physical setting in which the event took place, how long it took and what happened in terms of such things as: who arrived when and with whom, what they did and said, how others responded, who carried out what role, what
responsibilities and obligations were shown to be involved in such roles, what was the nature of the group dynamics operative, were there obvious divisions between some people and others and, if so, what was the basis of the differentiation; age, gender, status, occupation, ethnicity, etc., etc. I needed to record what people told me about their expectations of me and so on. On the other hand, during the period that these events took place I was also in the process of trying to establish the credibility of my identity as a religious sister. Personal experience suggested to me that such a cause would be furthered by my presence at these religious events, if I actively participated and conducted myself in an appropriately devotional demeanour, that precluded sitting in a corner taking copious notes throughout the ceremonies. There was obviously a need for compromise and adaptation, so I tried various strategies in an effort to arrive at some type of satisfactory resolution of my dilemma.

To do so necessitated grappling with issues about the best ways in which to come to an understanding of human experience. How much of human experience can be captured by an observational approach of watching, listening, accompanying and noting? To what extent can this approach be validly employed apart, or separated from feeling, doing, being; in short, from having the actual experience through fully entering the participant mode? Can we ever fully share the experience of another? Some like Lareau (1996) and Wolcott ([1974] 1998) who was used as an exemplar of the ethnographic approach in Creswell (1998), have come down firmly on the side of those who argue that participant observation is best practiced with the stress on the observational mode over the participant mode. Lareau (1996:219) has expressed strong reservations about those times in which she allowed participation to over-ride observation. She described her practice on these occasions in the following terms: “The seduction of participation sometimes overshadowed the goal of participation; and the cost was a lack of carefully collected information”. Wolcott ([1974] 1998:325), indicates similar reservations when reflecting on previous ‘fieldwork’ he writes, “I had become acutely aware of the limitations on one’s ability to objectively observe processes in which he is deeply involved as a participant”. By contrast others (Jackson, 1989; Stoller, 1987) advocate the need for a shift from emphasis on observation to greater degrees of participation, Jackson (1989:9) claims:

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84Because I accessed the Wolcott article in Creswell (1998) where it is wholly reproduced, by permission, as an appendix, I have cited pagination from Creswell rather than that pertaining to the Wolcott original.
To desist from taking notes, to listen, watch, smell, touch, dance, learn to cook, make mats, light a fire, farm - such practical and social skills should be as constitutive of our understanding as verbal statements and espoused beliefs. Knowledge belongs to the world of our social existence, not just to the world of academe. We must come to it through participation as well as observation.

I chose to employ a combination of approaches in my participant observation work. I always carried at least a small notebook with me so that, when and as circumstances permitted, I made brief jottings or more extensive notes in the course of the celebrations; but in the main little direct recording was able to be done during the actual ceremonies. However I did frequently take photographs during ceremonies, this being more acceptable practice on such occasions than direct note-taking. The Filipinas with whom I worked enjoyed having their photos taken and were always eager to obtain the copy of the photo which I had printed for them and which they frequently displayed in a prominent place in their homes. For several of the communal Marian celebrations in the *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel I was officially requested by the pastoral council committee to make a photographic record of enlarged prints of the celebration for display in the chapel meeting room and also to make available smaller copies of the photos as a memento for the principal participants in these celebrations. In addition to my photographic work I collected any available printed material relating to the celebration; programs, prayer sheets, and advertising literature. Sometimes I attempted to tape record sections of the celebrations, but this proved to be of only limited value as frequently there were overlapping dialogues, or many competing sound contributions captured on the tape. My main emphasis though was on entering into the participatory experience of the time and so I listened, I looked, I followed, I felt joy and sorrow, boredom, confusion and anger, I sang, I danced, I walked, I knelt, I stood, I sat, I laughed, I cried, I prayed, I talked, I ate, I carried candles and flowers, I touched statues, blessed children and reverenced the elderly, offered money and other gifts and in still other ways participated together with neighbours, friends and strangers. Before and after the events I engaged people in conversation about the celebrations and activities and listened to their various explanations. After the events I reflected on the content and the experience, sometimes this was via observations spoken into a tape recorder, other times via written notes. I drew maps of procession routes and in meetings I took notes on most occasions, the exception being Legion of Mary meetings where out
of respect for the code of secrecy\textsuperscript{85} of this organization as regards matters discussed in the business section of the meetings, I did not take any written notes during these meetings. Focus here was on the content of the material used for spiritual inspiration of the group before and after the weekly reporting of business matters, and the study of the group interaction dynamics. My participant observation mainly centred around ritual cycles and group activities in the subchapels and Parish church. Group activities covered weekly liturgies, meetings, group outings and socialising on birthdays and anniversaries. While among the ritual cycles were the celebration of various rites for the deceased on All Saints/All Souls Day, celebration of a number of fiestas, some Marian and others for the Santo Niño; and celebration of rites during Holy Week and Easter. Accounts of some of these activities and celebrations and my analysis of them are recounted in the following chapters, whereas my focus here is on the methodological approaches I used to amass the information on which these accounts and analyses are based.

Although participant observation is a central methodology in anthropology it is not an end in itself but rather a springboard for interpreting and translating cultural experience. Experience is a word easily used but very inadequately captured and defined by the use of other words because in itself experience is more than words. As Hastrup and Hervik (1994b:7) observe in exploring the linkages between social experience and anthropological knowledge, “any study of experience is also a study of values, emotions and motives”. The observation and participation have to be listened into, beyond words, and be read through in ways that are attentive to the wider social context in which participant observation is being practiced. The experiences and the participants that were the fabric of the participant observation in which I was engaged did not exist in isolation from other experiences and other participants, but were part of the weave of wider webs of social relations. While I could not be a participant observer in every linked context, I constantly needed to address questions concerned with how, when and why the experiences I was involved in were intertwined with other levels of social relations; and the who, for whom and through whom of the participants who were involved beyond my immediate context. As an accompanying strategy in

\textsuperscript{85}The Legion of Mary manual sets out that one of the basic duties of those in attendance at Legion of Mary meetings is the preservation of “inviolable confidence” as “to what they hear at meetings” (Duff, [1933] 1985:122), where those in attendance at meetings are normally only members of the organization or candidates for membership in the organization.
addressing some of these questions I obtained data from the National Statistics Office on the demographics of the Philippines, MM and Barangay All Holies and maintained a running file of newspaper clippings and a collection of popular press journal articles relating to facets of public religious celebrations, but I did not monitor local radio or television materials.

Life Story Conversations

There is a long tradition of life stories, biographies and oral history forming part of the corpus of ethnographic writing, (Denzin, 1989; Dollard, 1935; Langness and Frank 1981; Little, 1980; Mandelbaum, 1973; Peacock and Holland 1993; Radin, 1933). I see these three approaches as being different but inter-related facets of one tradition. While there is no clear, universally agreed upon differentiation of these three genres of writing, there seem to be some general characteristics that distinguish each of the three. In life stories the focus tends to be on strands of people’s lives, clustering around significant events, memories or periods of life. Commonly the stories are quite short, condensed, although at times quite detailed accounts. Life stories are glimpses into people’s lives but are not in the main a long chronological relating of the events and circumstances of a person’s life, such writing is more the mark of a biography. By contrast oral histories tend to written in a way, which relates the life experiences of one or more persons to the wider context of social history. Again there is an overlap between some biographies and oral history. Generally speaking, in biography the lens is focused on the foreground of the individual with some capturing of historical developments and movements in the background, whereas in oral history the writer’s lens is focused on a particular historical period and the experiences of those living within this time frame are explored in order to shed light and allow for a better reading of the larger canvas of social history.

In order to conduct this facet of my work I needed not only to be a participant observer in group events but also to establish a level of rapport with individuals so that I could approach some women to participate in an in-depth life story conversation. Through my regular involvement with subchapel communities this was gradually being achieved because as people accepted my common resident presentation of myself so they began inviting me to their homes, and conversing about their lives. However, I was finding it more difficult to connect at this level
with the more affluent women in those private subdivisions who mainly attended services in the large Parish church. I sensed I needed a go between, a link person who understood the nature of my research and could provide an avenue of personalised introduction to some potential participant women in the locality. One of the UP anthropology staff, Dr. Realidad Rolda, with whom I had discussed my research proposal came to my assistance via a contact known to her husband through affiliations in his work. This person was living in the adjacent subdivision to where the Parish church was located. On my first approach to her for assistance she gave me a list of some seven or eight persons known to her in the area whom she considered might be willing to participate in the research and recommended that I make follow-up contact with them. Of these initial contacts about half agreed to take part in life story conversations with me on a one to one basis. After gaining initial entry in this way into this sector of the society, other avenues of recruitment of participants progressively opened up. Some of the initial group suggested others whom I could approach to participate, and as I followed the celebration of ritual cycles I came to know other women who agreed to a more in-depth, semi-structured interview type conversation with me about their life experiences. Most of these women had Catholic religious affiliations, as indeed is the case generally in MM. However given that Islam is the next most common religious affiliation of the Philippine population I was desirous of also having some participation of Muslim women in the research. A researcher from the Institute of Islamic Studies in the Asian Center at UP, Ms. Raisalam Magondacan, introduced me to a contact, a woman from the Muslim community in a neighbouring Barangay who connected me to other Muslim women from low income backgrounds who agreed to take part in life-story conversations in a group, communal setting. Another Muslim woman from the upper class, residing in part in a private subdivision in the Barangay adjoining All Holies, and to whom I was introduced through a tutor at the language-learning centre I had attended, also agreed to participate in this phase of the research. However because all of these Muslim women were not part of my immediate surrounding neighbourhoods, I had much less opportunity to regularly engage with them in day to day life activities but did visit and converse with the low income group of women on several occasions.

\[86\text{See Error! Reference source not found.}, (p. Error! Bookmark not defined.), in the introduction.\]
I have chosen to refer to this phase of the research as life story conversations because I interacted with participants more in the manner of a free flowing conversation in which they spoke about memories and present experiences, according to whatever priorities they chose, rather than following the format of a more structured question and answer interview. This was purposely done to allow participants to set the agenda, as far as possible, by providing maximum scope for them to tell their story in the way that they would wish it to be heard, giving priority to times and issues which they deemed of importance in the context. Usually my side of the conversation was limited to making affirmations of hearing and understanding what the women were saying as well as questions of clarification and requests for further explication in accord with some very general areas which I desired to cover in the course of each conversation. However at times I would be directly posed a question by my conversation partner to which I always responded, although usually only in a brief way so as to provide participants maximum opportunity to speak about their life stories in the time available. Usually towards the beginning of our conversation, but occasionally towards the end depending on circumstances, there was a segment of the interaction, which was more in the nature of a survey or questionnaire interview. This was concerned with collecting some demographic, socio-economic baseline information with which to situate participants in relation to data from the 1990 Philippines Census of Population and Housing and the 1995 mid term intercensal survey of population and housing. For those who indicated a willingness to take part in a life story conversation I provided a formal letter of acknowledgment of the proposed arrangements of our meeting for this purpose. Prior to the conduct of each of these conversations I explained the purpose of my research and made available a copy of my plain language information sheet about the research. As a central element of my research focus was looking at the nature of the influence of religion on the worldviews of contemporary Filipinas I did not want to presume that religion was necessarily of importance in these women’s worldviews if this was not the case. For this reason I purposely kept the explanation

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87 See Appendix 1, for details of the general lead questions I used in the conduct of life story conversations.
88 See Appendix 2, for sample copy of form used in recording respondent profile base data information.
89 See Appendix 3, for sample copy of these letters, which served as an indicator to the University ethics committee of having obtained the informed consent of those participating in this phase of the research.
90 See Appendix 4, for sample copy of plain language information sheet in English and Tagalog. Note due to a desire not to unduly bias or influence participants in terms of focusing the conversation explicitly on religion if this area is not a priority one in terms of their particular meaning system, I purposely kept the explanation of my work broad. I expected that in the course of the conversation the level of importance of religion in the participant’s life would emerge and as such serve as one indicator of her worldview and values.
of my work broad as I expected that if religious belief and practice was of importance in the participants’ lives then there would be indications of this in the course of their conversations. If, however, participants did not spontaneously discuss the area of religious belief and practice in recalling their memories of growing up and what they deemed their parents considered of most importance in their lives; or in terms of what these women spoke about as guiding or influencing their choices, decisions and actions, then they were directly asked if religion has an effect on parts of their life. All those women with whom I had in-depth life story conversations indicated, either in the course of their life story conversation or in response to this direct question, that religious belief and practice was an important component of their lives. Consequently in our on-going interaction, I asked further questions about the nature of their religious beliefs and practices.

In most instances life story conversations took place in participants’ homes under widely varied circumstances. Sometimes they were conducted in the privacy of a closed study or parlour, at other times in an open lounge area with the intermittent presence of other family members, sometimes over a shared meal, at other times alone with a participant in a garden; and on still other occasions in a crowded room in a group environment with other women, children and some husbands present for at least part of the conversation, with additional contributions offered from the other side of thin plywood walls by anonymous persons. I always requested permission to tape the conversation, explaining that the tapes would not be played for others but used solely as an aid for me in recalling the content of our conversation. All except one participant readily consented to my use of a tape recorder in this manner, and in this instance I respected the participant’s wishes and tried to take more extensive notes, needing several sessions to complete the conversation process. The length of these conversations varied from one and a half hours to up to six to seven hours, over two to three sessions. I have drawn on twenty of these in-depth conversations for the research reported here, as well as innumerable other interchanges and shorter conversations held and observed during the course of my participant observation work. From the recorded conversations I prepared written scripts and scanned the resultant text for information indicative of the participants’ beliefs, values, worldviews and religious practices. In addition to extracting this information, I also scanned the
text for material pertaining to kinship relations and to institutions and the influence of various forms of institutions, e.g. educational, religious, family and extended kinship, and others, on the formation, maintenance or change of beliefs, values, worldviews and religious practices. This information was used together with data from my participant observation to gradually reveal a picture of a number of levels of social relations in the lives of contemporary urban Filipinas and the place of religious beliefs and practices in these women’s lives.

Ethics

For ethical practice it is incumbent on researchers to obtain the consent of those among whom they are conducting their work and with whom they are engaging in the research process. However in cross-cultural qualitative research it may, at times, be difficult to discern the appropriate manner of approaching and obtaining such consent from others. This is because the criteria by which we judge appropriate modes of conduct rest on assumptions that are derived from our own particular culture and not necessarily shared by those among whom we are working. Roces (1998:20), a Filipina, working on a research grant from Central Queensland University, notes that in handing out information sheets to all interviewees in line with the requirements of the university’s standards of ethical procedures, she had serious reservations as to how ethical it was “to impose Australian ethics on Filipinos”. This was because Roces considered that, for Filipinos, what established a person’s credibility and ensured that their rights would not be abused was not primarily some type of written contractual arrangement, but having trustworthy personal links and connections to a person’s web of social relations, especially to kin or close friends. In part I faced this type of experience in the process of fulfilling my university’s mandatory requirement that all research proposals involving human participants be submitted for university ethics committee clearance indicating that informed consent for the research had been obtained from participants. In the course of making this submission there was need for careful consideration about the ways in which it could be demonstrated, to the satisfaction of all concerned, that informed consent had been appropriately negotiated. As Kayser-Jones and Koenig (1994:20) point

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91 Also included within this category is material, which may be regarded as, concerned with pseudo-kinship type relations, such as between colleagues, peers, fraternities, neighbours, etc.
out in their discussion of ethical issues associated with qualitative methodologies such as participant observation:

consent is negotiated formally when first entering into the field. Thereafter, however, the researcher must engage in an almost daily process of obtaining “informal” informed consent, constantly reexplaining [sic] his or her activities and presence and creating meaningful social bonds with the subjects.

The process of “creating meaningful social bonds” takes time. There is no quick and easy way, or ready assurance that can be given in the area of ethical conduct. However, it is usually possible to negotiate a way through to a greater level of mutual respect and understanding for differences.

In ethically conducted qualitative research, understandings grow in the course of the research process. Openness to learn is vital. Oftentimes conformity to the values and ways of the people with whom I was interacting cross-culturally did not necessarily involve any ethical dilemmas, for example, adjusting to local time schedules, modes of organisation, forms of address and conversation etc. However in other cases conformity may run counter to the ethical values I practice in my culture. In such cases I obviously had to choose whether to conform or respectfully acknowledge that under certain circumstances the maintenance of separate codes of ethical behaviour may be unavoidably necessary. For example, what is the appropriate practice to follow where there is a cultural expectation of financial remuneration for the facilitation of routine processes or for favours done? Or on the other side of the coin, how ethical is it to accept privileged treatment by virtue of being a foreigner and / or religious sister and thus accept exemption of payment or preferential treatment in queues or on modes of transport over others in the local society? Without, as far as possible, giving serious offence to those extending such offers to me, I usually tried to avoid such privileging especially if I could see it was at the expense of disadvantaging others to whom similar courtesies or favours were not extended. Ethical research practice required that I make every effort to avoid deliberately deceiving and/or exploiting any of the people with whom I was interacting. However, this does not mean that there is only one appropriate mode in which to act in any given context. Like others before me, (Abeyewardene, 1991; Back, 1993; Brandes, 1992; Fischer, 1986; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Turnbull, 1986; Vera-Sanso, 1993; Weidman, 1986; Whitehead, 1986), I faced dilemmas in respect of how to present myself; the amount of disclosure I should make about my own life
and to what extent I should conform to others’ expectations of me. Or in what ways I could balance honouring my responsibilities of confidentiality with the necessity for disclosure of sufficient information to demonstrate insight into complex levels of social interaction. At times, because of my choice of association and participation in the lives of the poorer sectors of society I had to try to find a way to avoid offending others among whom I was working who occupied the more powerful and affluent strata of society. I struggled with the ethics of the politics of alignment versus what could prove most expedient for the ‘successful’ accomplishment of my work and how to deal with conflicting expectations concerning the reporting of my research in a society where contributors expect grateful public acknowledgment and not relegation to anonymity. What were my obligations in terms of gifts for birthdays and special occasions or in times of sickness and death for those either more affluent or less financially advantaged than myself? Again I tried to discern on a case by case basis what seemed to be the best course of action, using as a backdrop the criteria of sensitivity to prevailing cultural norms of propriety and justice, and consonance with my own sense of personal integrity.

Closing Comments

In this chapter I have given information about the specific mix of circumstances operative in my particular research context. I have explained how I became engaged in my research and have pointed to some of the more important features of the ethnographic setting in which I worked. In the following chapters I discuss in greater depth different dimensions of the lives of the people among whom I worked in this milieu. In these subsequent chapters, webs of social relations, people’s family paths, their values and beliefs, their networks of connections and the ways in which they position themselves and others in the negotiation of meaning in their lives are examined.

However in this current chapter some of the main issues connected with my self identity and the ways in which others related to me in my research have been discussed and I have described how this affected the ways in which I approached my work of exploring the nature of the influence of religious beliefs and practices in the lives of contemporary Filipino women. Since my research is concerned with a reading of present urban complexities in the light of the past, I have
highlighted the ‘situated’ nature of ethnographic knowledge, and noted that the manner in which ethnographic research is located in space, place and time, impacts on analysis and the value accorded the research in academic circles. In particular I argue, that even ‘at the best of times’ our knowledge is always only a very small part of the whole of human experience. This is all the more so when the knowledge being articulated is contingent on my conceptions of others and their readings and management of me. I have also discussed some of the implications of engaging with colonial discourses and approaching analysis from a feminist perspective. In addition, I explained how carrying out my work both necessitated and facilitated a phase of language learning. I also explained why I chose to concentrate more on a participatory rather than observational mode of participant observation, noting that this methodological approach had both strengths and weaknesses. I outlined how I went about the process of conducting life story conversations and the purpose of this particular phase of the work. Finally I noted, and briefly discussed, some of the ethical dilemmas that I experienced in the course of conducting this type of qualitative cross-cultural research.

My presentation might seem to suggest that there was a step-by-step progression from research engagement and location to language learning, participant observation and the conduct of life story conversations under an umbrella of ethical practice. However, in my experience many aspects of the methodology described here ran parallel with each other, drawing me into a kind of dynamic that necessitated a constant cycle of experience, reflection, questioning, clarification, insight or understanding leading to new perspectives on further experience. This cyclic process is basically the kernel of ethnographic inquiry. Learning, understanding and insight into life’s infinite dimensions comes through the doing. Or as Jackson (1995:163) expresses it:

The object of ethnographic fieldwork ceases to be the representation of the world of others; it becomes a mode of using our experience in other worlds to reflect critically on our own. Fieldwork is not primarily a matter of settling issues or reaching a set destination; it is a way of undertaking a journey, of broadening one’s horizons. Meaning resides in the journeying, not the destination, and the authenticity of ethnographic knowledge depends on the ethnographer recounting in detail the events and encounters that are the grounds on which the very possibility of this knowledge rests.
In chapters four, five, six, and seven I turn to ‘recounting in detail the events and encounters’ of my research engagement, but prior to this in the next chapter I review the literature about religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines and what is known about the place of religious beliefs and practices in the lives of Filipino women.
Map 2: Research Locality

Key to Local Neighbourhood Areas of Barangay All Hallows
and Nearby Surrounds

SQ 1 Squatter area 1 SB A Subdivision A
SQ 2 Squatter area 2 SB B Subdivision B
SQ 3 Squatter area 3 SB C Subdivision C
SQ 4 Squatter area 4 SB D Subdivision D
SQ 5 Squatter area 5 SB E Subdivision E
SQ 6 Squatter area 6 SB F Subdivision F
SQ 7 Squatter area 7 SB G Subdivision G
SQ 8 Squatter area 8 SB H Subdivision H
SQ 9 Squatter area 9 SB I Subdivision I
SQ 10 Squatter area 10 SB J Subdivision J
SQ 11 Squatter area 11 SB K Subdivision K
SQ 12 Squatter area 12 SB L Subdivision L
SQ 13 Squatter area 13 SB M Subdivision M

H Our House

† AHP All Hallows Parish Church
† SMB Santa Maria Bros. Chapel
† HMB Holy Mary Blessings Chapel
† SJC Santa Jesus Chapel
† SJC Santa Jesus Subchapel
† Other Chapels

Note: In this Map I have tried to give some indication of the relative location of the various neighbourhoods and chapels in which I worked. However, in many instances, as I have discussed in the body of the thesis, the boundaries of the various localities were indeterminate and so the best I have been able to do is indicate a marker to show the general central point of each locality.
Map 3: Kinship Links by Province of core Research Participants
Provinces of the Philippines in which core research participants have close kinship links are shown on the map below and listed according to geographic region.

**KEY TO MAP**

**PROVINCES BY GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS**

**Region I: Ilocos**  **Region VI Western Visayas**
- Ilocos Norte (1)
- Abra (2)
- Ilocos Sur (3)
- Antique (40)
- Iloilo (41)
- Negros Occidental (42)

**Region II Cagayan Valley**  **Region VII Central Visayas**
- Cagayan (9)
- Isabela (11)
- Negros Oriental (44)
- Bohol (45)

**Region III Central Luzon**  **Region VIII Eastern Visayas**
- Nueva Ecija (15)
- Tarlac (16)
- Eastern Samar (49)
- Leyte (50)
- Zambales (17)
- Pampanga (18)
- Leyte (50)
- Bulacan (19)
- Bohol (45)

**Region IV Southern Tagalog**  **Region IX Western Mindanao**
- Quezon (22)
- Rizal (23)
- Zamboanga del Sur (53)
- Laguna (25)
- Basilan (54)
- Batangas (26)
- North Cotabato (71)
- Mindoro Occidental (29)

**Region V Bicol**  **Region X Northern Mindanao**
- Camarines Norte (32)
- Catanduanes (34)
- Surigao del Norte (57)
- Sorsogon (36)
- Lanao del Sur (70)

**Region ARMM Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao**
- Maguindanao (72)

(Adapted from Dolan1993:210 Figure 9 which is based on information from Manila Times, October 13, 1990:3)
Figure 1: Highest Formal Educational Attainment

Percent of household population by highest formal educational attainment in Philippines, National Capital Region (NCR), and Barangay All Holies as per 1990 Census figures, (National Statistics Office, 1992:59) base data used to construct chart plus unpublished data from 1990 Census in respect of Barangay All Holies obtained directly from National Statistics Office, Sta. Mesa per Ms. Elizabeth Go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Nil Grade</th>
<th>Pre-School</th>
<th>Less than Gr.5</th>
<th>Greater than Gr.5</th>
<th>High School Undergrad</th>
<th>High School Graduate</th>
<th>Post Secondary</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Not Stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>15.71</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>16.14</td>
<td>10.04</td>
<td>26.03</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>19.76</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>20.56</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>25.84</td>
<td>19.53</td>
<td>17.41</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2:

**Review of Literature on Women and Religious Beliefs and Practices in the Philippines**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, against the backdrop of my research questions, I review the pertinent literature from a number of different perspectives. I discuss criteria which have been used as indicators of religious belief and practice and look for indications in the literature as to the degree of uniformity and/or diversity in the religious beliefs and practices of Filipinos, and whether there is any evidence to suggest that women, in the Philippines, are positioned differently from men in respect of their religious beliefs and practices. This leads into a discussion of what is known about the place of women in past Filipino religious practices, from the perspective that a consideration of the religious practices of Filipino women in the past is important for an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary women. Finally, I briefly review literature on contemporary Filipinas’ life experiences, looking for indications of religious intersections in their primary and secondary socialisation experiences and other ways in which their worldviews appear to be influenced by religious factors. While my research is primarily anthropological in nature I draw on research findings in literature from the related spheres of religious studies, theology, spirituality, history, women’s studies, Philippine studies, Asian studies etc., in order to provide a deeper and richer understanding of the central questions under investigation in this research. I consider such an approach as essential given that one of the central tenets of this thesis is that the lives of contemporary urban Filipinas cannot be conceived of as neatly bounded entities but rather as arenas in which these women engage with changing life contexts and family circumstances in dynamic ways, leading in part to new and changed lifestyles and in other respects to a continuation and/or reclamation of past priorities and modes of social relations.
Contemporary anthropological appreciation of the complexity and fluidity of cultural life (Appadurai, 1990; Gupta and Ferguson 1997c), goes hand in hand with recognition that there is no single disciplinary perspective from which the shifting, fractured, complexity of life can be comprehended, but rather a diversity of insight and experience is necessitated. There is need to dialogue with a diversity of epistemologies, not only from within the anthropological establishment but beyond. In this vein Jackson (1995:165) argues:

To deny epistemological privileges to any one modality of experience clears the ground for evaluating various experiences and activities in terms of their social consequences. Instead of determining truth by an appeal to protocols of discourse or correspondence to the facts, [Jackson advocates a research approach of entering].....into debates with others over the social implications of different points of view, working to decide between them on practical, political, ethical and aesthetic grounds. In sum, the intellectual participates in the conversation of humankind rather than seeking to arbitrate the truth.

Survey Studies of Filipino Religious Beliefs and Practice

There is little indication in the literature of anthropological research on religious beliefs and practices in the MM milieu, but reports analysing sociological type survey studies have been published by Mataragnon (1984), Ma. Carmen Gaerlan (1991), Acuña (1991), Mangahas and Guerrero (1992), Arroyo (1992), Abad and de los Reyes (1994), Abad (1995a; 1995b) and Mangahas (1996a). Mataragnon’s study is an exploration of the relationship between religion and social class among a sample of 194 Catholic respondents in a small area of Quezon City, while Gaerlan describes her work as being a survey of religious beliefs and practices of “a small\(^\text{92}\) sample of young, urban, educated, and predominantly female Filipinos in Metro Manila”, (Gaerlan, 1991:151). Acuña’s, Mangahas and Guerrero’s, Arroyo’s, Abad and de los Reyes’, Abad’s and Mangahas’ work all refer to analyses of the religious module of the 1991 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). The ISSP study is based on a survey sample of 1,200 adult respondents.

\(^\text{92}\)No clear indication of the exact number of respondents is given although percentages and frequencies suggest that total sample size was probably 128 respondents. Neither is it specifically stated that all the respondents were Catholics but I assume this was the case as the research is designated as “An Initial Study on Selected Religious Beliefs and Practice of Filipino Popular Catholicism”
Filipinos, aged eighteen and above, 300 of whom come from each of four areas: Metro Manila, Luzon outside MM, Visayas and Mindanao. The respondents from each of the three non-MM areas were comprised of 150 urban and 150 rural respondents. The breakdown of religious affiliation in the sample was as follows: 84% Catholics, 4% Aglipayans, 3% Iglesia ni Kristo, 3% Protestant, 1% Muslim and 5% other religious affiliations or not stated. Mataragnon’s and the ISSP surveys were conducted as face-to-face oral interviews while Gaerlan’s survey was in the form of a written questionnaire. The definitive language version of the ISSP survey questionnaire was English. It was designed in the main by overseas researchers as the ISSP is “a consortium of social science centers in 21 nations”, (Greeley, 1993b) and translated into Tagalog, Ilocano, Bikol, and Cebuano for implementation in various parts of the Philippines. Filipino social science researchers incorporated the content of the ISSP questionnaire into a research project, containing additional questions and entitled “Religion and Social Consciousness”, which, had been commissioned by the Catholic Church’s National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace (NASSA). While the findings reported are of interest, the quantitative methodological approach used is very different from that which I employed. This type of survey methodology has the limitation, as I will illustrate in the ensuing discussion, of using as a starting point assumptions made by those who design and analyse the surveys in respect to categories, classifications, dimensions and criteria judged appropriate for assessing religious beliefs and practices, rather than relying more on eliciting respondents own categories of meaning through more experientially based research over an extended time frame.

Mataragnon’s survey conducted in the early 1980s was concerned with exploring whether or not there were indications that Catholics from different social classes conceived of God in different terms and expressed their religiosity in different ways. Respondents came from different socio-economic neighbourhoods from several neighbouring barangays in a section of Quezon City, other than, but nearby the locality in which I worked. Respondents were both male and female, aged thirty to forty-five and were categorised into four social classes93 on the

93These social classes were given the designations A: Upper middle class; B: Middle class with college education; C: Middle class without college education; D: Lower class.
basis of the locality in which they resided and whether or not they had a college education. No indication of the respondents’ actual occupation, ethnicity or marital status was given but all the respondents were Catholics residing within the boundaries of two major parishes. The survey questionnaire was divided into three main sections entitled: “I) Images and Qualities of God, II) Dimensions of Religiosity, III) Locus of Control/Responsibility”, each being composed of questions which the researcher considered would elicit information from respondents about the images and qualities they associated with God, dimensions of their religiosity and the extent to which they attributed the primary control of their lives to themselves or to God. According to Mataragnon’s (1984:22) analysis of the results, the higher the social class the more the respondents saw God as benevolent, had knowledge about their religion and expressed belief in the official Catholic creed. The higher the social class, the more women, in particular, indicated a feeling of closeness to God and observed seasonal religious activities. Mataragnon also concluded that the lower the social class, the more respondents saw God as powerful. Further, females from all social classes were reportedly significantly more religious than males in terms of their closeness to God and the frequency of their involvement in seasonal religious practices. However, no general class or gender differences were found in terms of respondents stated adherence to moral teachings, although upper middle class women professed to more closely follow moral teachings than their male counterparts. It may be significant to note that lower class women appeared to indicate adhering less closely to moral teachings than their male counterparts. Finally, Mataragnon concluded that there was no significant difference between respondents along class and gender lines in terms of where they overall attributed the locus of control to be in their lives, even though various of the individual items which Mataragnon had chosen as being indicative of whether respondents attributed the primary control of their lives to themselves or to God were scored in quite different directions by respondents from various classes.

While Mataragnon’s overall finding that Filipinos from different social classes image God in essentially different ways may be valid, I am not so convinced from 94 Respondents residing in localities described as “privately developed, plush and exclusive residential subdivisions”, (Mataragnon, 1984:9) were classified as belonging to the upper middle class. Respondents residing in government housing projects and along two of the major thoroughfares of Quezon City adjacent to localities of the upper middle class respondents were classified as representing the middle class and respondents residing in squatter areas in neighbouring localities were classified as representing the lower class.
her report that the differences are necessarily those which she concludes exist. Unfortunately Mataragnon only gives a partial indication of the specific questions used in her survey without including in her research report a complete copy of the questionnaire that was used, and does not clearly detail the full range of responses received and the basis used for classifying them into various categories. Nor does Mataragnon give any clear indication of her own social class location, but it seems reasonable to assume that she probably belongs to those whom she classifies as belonging to social class A - upper middle class, or at very least to her social class B category - middle class with college education. These omissions make discussion of Mataragnon’s research design and mode of analysis difficult but, from the information that is provided, a number of assumptions on which her analysis rests appear problematic to me. Because of the terms of the criteria which Mataragnon used in her research to assess religiosity, not surprisingly respondents from the upper and middle classes appear more religious than those of the lower class. One has to ask, however, whether religiosity, and what constitutes it, is necessarily understood in the same way by people from different social classes or by those designing the research instrument and the research respondents. I am not convinced from Mataragnon’s research that it is necessarily valid to conclude that her lower class respondents are less religious than her upper and middle class respondents, but rather, I suggest that her results may simply be another case of Abad’s (1995a:3) findings discussed later in this chapter, namely that different social groupings of the population “may be equally religious but on terms different from each other”. Mataragnon assumes that those who frequently engage in certain ritual practices are more religious than those who have less involvement in this way. However a number of those with whom I worked used the word ‘religious’ in two distinctly different ways - at times they used the word “religious” to mean religiosity in terms of being preoccupied with participation in religious activities and rituals in contrast to ‘being a religious person’, as equated to ‘being spiritual’ or ‘being good’. The women with whom I was engaged noted that frequent and regular participation in ritual, devotional and Church activities was indicative of ‘being religious’ in the sense of religiosity but may or may not be indicative of ‘being religious’ in the sense of being a spiritual person which depended on the quality or tenor of a person’s whole life, particularly their social relations, rather than simply their religious practice.95

95In this regard see particularly my discussion in chapter four of Babette’s and Mina’s interpretation of the source of their mothers’ and their own strength and inner power to live through adversity, hardship, separation from kin etc. being derived from their spirituality and thus being essentially religious in nature. However both Mina and Babette described their mothers as not engaging in a great deal of ritual and devotional activity and thus not being particularly religious in this sense.
The worldview of those considered to be ‘spiritual’ was regarded as being very deeply permeated by religious values. Several of the Filipinas with whom I worked used the word ‘religious’ in both senses in the course of one conversation as I illustrate in chapter four where I detail a segment of one of my conversations on this precise point of what it means “to be religious”.

Mataragnon also assumes that Catholics who reported feeling closer to God can be adjudged more religious than those who feel themselves to be more distant from God. But this judgement rests on a particular understanding of religion which assumes a shared understanding exists between people of different social classes that the goal of religious practice is to make one feel close to God, and that ‘feeling close to’ means ‘one is close to’ God whereas not feeling close to God implies that one does not have a relationship with God. These assumptions are, at best, questionable and their validity does not appear to have been established within the terms of the research. Further, in the free association section of the questionnaire, respondents’ descriptions and images of God may not necessarily hold the same meaning for people from different social classes or even necessarily one single meaning for people from the same social class, especially in the case of pictorial or symbolic representations which are inevitably polysemic. For instance, Mataragnon (1984:15) concludes that pictures of “persons set in a heart” or “a heart aflame” are symbolic of love whereas drawings of “arrows shot at a heart”, “a cross” or “a bleeding heart” are symbols of “sorrow, suffering and pain” as they can indeed be, but these latter symbols can also be interpreted as indicating love - as in the case of a Cupid image and cards for Valentine’s Day depicting hearts with arrows through them, cards for which Filipinos have great enthusiasm, or images in popular song of ‘my heart is bleeding for you’, to indicate intense love. Iletó (1979) indicates that the ‘Pasyon’ and cross have been ‘read’ in very different ways by the ruling elite and the masses. And while

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96 See chapter four, p. 176 ff.

97 Even a number of the Christian gospel texts can be interpreted as casting doubt on the assumption that those who declare themselves to feel close to God are necessarily more religious than those who feel themselves to be distant from God, or that those who feel distant from God are lacking in relationship with God. The classical text being that of the parable of the “Pharisee and the Publican” (Lk. 18:9-13) but also reflected in the story of the “Widow’s Mite” (Lk. 21:1-4/Mk. 12:41-44) and the story of the “Pharisee Simon and the ‘sinful’ woman” (Lk. 8:36-50) as well as numerous other examples.

98 Refers here in particular to Pasyon Pilapil which is an 1814 edition of the Tagalog version of the “Account of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ” which Iletó (1979:12) used in his work.

99 In the sense of their meanings interpreted or translated.
Mataragnon (1984:23) alludes to Ileto’s work, she only partially appears to pick up on Ileto’s point that the lower classes devotion to the ‘Pasyon’ is connected to their conviction that a person’s true worth resides in their inner self, in their ‘loob’, in the ability to have concentrated within oneself the powers which enable one to live through suffering and pain, to live honourably, which a person of lesser inner worth cannot do regardless of the signs of their outer worth. Related to this is the possibility that for some people the locus of spiritual power or potency is not held to be concentrated solely within a God figure as such but rather to be dispersed in the whole of creation. However at particular times this cosmic power is concentrated in particular people, particular objects, particular places, so that what is more important than trying to directly locate oneself close to a God whom one perceives to be distant and difficult to access, is to instead avail oneself of multiple avenues to tap into this dispersed power and concentrate it within oneself. This can be done by locating oneself close to those people, objects and places in which a concentration of this power has been demonstrated to exist. Thus the practices in which the lower class engage in order to concentrate spiritual energy/power/potency for themselves and their loved ones may be quite different from the regular and seasonal religious practices which Mataragnon chose to enquire about in her survey. Practices which were presumably selected on the basis of her experience and classification of religious practices, and thus not surprisingly, again the upper and middle classes appeared to be more commonly engaged in these practices, except for that of reciting the ‘Pasyon’ and wearing black/purple during lent, than the lower class. Lower class respondents may well agree, to the proposition in Mataragnon’s (1984:12) survey “I find God too abstract and distant to affect my life directly”, but these same respondents do not appear to have been asked whether or not they hold that their lives are affected by spiritual powers, or whether they believe that God indirectly affects their lives through various saints, spirits, etc. Talisayon’s (1994) work reaches conclusions along these lines as he suggests that among Filipino spiritual groups God is ‘presence’ or ‘meaning’ to be experienced in social reality in contrast to the alternative of God being a ‘transcendent being’ out there to be sought. But this is not to say that either way of conceiving God is necessarily mutually exclusive of the other but rather that there are indications of multiple conceptions of God among differently positioned Filipinos, and even

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100This refers to the practice during lent, especially during Holy Week of chanting the ‘Pasyon’ which although primarily concerned with Jesus’ passion is very different from a scriptural account of this, being more a blending of legendary embellishments with the biblical story of salvation history from the book of Genesis until the post Constantine era.
within the life experience of any one particular Filipino at different times and circumstances in an individual’s life. In this vein Beltran (1987:206, 210-211) argues that:

the limits of language, of propositions and declarative sentences, are not the boundaries of meaningful experience for Filipinos. They are more at home with what lies beyond those boundaries.... [such that] where Westerners tend to isolate and dissect, Filipinos contemplate an ordered whole and intuit a depth behind spatial depth that grounds the simultaneity of all things which are successive in time..........Filipinos seem to have the ability to relate things that analytically and rationally do not belong together.  

Here Beltran brings together Covar’s (1975b) contention about harmonisation and mediation and Rafael’s (1988) notion of association and linkage ultimately giving rise not to a static, rigid uniformity but rather to a fluid continuum of relation and interchange. Both Covar’s (1975b) and Rafael’s (1988) work are considered further in the next chapter in my discussion of colonial interchange and religious cultural interactions.

Another study conducted in the early ‘90s by Ma. Carmen Gaerlan (1991) has a number of similarities to Mataragnon’s study. It also does not include in the research report a complete copy of the questionnaire used or a clear indication of the rationale used in the design of the questionnaire and why some criteria were selected as objects of inquiry and others not included. Gaerlan’s survey differs from Mataragnon’s in that no information appears to have been gathered about social class other than to ascertain respondents’ highest level of education attained, and the majority of the respondents in Gaerlan’s research are younger (almost 75% being aged less than 28 years) than those who participated in Mataragnon’s study. Further, there did not appear to be any free association component to Gaerlan’s research and the nature of a number of her questions appeared to be somewhat different to those of Mataragnon. I will not detail all of Gaerlan’s findings but comment on a few aspects of her discussion of results.

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101 Emphases mine.

102 Of Gaerlan’s respondents 89.33% had a college degree and the remainder at least high school education, (Gaerlan, 1991:13-139).
Gaerlan uses respondents’ perceived closeness of relationship to religious figures, especially Jesus Christ, as an index of the health of respondents’ ‘spiritual relationship’ and concludes from her research that “in general respondents have a healthy spiritual relationship” but that because there was a lack of perceived closeness to angels and saints there “seems to be a lack of awareness or acceptance of the possible role of angels and saints in enriching their spiritual life”. However the reason for the respondents perceived lack of closeness to angels and saints may not be that which is suggested here by Gaerlan but more due to respondents having ambivalent feelings towards saints and angels, considered as spirit entities needing to be placated and propitiated in order to ensure that they continue to be favourably disposed towards respondents. Further, in reaching her conclusions Gaerlan does not discuss the place which the Virgin Mary, (who has been designated in a category separate from the saints and angels and also from Jesus Christ, God the Father, and Holy Spirit) may have in respondents’ spiritual relationship. However Gaerlan’s (1991:139, 142) tables of results show that almost as many of her respondents usually prayed to the Virgin Mary when confronted with problems as usually prayed to God the Father and many more prayed to the Virgin Mary than to the Holy Spirit.\(^{103}\) Also there is very little difference in the mean score of the respondents’ perceived closeness to God the Father, Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary.\(^{104}\) And while there is more difference between the mean scores of respondents’ perceived closeness to Jesus Christ and their perceived closeness to the Virgin Mary,\(^{105}\) this difference is still less than that which exists between the mean scores of respondents’ perceived closeness to the Virgin Mary and to the next ranked category angels.\(^{106}\) However efforts to quantify people’s degree of religious belief and to numerically rank attributes related to values is necessarily of very limited validity because these attributes are qualitative in nature and not meaningfully quantified. The importance of the Virgin Mary as a source of spiritual empowerment was continuously borne out in my observation of local level religious practices in Barangay All Holies. As others have argued, (refer Mulder 1992:41), the Virgin

\(^{103}\) Where f=63, 70 and 34 respectively for the Virgin Mary, God the Father and the Holy Spirit when f stands for frequency of respondents choosing to pray to each of these three spiritual figures, (see Ma. Carmen Gaerlan 1991:142).

\(^{104}\) The respective mean scores were 4.19, 4.13 and 4.09 respectively on a five point scale where 5 = Very Close and 1 = Not Close at All, (see Ma. Carmen Gaerlan 1991:139).

\(^{105}\) Mean scores of 4.30 and 4.09 respectively on the above cited five-point scale, (see Ma. Carmen Gaerlan 1991:139).

\(^{106}\) Mean scores 4.09 and 3.83 respectively on the, above cited, five-point scale, (see Ma. Carmen Gaerlan 1991:139).
Mary occupies a place of considerable importance in the spiritual relationships of Filipinos, and I take up further discussion of this in chapter seven.

In her discussion of what she terms “folk religiosity” or “popular religion” Gaerlan (1991:149-150) appears to take institutionalised Catholicism as a norm and follows the approach of trying to explain the ways in which popular or folk religion, or the common ‘tao’(person), in their religious practice attempts to move away from the “norm”, such that “popular religion is a quest for a more direct, more simple, more profitable relationship with the Divine” and therefore, in a sense, the establishment of a ‘new’ or alternative schema of religious belief and practice. In the same volume in which Ma. Carmen Gaerlan’s research is published, Obusan (1991) is insistent, and I concur with her, that the dynamic is the other way around. In her writings on the Tatlong Persona Solo Dios,107 founded in 1936, Obusan (1991:84) claims that “the existing pre-Spanish religion shaped or ‘distorted’ the Christian religion brought by the Spanish conquerors”. Obusan (1991:85) is particularly emphatic that the reformulation is not the other way around, which she contends is the more prevalent perception, namely that “folk religion such as the Tatlong Persona Solo Dios is predominantly a Christian religion that has been ‘distorted’ by the early Filipino religion”. Pre-Hispanic religious beliefs and practices have been the initial flux through which Filipinos have received the religious beliefs and practices brought to the Philippines by the Spanish. Each religious worldview has interacted with the other so that through each generation changes have occurred in external forms of religious expression, and the manner in which meanings have been articulated and reinterpreted, but ultimately in ways that have enabled the majority of the Filipino populace to continue to make affective and experiential connections between their past and present spiritual worldviews in their common religious practices. This contention is further borne out in the findings of Beltran’s (1987) study which I review after my discussion of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) research. This is because Beltran’s research in some respects forms a bridge between the

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107 A contemporary indigenous religious movement based in the Mt. Banahaw area, Quezon Province a few hours drive Southeast of MM, whose official title is actually “Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios” (literally “Church of Three Persons One God”) but when initially founded in 1936 it was called Pambansang Kapatiran Panalanging ukol sa Kalayaan ng Bayan, Inc., (literally, “National Brother/Sisterhood (kapatiran is derived from kapatid which is non gender specific, alternatively meaning sibling, brother or sister depending on context) of Prayer for Independence Inc.”), but the officially registered name with the government was in Spanish, Adoracion Por La Libertad Patria, Inc;”(Adoration for the Liberation of the ‘Fatherland’) even though the organisation’s foundation occurred during the time of American rule (Obusan, 1995).
quantitative approach of survey work and the qualitative approach in social science analysis, on which anthropological research is more usually founded.

**International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) Findings**

Reports discussing the findings of the ISSP module on religion, all emphasise that the majority of the Filipino population consider themselves to be religious. According to Mangahas and Guerrero (1992:7) and Arroyo (1992:2), eighty-four percent of those surveyed rated themselves as being religious to varying degrees. It is important here to note that those who rate themselves as non-religious, or neither religious nor non-religious are not necessarily non-believers. It may be that religiosity here is primarily to be regarded as a measure of frequency of participation in Church services without necessarily directly correlating with people’s sense of having religious belief. That this is so, in the Philippine context, is indicated by the fact that a total of ninety-nine percent of those who participated in the 1991 ISSP module on religion rated their belief in their religion as being either, ‘just right’, (twenty-one percent), ‘strong’, (forty-six percent), or ‘very strong’, (thirty-two percent) as against only one percent rating their belief in their religion as being ‘weak’ and none rating their belief as being ‘very weak’, (Mangahas and Guerrero 1992:5).

The base results of the 1991 ISSP have been analysed in varying ways in efforts to reach conclusions about the nature of Filipino religiosity. Arroyo (1992) cross-correlated respondents’ self-rating of what he termed “indicators of

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108 See Acuña (1991), Mangahas and Guerrero (1992), Arroyo (1992), Abad and de los Reyes (1994), Abad (1995a; 1995b) and Mangahas (1996a). It is noticeable that while the overall tenor of these reports on the 1991 ISSP religious module is basically consistent, there appear to be a number of discrepancies in the ballpark figures cited from one report to another. Only Filipino scholars (Abad, Mangahas and Talisayon) have used the Filipino ISSP data in comparative analysis in data obtained from other countries who participated in the ISSP research. Kelley and De Graf (1997:644) excluded the Philippine data from their comparative analysis of the ISSP findings in various countries for the reason that they claimed “the Philippines dataset…..has a serious processing error”.

109 Again in the analysis of the ISSP material ‘being religious’, which I have already shown to be polysemic, becomes further conflated with ‘having religious belief’ in ways that make interpretation of the results of this research complex.

110 That is, 50 percent somewhat religious, 28 percent very religious and 6 percent extremely religious.

111 I will focus mainly on the work of Arroyo (1992), Abad and de los Reyes (1994) and Abad (1995a) as their publications discuss the outcomes of various approaches to the analysis and interpretation of the ISSP questionnaire in contrast to Acuña’s (1991), Mangahas and Guerrero’s (1992), and Mangahas’ (1996a; 1996b) reports which are mainly a summary reporting of respondents’ responses.
religious fervour” with demographic data and concluded that “the only category showing some trend is that of gender” as there is no clear correlation of religious fervour along lines of “class, age or locale”, (a summary of Arroyo’s findings is shown in Table 1, given at the end of this chapter, p. 114). In earlier survey work conducted in non-urban lowland Christian areas, Lynch and Makil (1968:305) concluded on the basis of questions addressed to respondents concerning their expectations in terms of ideal behaviour that:

in matters of religion and morality, the role behavior expected of men is clearly distinct from that expected of women........women are supposed to approach God closely\textsuperscript{112} and, through this closeness, to become reservoirs of goodness and grace........Christian Filipino mothers and wives must accept it as part of their role to make Christ believable and attainable to their sons and husbands.....the most effective link between a Filipino and his God will be a good Filipina.

There is an expectation indicated here that those who will approach God closely on behalf of the community are women. This suggests that one of the expectations in Filipino society is that women will be the usual mediums between the human and the spiritual realm, a point that I develop further in chapters four to seven.

In further analysis of the 1991 ISSP results Abad and de los Reyes (1994) sought to identify on what grounds those who classified themselves as being religious, as opposed to those who regarded themselves as being non-religious, could be differentiated. To this end Abad and de los Reyes, (1994) selected twenty-nine criteria as “probable correlates of religiosity”\textsuperscript{113} from the total of 71 items in the religion module of the survey and grouped them as indicators of nine dimensions of religiosity which they termed ‘religiosity indices’ (see Table 2: Indices of Filipino Religious Beliefs and Practices).\textsuperscript{114} On the basis of the ‘religiosity indices’ Abad and de los Reyes constructed, those who rated themselves as religious could only be clearly differentiated, from those who rated themselves as non-religious, in terms of the indices of religious practice and relationship with

\textsuperscript{112}Emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{113}However no detailed information is given as to the rationale for the choice of these particular criteria as indices of religiosity other than seemingly being considered “probable” by the authors.

\textsuperscript{114}Given at the end of this chapter, p. 115.
In taking Arroyo’s (1992) conclusions in respect of possible gender differences in religiosity further, Abad (1995a:3) suggests that “males and females may be equally religious but on terms different from each other”. Where differences are most marked is in terms of the importance of those criteria categorised as ‘orthodoxy of beliefs’, ‘folk beliefs’ and ‘moral norms’, all of which appear to be regarded as of greater importance for the males than for the females. It is not that women do not rate highly in the indices of orthodoxy of their beliefs and moral grounding but that they do not perceive these indices to be as important to the measure of religiosity as men do. Thus, in terms of gender and religiosity Abad (1995a:4) concludes from his analysis of the ISSP results that:

male religiosity......tends to be more normative or doctrinal in nature; female religiosity.....seems less normative, devotional or experiential in nature.\[116\]

As I have already noted, there is no clear indication as to how Abad and de los Reyes (1994) arrived at the selection and grouping of particular criteria as “probable correlates of religiosity”, but it is interesting that Abad (1995a:15-16) finds that the demographic sub-group that has the highest degree of cross-correlation with the criteria chosen as indices of religiosity are, “males...in the 30-40 age group.....in the D [working] class....with high school education.\[117\] This suggests that, taken as a whole, the criteria which Abad and de los Reyes, (1994), both male researchers, have chosen as probable correlates of religiosity more closely approximate indices of religiosity of greater importance to men than to women. In the United States context, Gilligan (1977) reports on the observation of similar conceptual differences between men and women in her research on “women’s conceptions of self and morality”. She argues that women are not guided so much by abstract principles of morality, as by responsibilities in practical life situations and circumstances, in essence that the experiential has precedence over the normative. Drawing on Kohlberg’s (1969) analysis from working among males, Gilligan (1977:510) illustrates that those whom Kohlberg

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115 In Abad and de los Reyes’ (1994) schema of ‘religiosity indices’ (see Table 2, p. 115) a person’s feeling of closeness to God is only one of the criteria chosen as a correlate of a person having a relationship with God.

116 Original emphases.

117 Abad also adds “living in rural areas” to this profile although the tabulated data of correlation coefficients as presented in ‘Table 7’ of Abad’s (1995a:15) data do not appear to support this conclusion.
classifies as approaching the highest stage of moral development respond to the question of what morality is, in terms of:

it is a prescription, it is a thing to follow……kind of contributing to a state of affairs that go beyond the individual in the absence of which the individual has no chance for self-fulfillment of any kind…………If you want other people not to interfere with your pursuit of whatever you are into, you have to play the game.

In contrast Gilligan (1977:510) found with reference to the transcripts of her own research with females that they defined morality in terms of:

always in my mind is that the world is full of real and recognizable trouble……..I have a real maternal drive to take care of someone. To take care of my mother, to take care of children, to take care of other people’s children, to take care of my own children, to take care of the world……when I am dealing with moral issues, I am sort of saying to myself constantly, are you taking care of all the things that you think are important…..

Further, Gilligan suggests that the fact that women are observed to diverge in their developmental path from Kohlberg’s standard model of human adulthood has more to do with the framework within which the standard has been derived than necessarily indicating that women’s degree of moral development is only partial. She, (Gilligan, 1977:489-490) notes that in applying the criteria developed by Kohlberg for measuring stages of human development, only males appear to attain the highest levels because the categories used to assess stages of moral development have been “derived within a male perspective from male research data”.

Overall Abad and de los Reyes (1994:8) conclude that the survey results indicate that “what Filipinos associate with religiosity is a fundamental stance towards God, specifically a belief and a closeness to God, as well as regular observance of some religious activity”. However the ISSP results, and Abad and de los Reyes’ analysis of them, still only provide a rather limited understanding of exactly what ‘being religious’ means for Filipinos because of the nature of their research instrument118 and their inclination to draw inferences from respondents’ responses to the survey that are not necessarily substantiated. For example, in the survey

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118This is because their research instrument was a survey questionnaire that had been designed overseas, as noted earlier in this chapter, see p. 75.
six statements\textsuperscript{119} were grouped together and respondents were asked which statement comes closest to expressing what you believe about God. However some of these statements are not necessarily comparable one to the other. This is because one of the statements expresses non-belief in God’s existence as a simple statement, while other statements that express belief in God’s existence do so, not as a simple statement, but as part of composite statements that also have a component relating to a degree of certainty or uncertainty about God’s existence. And still another statement is a composite one about non-belief in a particular concept of God, coupled with belief in another alternative concept of God. While yet another statement is a composite one concerned with degree of certainty about God’s existence, coupled with non-belief in there being any way to resolve this uncertainty. For me, all that the respondents’ responses to these statements and others concerned with the continuity of respondents belief or non-belief in God\textsuperscript{120} indicate is that a very large proportion of Filipinos very definitely believe in God’s existence and have always done so. However the responses to the survey indicate very little about respondents’ actual concept or image of God. For only a small percentage of the respondents (3\%) the statement, “I don’t believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a Higher Power of some kind” comes closest to expressing what they believe about God, but this does not preclude others possibly believing that God is both personal and a higher power of some kind, however no statement to this effect was proposed to the respondents.

\textsuperscript{119} According to Abad and de los Reyes (1994:10) these six statements in English and Tagalog as used in the survey were:

I don’t believe in God (Hindi ako naniniwala sa Diyos).
I don’t know whether there is a God and I don’t believe there is any way to find out (Hindi ko alam kung may Diyos, at sa tingin ko ay hindi maaaring mapatunayan kung mayroon ngang Diyos).
I don’t believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a Higher Power of some kind (Hindi ako naniniwala na may Diyos na parang isang tao, pero naniniwala ako na mayroong isang tao, pero naniniwala ako na mayroong isang Mataas na Kapangyarihan).
I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others (Naniniwala ako sa Diyos kung minsan, hindi palagi).
While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God (Bagamat nag-aalinlangan ako, sa palagay ko ay may Diyos).
I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it (Walang pagdududa ang aking paniniwala na may Diyos talaga).

\textsuperscript{120} I don’t believe in God now and I never have (Hindi ako naniniwala sa Diyos ngayon at kahit noon pa man).
I don’t believe in God now, but I used to (Hindi ako naniniwala sa Diyos ngayon, pero dati ay naniniwala ako).
I believe in God now, but I didn’t use to (Naniniwala ako sa Diyos ngayon, pero hindi ako naniniwala noon).
I believe in God now and I always have (Naniniwala ako sa Diyos ngayon at kahit noon pa man) as cited by Abad and de los Reyes (1994:11).
The survey results also indicated that most Filipinos (89%) either agree or strongly agree that: “There is a God who concerns Himself with every human being personally (May isang Diyos na nagmamalasakit para sa bawat tao)”. But again these responses are more indicative that Filipinos believe that their lives are personally affected by God, rather than being particularly indicative of Filipinos’ concept of God. Ma. Carmen Gaerlan’s (1991:144-145) research indicated that her respondents believed that their lives could be personally affected, for instance that they and their families could be kept safe, or that respondents could receive direction in their lives; by carrying with them, or wearing certain religious objects such as rosaries, scapulars, medals or prayer and novena books, and religious pictures etc. In line with my reservations here, Beltran’s contention, highlighted earlier in this chapter, suggests that some of the conclusions which have been drawn from the ISSP results may be too simplistic and only partially true because of the emphasis in the research instrument on ‘declarative statements’ which do not easily allow for Filipino respondents’ perceptions of ‘simultaneity’ through which they ‘relate things that analytically and rationally do not [appear to] belong together’ from the perspective of an alternative worldview.

Abad and de los Reyes (1994) express some degree of puzzlement as to why the actual practice of Christianity in the Philippines does not seem to be consistent with many of the tenets in the elaborately articulated system of core philosophical beliefs of Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular. This leads them ultimately to suggest that Christianity’s highly articulated system of beliefs constitutes it as a ‘high religion’ whereas Filipinos’ religion is considered to be ‘low religion’ because the core beliefs underlying indigenous Filipino religious practices are rarely consciously articulated as a set of propositions constituting “a coherent, elaborate whole” (Abad and de los Reyes 1994:9). There are overtones here of Redfield’s (1956) concept of “Great and Little Traditions” although no direct reference is made to this work. While this perspective has the merit of acknowledging that interactive cultural worldviews are operative, or in Abad and de los Reyes words allows for “the idea of a continuing encounter between Christianity and indigenous religion”, less positively however, this perspective also implies a differential valuation of the two religious traditions in ways which suggest that one is privileged and the other is in some respects lacking. One approach is accorded superiority, the other is less valued and thus from this

See p. 80.
viewpoint the interactive dynamic is necessarily skewed in ways which are unlikely to lead to an end result of harmony, balance and reciprocal exchange but rather to an ongoing ‘dialogue’ of mis-translation and mis-interpretation. As I discuss in greater depth in the next chapter, Rafael (1988) argues that a process of precisely this nature was initiated with the Spanish colonisation and evangelisation of the Philippines, both of which were inextricably bound together. A process which has led some to interpret Filipino religious practice as being dichotomous, or in Bulatao’s ([1966] 1992) terms “split-level”, but rather than such a reading, I would contend that religiousness among Filipinos exists as a continuum of religious beliefs and practices. At one end of the spectrum there exist deeply ritualised, sensuous practices, closely attuned to and steeped in the symbolism of the natural world, in close continuity with pre-Hispanic beliefs and practices, and at the other end exists deeply codified religious belief steeped in dogmatism and/or fundamentalism centred around cognitive assent to credal statements and sacred texts. Most people operate predominantly at neither end of the spectrum but at some intermediate location, drawing on a range of beliefs and practices in different circumstances and at different periods of their lives.  

Anthropological and Other Qualitative Insights into Filipino Religious Belief and Practice

Of the survey work done on the religious beliefs and practices of the urban population Beltran’s research is the most extensive in terms of the sample used even though it had a very directed focus in terms of the question being researched, namely the effectiveness of the Catholic “Church’s transmission of her doctrines about Christ to Filipino believers” in the City of Manila, one of the eight cities and nine municipalities that constitute MM. The interview schedule used by

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122In his analysis of the ISSP results, Abad (1995a:6-7) suggests that the characteristics of Filipinos’ religiosity shifts with age, that those in the 18-29 year age bracket exhibited a “formative” kind of religiosity, “orthodox but weakly integrated with religious practice, moral norms and beliefs in divine providence” whereas the religiosity of those in the 30-44 year age bracket tended to be of a more “conventional” nature characterised by “closer conformity with official expectations.....grounded more strongly on [sic] orthodox beliefs, moral norms, [and] beliefs in divine providence”; while the religiosity of the 45 years and over was “an independent kind of religiosity.......less bound by traditional beliefs but devotional just the same”.

123Over five thousand respondents out of an estimated population of 926,472 Catholics aged fifteen and over in the fourteen districts of the City of Manila in 1984, where it was estimated that one out of every three persons was a squatter. In addition another 10,000 respondents participated in preliminary surveys conducted throughout the country, (Beltran, 1987:ix, 42, 50)

124See Map 1, p. 23, for the geographical boundaries of this locality in MM.
Beltran and a team of research assistants was divided into four sections. One section elicited information to construct a respondent profile in terms of age, gender, marital status, highest educational attainment, employment status, i.e. whether or not employed and if so present occupation and range of monthly salary. The other three sections of the survey were directed towards obtaining information about respondents’ “knowledge about Christ, their attitudes towards Christ, and their perception of Christ”, (Beltran, 1987:269-284). Importantly Beltran (1987:41) points out that his interview schedule was not designed to measure the centrality of religious beliefs (the importance the respondents attributed to these beliefs), or their saliency (the closeness to awareness of these beliefs or the readiness to express them), or their intensity (how strongly these beliefs were held or how sure the respondents are about them).

This acknowledgment is of considerable importance in interpreting the survey results because it means that other religious knowledge which Beltran did not solicit information about may be much more central in Filipinos’ overall beliefs. Such religious knowledge may be more readily expressed and intensely believed in, and form the main corpus of the beliefs transmitted to Filipinos in the course of their primary socialisation.

Rather than focus on the details of specific responses to the various questions asked in each section, I highlight Beltran’s overall findings in relevant areas and particularly focus on a number of his more qualitative insights from his reflection on both the survey results and his experience of participant observation in the lives of many of the respondents. For, although Beltran uses survey work based on an interview schedule as a starting point, his analysis of his survey findings are informed by his experience of over ten years of living and working within the community in which his survey was conducted, so that there is a strong qualitative element to Beltran’s overall research approach in contradistinction to that of the ISSP research. Beltran’s analysis is also sensitive to the difficulties of translation and interpretation and recognises the possible influence of his own educational background and socialisation.

Beltran (1987:51-2) reports that the age distribution of his sample closely followed that of government census figures in that “it mirrored the youth of the total population” with approximately 24% of respondents in the 15-19 age
bracket, 23% in the 20-24 age bracket and the remaining 53% aged 25 years and over\textsuperscript{125} with females outnumbering males by the ratio of 57:43.\textsuperscript{126} Respondents were divided into four groups\textsuperscript{127} on the basis of their educational attainments. Beltran found only a partial correspondence between official Catholic Church doctrine on Christ and respondent’s knowledge about Christ,\textsuperscript{128} but nonetheless almost 80% of respondents had an average or better knowledge of official Catholic Church teachings about Christ, i.e. 68% or more of their responses being in agreement with Catholic Church doctrine. However, Beltran (1987:112) highlights “that while there is knowledge of the teachings of the Church about Christ, there appears to be little understanding of their meaning, as evidenced by the inconsistencies of the responses”. This is to say that Church teachings have been heard, and in that sense ‘received’, by Filipinos but interpreted in ways unexpected by Church authorities. I explore this point further in the next chapter.

Although Beltran (1987:109) expected that “the respondent’s age or at least his or her educational attainment would influence knowledge about Christ” and that “women would score higher than men because women are seen more frequently in church”, his survey findings were that “knowledge about Christ was independent of the respondent’s age, gender and educational attainment”. This suggests that the particular religious beliefs and values under investigation in Beltran’s study have been formed and deeply embedded early in life and remain largely resilient to marked social change in the course of life. Beltran (1987:110-112) hypothesises “that religious attitudes, like religious knowledge, are inculcated for the most part during the early period of socialisation” and therefore that early

\textsuperscript{125}By comparison the age distribution of the Philippine and NCR population aged 15 years and over in the censuses of 1990 and 1995 are shown in Figure 3, p. 116. It can be seen that there is a greater proportion of people in the age range 20-34 but less people over 60 residing in the NCR than the proportion of this age bracket in the Philippines overall. Further, the percentage of females in the NCR in the age bracket 15-24 is greater than that of males and roughly equal to that of males in the 25-29 and 50-59 but in the 30-49 age bracket the percentage of males in the NCR is greater than that of females.

\textsuperscript{126}The ratio of females to males of those aged 15 and over in the 1990 census was 1010:1000 in Philippines overall and 1120:1000 in the NCR and in the 1995 census 1005:1000 in the Philippines overall and 1100:1000 in the NCR, (calculated using base data from National Statistics Office1992; 1997).

\textsuperscript{127}The four groups were: “those without any formal education (0.3%), those who had reached the elementary level (15.5%), those who had reached high school (41.2%), and those who had gone to college, including those who had done further studies afterwards (43%)” (Beltran, 1987:52).

\textsuperscript{128}Respondents’ overall responses most divergent from official Church teaching were with respect to the following propositions: “Christ was created by God the Father”, “Christ has two births: one from God the Father and the other from Mary”, “Christ is not equal to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit”, “Christ is only God, not man”, “God the Father is more powerful than Christ”, “Christ as man was not subject to hunger, thirst and tiredness like us”, and “Christ as man did not know that he was God”.

family socialisation, particularly parental influence is most probably responsible for respondents’ knowledge about Christ even though according to the survey 54.9% of the respondents claimed that the most significant source of their knowledge about Jesus was the Bible......[and only] 18.6% said it was their parents who were the primary source of their knowledge about Jesus.

Beltran suggests that it is because respondents’ no longer have vivid memories of their early socialisation that they do not name their parents as the primary source of their knowledge about Jesus. But I found that the women among whom I worked indicated, in their life story conversations, quite vivid memories of their early socialisation, some of which I discuss in chapter four. Further according to Beltran’s survey results when “asked which individual was the most significant source of their knowledge about Christ, 52.6% said it was the priest” even though as Beltran indicates according to other research129 “there is minimal contact between priest and parishioners”. The survey results also indicated that for almost 60% “the institution primarily responsible for their knowledge about Jesus was......the Church”. In the light of these findings perhaps a better explanation, than that which Beltran proposes, as to why respondents do not most commonly name their parents as the main source of their knowledge about Jesus, is that this knowledge is part of their secondary, rather than their primary religious socialisation and that parents are not particularly influential in this socialisation and may not even be as influential in early socialisation as other family members130 like grandparents, aunts/uncles or older siblings etc. In support of this Bacani131 ([1988] 1992:105-6) when writing about her experiences of religious socialisation, in Mananzan’s ([1988a] 1992a) edited volume which I further discuss later in this chapter, recounts:

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130 Beltran’s (1987:282) survey form indicates provision for a response of ‘Parents and/or elders’ (Mga Magulang at mga nakatatanda) as an alternative to that of ‘Bible’ (Bibliya) ‘Catechism’ (Katesismo) ‘Sermon’ (Sermon) or Others:Specify (Iba:Tukuyin) in answer to the question “From which of the following sources did you acquire your knowledge about Christ?” (Saan sa mga sumusunod nanggaling ang iyong kaalaman tungkol kay Kristo?) but only provides for an answer of ‘Priests’ (Mga Pari) or ‘Catechists’ (Mga Katekista) or ‘Teachers’ (Mga Guro) or ‘Parents’ (Magulang), or ‘Others:Specify’ (Iba:Tukuyin) in response to the question “From which did you receive or acquire your knowledge about Christ?” (Alin sa mga sumusunod na tao nanggaling ang inyong kaalaman tungkol kay Kristo?).

131 Refers to one of the contributions of personal histories of religious experience published in Mananzan’s edited volume under the overall title of “Oppression and Liberation” with each article headed by the real or pen name of the various contributors.
I remember my first notion of God at age five: GOD was a woman and her name was Mary, and Mary was with child. My Lola (grandmother) [whom Bacani describes as ‘a very devout Roman Catholic’] called her Mother of Perpetual Help. Lola also taught me how to make the sign of the cross by myself. I asked her why Mother Mary was not in that “prayer”, she smiled and shrugged off her answer. My first summer vacation with my mother [whom Bacani describes as ‘a staunch Methodist Protestant’] at age 7 she took me to Sunday School where I met children singing “Jesus is a Happy Name”. I asked my mother, “Who is Jesus?” My mother’s prompt answer was “He is God, our good shepherd!” And I said, “I thought God’s name was Mary?” She led me to a Bible where the full story of Jesus is written. Enthusiastically, I shared such an experience with Lola, only to be admonished that I should never read the Bible as it is the book of Protestants.

Bacani’s experience lends support to the Bible being one of the primary sources of knowledge about Jesus but also suggests that, in times past at least, the Bible was not widely read by Catholic laity. Connected with this is Beltran’s observation that he found many who were quite unable to distinguish whether the source of the doctrine is the Bible or the ‘Pasyon’. Perhaps for them knowing the stories from the ‘Pasyon’ texts would be equivalent to knowing the stories from the Scriptures.

I also found support for this observation of Beltran’s as I discuss in later chapters, especially in my chapter dealing with Marian ritual and devotion where I highlight the close connection which appears to exist between popular conceptions about Mary and images of, and stories about her which exist in Pilapil’s ([1884] 1949) passion text used in ‘Pabasa’ celebrations. In terms of seasonal or yearly religious practices, Mataragnon (1984:17-18) found that respondents from the lower class read the ‘Pasyon’ more frequently than respondents from the other classes in her sample. Survey results also indicated that upper middle class respondents engaged in Bible reading more frequently than lower class respondents although the relative popularity of this practice is apparently much less than that of many other religious practices engaged in by the respondents. According to Mataragnon

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132 The capitalisation here is as it appeared in the original text.

133 Although the version used by Ileto (1979), as mentioned earlier, refers to an 1814 edition of the Tagalog version of the “Account of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ”, those used during Holy Week in present day ‘pabasas’ are reprintings of this text, (Pilapil, [1884] 1949), essentially unchanged except for the adoption of minor variations in spelling conventions and very occasionally in grammar and meaning.
public worship activities seem to be most frequent: mass, followed by communion, then giving to the collection. Praying for the sick and dead comes next, followed by a far fifth for Bible reading.......[with] females [being] significantly more frequent in reading the Bible, praying for the sick/dead, praying the rosary, taking communion, making novenas, and offering flowers.

In terms of religious practices Beltran (1987:126-135) highlights the importance of religious images for Filipinos, noting the ubiquity of family altars where various religious images are venerated and the centrality of images in different devotional practices like novenas, processions, fiestas and holy week devotions. Related to this Ma. Carmen Gaerlan (1991:143) found in her survey that 89.8% of respondents “indicated that they have an altar at home”. In particular Beltran (1987:127, 135) claims that for Filipinos religious images are not simple objects of piety but sacred objects which somehow share in the numinosity of what they represent....[and that] no matter how unbeautiful these images are.....once they have been blessed by the priest and sprinkled with holy water, they are believed to share the glory and the power of the person they represent.

This way of understanding images connects closely with Anderson’s (1972) work on Javanese concepts of power with links to Ileto’s (1979) and Cannell’s (1999) research as discussed later in this chapter and is of central importance in understanding much local level religious practice, especially Marian devotions, in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood communities in which I worked. Further discussion of images and their present day use in religious practices, coupled with an exploration of the ways in which these rituals may represent transformed links with pre-Hispanic and sixteenth century Spanish religious beliefs and practices, is taken up in more depth in chapters six and seven.

Beltran (1987:139-140) also highlights the way in which Filipinos believe that the dead become part of the life of the living. Filipinos, Beltran claims, not only pray for but also pray to their deceased relatives. The importance in the Filipino worldview of maintaining a continued relationship with the deceased is most dramatically demonstrated in the practices associated with the celebration of All Soul’s day. Women play an important role in these practices and other rituals associated with death rites although Beltran does not specifically detail this but Pertierra (1988:107-116) does. Later in this chapter in my review of literature
documenting women’s role in pre-Hispanic religious practices, I highlight the widespread involvement of women in the rituals associated with honouring the dead and in chapter five I discuss the contemporary celebration of All Saints/All Soul’s days in MM and the ways in which these present day practices provide for the continued transmission of core Filipino values in a changed time and place and the reproduction in death of the hierarchical social relations of the living.

The ways in which religious beliefs and practices, at one and the same time, both reflect community social relations and also structure and reproduce them is the focus of Pertierra’s (1988) ethnographic analysis. The social context of Pertierra’s research, conducted in the mid 1970s in the small towns and villages134 of Zamora, an inland rural Ilocano municipality, was markedly different from the metropolitan environment of Barangay All Holies. Even though, in both contexts, class and locality divisions existed, the situation pertaining in Pertierra’s Zamoran research setting was more a case of bipartite factions within one dispersed but inter-related community, (refer Pertierra’s 1988:59-76 discussion), than that of communities within communities, often strangers to one another, as existed in the urban milieu in which I worked. Nonetheless, Pertierra’s research is tangentially relevant to my work because a number of the Barangay All Holies residents were Ilocanos. While the religious affiliation of the Zamoran population was predominantly Catholic (75%), it is one of the less Catholic Christian localities in the Philippines, having a lower Catholic proportion of the population than in the Philippines overall and markedly less so than in the MM environment. Pertierra connects the differential religious affiliations of the municipality partially to ethnicity, particularly the in-migration of Catholic coastal Ilocanos, and partially to political and economic expediency, elements of which I explore in my discussions in the following chapter. In particular Pertierra (1988:21-2) claims that conversion to Protestantism in Zamora “did not result in complete loss of control over the barrio’s religious life” because it most commonly occurred in those areas where both political and religious leadership was under the control of senior men. According to Pertierra where

most ritual activities of communal significance were controlled by senior men [and] this group of senior men effectively controlled the barrio’s political affairs, they refused to relinquish control over its ritual affairs.......[Pertierra suggesting that] the combination of

134 With populations ranging from 99 to 836 but on average comprising, 250 to 450 people, (Pertierra, 1988:16).
political and religious control by elders in the barrios mentioned made religious conversion more difficult there than in those barrios whose religious structures were more loosely integrated with specific political interests.

However Pertierra (1988:21) claims that loss of local control over religious leadership did occur among those who converted to Catholicism because of “its emphasis on ordained Western-educated specialists belonging to a foreign-controlled bureaucracy”.

Although Pertierra does not elaborate on it directly, his research suggests that conversion to Catholicism was most marked in those localities in which pre-colonial political and religious leadership was differentiated along gender lines, with women having primary responsibility for religious leadership. Infante’s (1975) research, as discussed in the next section of this chapter, indicates that such differentiation was the more common practice throughout the archipelago in pre-colonial times. However, with the introduction of their religious worldview, the Spanish friars particularly targeted the overthrow of this female religious leadership as I discuss in the next section of this chapter. The resultant outcome was that males became the principal practitioners of institutional Catholicism’s religious rituals. But Pertierra (1988:92-142) observed that Zamoran Catholics engaged in many indigenous rites other than the rituals performed by the priest and that the principal practitioners in these other rites, in continuity with pre-colonial practices, were most commonly women. Pertierra describes these rites as being essentially domestic in nature, although I regard this as a somewhat misleading classification of the practices because even though they are frequently performed in homes there are indications that a number of these rituals are performed in at least a quasi-public milieu and not solely for personal devotion and benefit but in circumstances intended for the welfare of members of the wider community. For example, the wedding dedicatory rights, usually conducted after the Church ceremony when this was held, were performed in the presence of kin and the local neighbourhood community assembled at the couple’s home. The ceremony consists of the recitation of prayers, to accord respect to “ancestors and other spiritual beings associated with the household”, which are led by “a senior kinsman or woman....as the couple sit on each side of an improvised altar. A statue of the Virgin Mary (or a saint) is placed on the altar and two candles burn on each side of it” (Pertierra, 1988:104). And again in the mourning rites associated with a person’s death Pertierra (1988:107-109) recounts that:
prayers led by a senior kinswoman are said for the deceased......women sit in the main room: men congregate outside....local associations (saranay) [which Pertierra notes are often headed by women] help their members in a range of activities and expenses associated with mortuary rites.........[And a] novena begins on the night of the burial......these prayers are led by senior kinswomen......women and children are active participants in novenas, men seldom attend them. And even when they do, they are unlikely to take an active role....the last night of the novena after the prayers, a main meal is served and a dance is held to commemorate and honor the deceased. For the first time, senior men take an active role in the proceedings.

I observed similar practices in the neighbourhood communities in which I conducted my research. In addition, members of the Catholic community engaged in a range of other devotional and ritual activities, not connected with rites of passage. Although priests sometimes also attended these rituals, the priests were rarely the leaders of these practices. Rather, the leadership of these religious practices was undertaken by senior, usually married, women. I found the frequency of these local neighbourhood religious practices, led by women, to be an especially marked feature of low income neighbourhoods and to occur much more frequently than Pertierra (1997:153) indicates was the case in the Zamoran context,

The prominent role played by women in its [the October rosary devotion] organization and its focus on the household, differentiate it from the majority of Catholic practices, which are usually centred on the church and presided over by the priest. The lack of a developed body of Catholic ritual with a domestic focus has been mentioned. The October rosary is one of the few Catholic rituals which take place in the home and involve mainly lay (women) officiants. This focus and emphasis explains much of its success.

The prevalence of a wide array of neighbourhood rituals which are regarded by the local population as being predominantly Catholic in nature suggests that religious leadership among Barangay All Holies Catholics, while realigned in certain respects has been less completely redefined as a predominantly male domain than among Zamoran Catholics.

For those regarded to be in possession of extraordinary powers to communicate with the spirit world, there is frequently a fine line in the way in which others interpret their actions. Such persons, most commonly of female gender, are deemed either to be in communion with cosmic and divine power or alternatively
to be in communion with the forces of evil, being alternatively regarded as a spiritual medium and seer or a practitioner of witchcraft in league with demonic forces. In writing about facets of Visayan witchcraft beliefs and practices Perttierra (1983:336) claimed that “women play prominent roles in public areas such as the economy and religion”, a claim which Israel-Sobritchea (1996) questions as she argues that “formal power (e.g. religious and political) is generally in the hands of men [in the Philippines, and]........both political and religious discourses are masculine”. However, in her study of folk healing and sorcery in Cebu City in 1993-1995, Israel-Sobritchea does acknowledge that in certain ways, at certain times, women do appropriate elements of religious power and discourse and through their actions cause femaleness to be reconceptualised from the ways in which it has been patriarhally constructed. Israel-Sobritchea illustrates that belief in healing and sorcery are not divorced from but intertwined with the reformulated Christian beliefs of both practitioners and clients. Female practitioners considered to be particularly effective are regarded as being so through their prayer, by which means they are regarded as accessing the potent power of their spiritual benefactor most usually considered to be Christ, one of the Saints or the Virgin Mary. As potent spiritual mediators these women channel, through their bodies, extraordinary powers capable of overcoming evil and effecting healing in ways that invert the representation of women as witches, and as such the root and embodiment of evil, so common in patriarchal religious discourse. Further, these women are no longer physically able to simultaneously be effective spiritual practitioners and fulfil the roles stereotypically expected of them as mothers and housewives, giving rise to yet other ways in which femaleness becomes reconceptualised through their actions.

The Interpretation, translation, and appropriation of Women’s Religious Practice

In the introductory chapter I alluded to historical studies indicating that women exercised important spiritual roles in pre-Spanish ‘Filipino’ society. In order to ascertain what could be gleaned about women’s place in indigenous Filipino society, Infante (1975) reviewed writings from the early contact period of Spanish colonisation and also literature pertaining to the various ethnic groups of the cultural minorities in the Philippines who have either resisted or remained on the fringes of the colonisation and evangelization processes. Infante (1975) examined what is said about women in these writings, in terms of six main aspects
of their lives. These aspects related to women’s experiences as daughters, wives and mothers in terms of their participation in various rites and processes of socialisation and their adult standing in the community. Infante also reviewed what had been written about women’s degree of involvement in the religious practices of the community. It is this dimension of women’s experiences, at the advent of colonisation, which is my principal concern here. Infante (1975:24-7) reports that among the peoples of several ethnic groups, children of both gender were expected to perform certain ceremonies and make offerings of animal sacrifices and other food to spirits when their parents were ill, and on their parents’ deaths. Further Infante (1975:127-128) cites references indicating that rites existed, among Tagalogs, for the initiation of girls into womanhood which were presided over by a female priestess known as a ‘catolonan’,135 (see also Scott, 1994:240). She (Infante, 1975:160-194) found that women had an active, and often leading, role in their communities in mourning ceremonies, death anniversaries and in the preparation of corpses for burial. Specially designated older women usually led the performance of religious rituals in times of sickness, or of war; during ceremonies and feasts marking phases of the agricultural cycle, thanksgiving, and housebuilding in addition to providing services as counsellors and mediums.

Infante (1975:167-194) gives numerous indications that in the course of these ceremonies and rituals women throughout the archipelago,136 not just among isolated pockets of people, exercised important mediating roles between humans and spirits. Infante’s documentation suggests that there was in pre-Hispanic times, and there still is among contemporary non-Christian Filipinos, a preference

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135 I follow here the most common Spanish rendering of the indigenous term, as used by Infante (1975:128) although variable alternative spellings are used with respect to these female ritual specialists, e.g. katulunan, (Scott, 1994:239); katalonan (Salazar, 1989:35; Guerrero, 1992:2; Villariba, 1996:25); katulungan, (Santiago, 1995:154); catalona(s) (Mangahas, 1987:13; Mananzan, [1987] 1991:17; Brewer, 1996:100); catalonans (Honclada, 1985:13).

136 Infante cites specific examples from the following groups of people: Visayan, Tagalog, Pangasinan, Cagayan, Bicol, Calamianes Islands, Caraga, Zambal, Italones, Mindoro, (lowlanders and Mangyan), Marinduque, Luban, Tiagan, Tinggian, Tonglo, Benguet, Nabalo, Lepanto district, Kakanay, Bontoc, Ifugao, Kalinga, Isneg, Tinitianos, Tagbanua, Sulod, Subanun, Bukidnon, Bilaan, Mandaya, Bagobo, Negrito.
for female religious practitioners. These female ritual specialists known locally by various terms were often referred to as priestesses and sometimes as shamans, or spirit mediums but they also became demonised by the Spanish clergy as witches and evil practitioners of magic (Guerrero, 1992; Brewer, 1996). Although information to hand on the actual religious beliefs and practices of these women is sketchy, Infante’s (1975), Guerrero’s (1992), Scott’s (1994), Santiago’s (1995); Geremia-Lachia’s (1996) and Brewer’s (1996) documentation evidence many direct and indirect references to them in the writings of the Spanish friars indicating that they exerted considerable social influence as the primary, although not sole, mediators between the spiritual/supernatural and human/material realms at the advent of colonisation. That the Spanish friars, over an extended time frame, reported negatively on the existence and practices of these female practitioners in the spiritual/religious realm points to these women’s influence in the community being perceived as a direct threat to the missionaries’ power base, spiritual potency and conceptions of male superiority. An indication of this is Brewer’s (1996:106) observation that:

From isolated mission outposts large numbers of baptisms are reported in half a sentence, while two pages or more are spent detailing success or failure with an obdurate baylan.

Through linking textual analysis to historical shifts in social consciousness, Brewer illustrates how the babaylans, initially attributed priestly identities, are gradually transformed, primarily through the friar’s agency, to represent the epitome of evil, demonised women whose presence must be physically and

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137 Most commonly they are referred to in the literature as catolonans or variations on this in Tagalog speaking areas, (see footnote, n. 135, p. 99) whereas in the Visayas they were referred to as babailanas, baylanes, (Infante, 1975:170, 171); babaylanes, (Mangahas, 1987:13; Geremia-Lachica, 1996:51); babaylans, (Infante, 1975:172; Honclada, 1985; Mananzan, [1987] 1991:17; Salazar, 1989:35; Veneracion, 1992:1; Guerrero, 1992:2; Scott, 1994:84; Santiago, 1995:154; Villariba, 1996:25); dailan, (Geremia-Lachica, 1996:51), and baylan, bailan, baylan, balian, baliana, (Brewer, 1996:100). According to Infante (:169-193) local language terms which have been used to denote these predominantly female ritual specialists by peoples in other parts of the Philippines are: managanito (Pangasinan); baliana (Bicol); mangaloc (Calamianes islands); alopogan (Tinggian); mambunong (Nabaloi); mangaalisig (Kalinga); dorarakit (Isneg); marayawan (Mangyan); balian (Subanun); baylan (Bukidnon); almo-os (Bilaan); bailanas (Mandaya); nabalian (Bagobo). Honclada’s (1985:13) nomenclature has slightly alternative spellings, mananganito (Pangasinan); almonos (B’laan); mangaalisig (Kalinga); dorarakit (Isneg) and lists the name for female religious practitioners among the Gaddang as being anteras.

138 There are constant references indicating that although the role was predominantly filled by women, some men also exercised the same duties but when they did so they tended to dress and act like women, (Infante, 1975; Salazar, 1989; Guerrero, 1992; Santiago, 1995; Brewer, 1996).

139 Guerrero (1992) in a survey of texts in the period 1590 - 1898 details accounts of struggles between babaylans and missionaries for people’s allegiance in 1599, 1607-1630s, 1615, 1646, 1663-4 plus some other undated accounts, she also cites an Augustinian friar’s account written in 1780, more than two centuries after the arrival in 1565 of the initial Augustinian missionaries, which claimed that “the early missionaries had many battles with the witches...that were quite numerous in the Philippines and he could provide a long list of friars that they had killed.”
textually extinguished. Brewer (1996:105) observes how renaming of the babaylans from priestesses to witches in the Philippines coincides with Europe’s inquisitors, jurists, and theologians debat[ing] at length as to what actually constituted witchcraft.......[and] since many similarities existed between the activities that were becoming identified with witchcraft in Europe and those which constituted the main work of the baylan in the Philippines, it is not surprising that a corresponding shift in meaning occurred in the archipelago.

The writing of the Spanish friars is one perspective on life and although it is problematic, being as Scott (1994:3) expresses it, “the reactions of aliens caught in the grip of culture shock”, such writing has value, not so much for providing an accurate description of past conditions or a valid interpretation of the actions of others, as insight into the writers’ own worldviews and their perceptions of reality. It becomes problematic to the extent that these recorded worldviews and perceptions of reality are enshrined as the authoritative account of the past. Rafael (1988) has argued convincingly that parallel with the colonisers’ account of conversion runs another discourse flowing out of an interpretation of the meanings of the colonisers’ actions and words from the perspective of the colonised Tagalogs’ social world. Rafael built on Ileto’s (1979) earlier research in a different but related vein in which he argued that accounts of the 1896-1898 Philippine revolution drawing primarily on the indigenised elite’s interpretation of events, failed in significant ways to comprehend the meaning of the revolution from the perspective of the masses, and completely failed to understand the significance and relationship to the revolution of an on-going stream of religio-political movements and uprisings prior to and after the 1898 revolution. Ileto’s (1979:10) agenda as he expresses it in his opening chapter is about presenting an account of “history from below” out of a conviction that ‘multiple perspectives’ on past events and their interpretation are needed. For this reason Ileto’s work is valuable because it enlarges history to encompass part of the story previously unarticulated in its script, while leaving room for a continued writing of the story from still other perspectives, which is precisely what is done by the contributors to the special centennial issue of Review of Women’s Studies on “Women in History and Revolution” (Kintanar and David, eds.) 1996). As already noted, in passing, in the opening chapter, Policarpio’s ([1924] 1996), Camagay’s (1996), Apilado’s (1996) and De la Cerna’s (1996) papers in Kintanar and David’s (1996) edited volume take up dimensions of women’s actual involvement in the revolution and other processes of social change in the Philippines, as well as the representation
and interpretation, or lack thereof, in prior historical accounts of the events and happenings under discussion. Although I welcome this scholarship, it not my intention to enter into a detailed discussion of it here. Rather, I want to suggest that in addition to this historical research from a feminist perspective, there is need for feminist research from many other perspectives, one of which is a rethinking of the intersection of cultural conceptions of gender, religion and power in the Philippine milieu.

While Ileto and Rafael only indirectly refer to the presence and influence of priestesses in Tagalog society they both illustrate at length how, in the Philippine milieu, religious discourse has been inextricably interwoven with differing conceptions of power between indigenous Tagalog speakers and Spanish missionaries. Ileto contends that research on the Philippine revolution, prior to his work, had partially misread the terms in which mass support for the revolution was based. Leaders of movements of resistance to Spanish hegemony had galvanised popular mass support because of their perceived possession of inner spiritual potency. These leaders cultivated the ability to concentrate spiritual power from diverse sources within themselves and within their group of supporters. Research on the revolution prior to Ileto’s work failed to sufficiently attend to the importance of the spiritual dimension of the revolution and other uprisings preceeding it. Ileto draws parallels between Anderson’s (1972) research on conceptions of power among Javanese and the situation pertaining in the Philippines. According to Ileto’s (1979:24) reading of Anderson (1972:6):

Western political thought treats power as an abstraction, a way of describing relationships between individuals and groups. Through analyses of relationships and patterns of behavior, it has come to be generally accepted that the sources of power are such things as wealth, social status, formal office, organization, weapons, manpower, and so forth

But power for the Javanese, Anderson (1972:7-8) says, is “manifested in every aspect of the natural world, in stones, trees, clouds and fire” and modes of accumulating power are quasi-spiritual ascetic practices directed towards “focus[ing] or concentra[ting] the primordial essence”. And in writing particularly of men who accumulate power in Java, Anderson (1972:13) observes:

The most obvious sign of the man of Power is, quite consistently, his ability to concentrate: to focus his own personal Power, to absorb power from the outside, and to concentrate within himself apparently antagonistic opposites.......the image of asceticism is
the prime expression of concentrated Power. [Anderson (1972:9) earlier having clarified in respect of asceticism]...The inward significance of such ascesis is in no sense self-mortification with ethical objectives in mind but solely and singly the acquisition of Power......The concept of concentration140 which underlies the practice of asceticism is also correlated closely with the idea of purity; conversely the idea of impurity is intimately related to diffusion and disintegration. The world, the flesh, and the devil are not necessarily conceived as evil or immoral in the first instance, but rather as distracting and diffusing, and thus as leading to the loss of Power. [And finally Anderson (1972:10) notes that the]....process of absorption or accumulation could be furthered both by certain rituals, often containing a core of asceticism, such as fasting, meditation, and so forth, and by the possession of certain objects or persons regarded as being “filled” with Power.

In the Philippines one special means of channelling and concentrating spiritual power within is to position oneself close to particularly potent animate and inanimate sources of this cosmic energy, while simultaneously cultivating a receptive disposition in one’s inner being “through ascetic practices, prayer, controlled bodily movements and other forms of self-discipline”, (Ileto, 1979:25). From the perspective of Cannell’s (1995a; 1995b) contemporary research in Bicol, such practices and other stylised behaviour, especially dress, constitute a particular process of ‘imitation’ through which power transfer takes place. Those engaged in this imitative process become, in a certain way, transformed or ‘translated’ from their usual subordinate status through being able to take power from outside to themselves, even if only for the most fleeting of moments. They thereby accrue a limited, but enduring, currency of prestige by having been able to satisfactorily carry through the process of imitation. Andaya (1994:110) with reference to the work of Fernandez (1979) observes that priests objected to the common practice of women being the ones to carry the Marian statue in procession on holy days. However, despite their disapproval the priests were not able to curb the practice because it was too widespread. While Andaya does not detail exactly why the priests disapproved, she intimates that their disapproval, in part at least, had to do with the women’s manner of self-presentation and thus differing readings and interpretations of gender construction, because while unable to stop the practice, the priests, according to Andaya, “specified that at least those involved should be clothed in a seemly fashion”, (Andaya,

140Emphases in italics here and in following sections of this citation are as per original.
While the women, in all probability, considered themselves as physically capable of carrying the statue as men, it is doubtful that this was their motivation for executing the task. More likely they were eager to position themselves close to this source of spiritual power so that they could focus this energy within themselves and their community, thereby effectively continuing in the new social order their role as spiritual mediators. This practice of women carrying Marian statues during neighbourhood processions has continued through the centuries into the 1990s, (see Plate 1 in set of plates inserted overpage). It is also notable that young women dressed as for participation in a beauty pageant (see Plate 2), in a manner of dressing which may possibly have met with the public disapproval of the Spanish friars in times past, took part in this same procession. These young women were particularly eager at procession’s end to be photographed positioned next to the processional Marian statue (see Plate 3), posing thus and beseeching their friends to snap them. There is a link between Cannell’s (1995b; 1999) research referred to earlier and these young women’s beautiful self presentation and positioning of themselves close to the local chapel Marian statue, symbol of spiritual power. I explore facets of this interconnection and Roces (1998) work on the inter-relationship between modes of exercising power and constructions of feminine identity in later chapters.

I propose in the course of this thesis that Filipinos ‘gave in but did not give up’ their conception of ultimate power residing in spiritual potency and their sense of females being the prime and most effective mediators between humans and spiritual elements, in the constant interchange necessitated by life’s exigencies.

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141 Andaya is referring here to Fernandez’ (1979:164) claim that because of the persistence in the custom of women carrying large Marian images in community Marian processions “the Synod of Calasiao counselled that at least the bearers of the image should be satisfied with ordinary decent clothes”.

142 I took this photo during a Marian procession of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel community fiesta celebrations. Further description in relation to this plate is given in chapter six and also in my analysis of other aspects of the contemporary celebration of Marian fiestas in the urban milieu in chapter seven.

143 See insert of pictorial plates after p. 104.

144 Possibly the attire of at least one of these young women may have been regarded as somewhat revealing and contrasts markedly with that worn by those women who engage in carrying the Marian statue nowadays as depicted in Plate 1. Both Plates 1 and 2 are further discussed in chapter seven.

145 Inserted with other pictorial plates after p. 104. I note that those pictured in Plate 3 did not take up this particular positioning at my request but rather in the light of seeing that I had a camera in my possession requested that I take a shot of them.

146 See p. 103.

147 See p. 232 ff.

148 See my discussion of Rafael’s work (1988:213) in the following chapter, p. 145.
Plate 1: Women carrying Marian statue in Neighbourhood Procession

Women of Santa Maria Birhen chapel community carrying Marian statue in neighbourhood Marian procession during Immaculate Conception Fiesta celebrations, December 1996.
Plate 2: Participation of Beauty Contestants in Marian Procession

Young women contestants in neighbourhood beauty pageant participating in neighbourhood Marian procession on the evening of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to mark the culmination of the Fiesta celebrations organised by Santa Maria Birhen chapel pastoral council, December 1996.
Plate 3: Marian statue and Female Beautification, avenue to and reservoir of Spiritual Power

Young women beauty pageant contestants, at the conclusion of the Marian procession in their neighbourhood, position themselves close to the Marian statue which has been carried in procession. This Marian statue is revered as a potent source of spiritual power, so by presenting themselves ‘beautifully’, positioning themselves close to this object in which power is concentrated, and having this action publicly marked with a photograph, the young women hope to focus within themselves some of this power to enhance their lives.
Filipinos realigned in part their forms of religious practice to those of the colonisers but they did not surrender their sense of the primary channel through which access to spiritual agency is attained. Blanc-Szanton (1990:348) has argued, with respect to gender, that lowlander Visayans and Spanish colonisers anchored “gender reformulations in their own experiences” and that, in order to understand present day Visayan conceptions of gender, it is necessary to examine what was and was not “selected, stressed, refashioned, and developed over time” by the indigenous population through their interaction in the colonisation process. Similarly it is necessary to couple with this analysis of gender construction through translation and ‘mis-translations’, insights into the ways in which religious symbolism has been translated and reinterpreted by various peoples in the archipelago during the cultural interchanges of evangelisation. In advocating a rethinking of religion from a feminist perspective, influenced by Foucault, Jantzen (1998:74) argues that:

what has counted as religion has varied according to the historical context and in terms of who was in a powerful enough position to be doing the counting.......so that powerful men have been able to define and redefine religion for women and other subordinate groups.

Feminist researchers, Jantzen (1998:91-92) contends, need to rethink religion starting from discourses of women’s experience focusing on ways in which women use religion “as a node of resistance rather than a force of oppression”, not taking as a given that “patriarchal and oppressive religion is what religion must be......developing a religious Imaginary that begins thinking otherwise”. We gain insight from the writings of the Spanish friars that religious symbolism and gender construction have been translated and interpreted within an absolutist religious cultural milieu, a standpoint that causes an erroneous, warped interpretation and translation of pre-Hispanic religious beliefs and practices. The friars’ worldview is one in which all beliefs and practices perceived to be at variance from their established masculine, Spanish, Catholic norms merited denunciation as false and evil, accompanied by concerted, forceful efforts directed towards effecting a change in consciousness and praxis. However, what do we know about indigenous women’s translation and interpretation of the colonisers’ use of religious symbols and conceptions of gender? What indications, if any, do we have that babaylans and their fellow Filipinos, male and female, have consistently rethought and subverted the ways in which the Spanish were attempting to reformulate the religious conceptions of the indigenous population and impose through force their definition of ‘true’ religion? To answer these
questions necessitates adopting a shifting focus between the past and the present as I do in later chapters.

**Religious Intersections in Contemporary Filipinas Lives**

In previous sections of this chapter I have discussed surveys, which have been conducted using various criteria as indicators of religious belief and practice in the Philippines. I have also briefly discussed research of a more qualitative nature in MM and other parts of the Philippines, based on researchers observations of the religious beliefs and practices of specific communities. I have also discussed what can be gleaned about the religious practices of Filipino women, in particular, from historical research. I will now consider, in the last section of this chapter, some contemporary Filipinas own reflections on aspects of religious belief and practice in their lives. This section thus forms a bridge between researchers’ analysis and accounts of Filipinos religious beliefs and practices in general and my research which combines Filipinas’ own reflections on the place of religious belief and practice in their lives and my reflections and analysis of extended participant observation in their local level religious practice. I concentrate in this section on ten women’s brief personal histories describing their experiences of religious socialisation and the oppressive and liberating dimensions of religion in their lives. The stories as published in Mananzan’s ([1988a] 1992a) edited volume vary in the way in which they have been written and the type of information conveyed so that they are not readily compared one with the other and yet there are many points which can be drawn from the stories for reflection and analysis. Some women’s accounts focus largely on relational matters, (Odeng, [1988] 1992; Flores, [1988] 1992; Rose, [1988] 1992) others are written more in a reflective vein focusing on cognitive concerns, (Arboleda, [1988] 1992; Eco, [1988] 1992) and still others a mixture of these approaches, (Bacani, [1988] 1992; San Agustin, [1988] 1992; Jannie, [1988] 1992; Ester, [1988] 1992; Francisco, [1988] 1992). In these women’s accounts of their natal family’s experiences, women were more frequently reported as being religious and engaged in religious activities than men. San Agustin ([1988] 1992:110) says of her mother that she “does not hear mass at all but she prays a lot and is a devotee of several novenas and saints”, but in relation to her father she says “the only time

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149In some cases the editor has used 'pen names'.
my father went to church was during Christmas and this, too, he has given up in the past years”. Arboleda ([1988] 1992:128) describes her mother as “deeply religious” and recounts that her aunt was very devoted to daily recitation of the rosary but is largely silent with respect to the religiosity of her father other than noting that her family went to mass every Sunday and that both her parents strongly disapproved of her decision during college days to no longer join in Sunday mass attendance. Ester ([1988] 1992:120-122) describes her grandmother as “a very devout Catholic who went to mass everyday and had a devotion to our Lady of Mt. Carmel” but says of herself “I had no hardened religious beliefs.....not even the usual Catholic devotions like the rosaries, novenas, etc.” having described her immediate family as having “followed Roman Catholic rules and regulations to the minimum”. She also notes that the Bible was not above being questioned by her Grandfather. Similarly Bacani ([1988] 1992:105) speaks of having “a critical and questioning Roman Catholic” father but, as indicated earlier, describes her mother as “a staunch Methodist Protestant”. In fact Bacani was exposed to very diverse religious influences, for in addition to having “a very devout Roman Catholic grandmother” she also mentions having “a steadfast Aglipayan” grandfather. All but two of these women indicate that they received their initial religious socialisation from other women, either grandmothers, mothers or aunts, frequently not so much by what they said, as by what they did, as Jannie ([1988] 1992:115) recounts, “My mother.....was my first teacher in prayer not through giving me lectures but through her fidelity to her early morning prayers”. While this early experience of her mother’s prayerfulness proved to be largely a positive experience for Jannie, quite the opposite proved to be the case for Odeng ([1988] 1992:113) who reports that:

We were a religious family. Every Sunday, my mother would take us, all 13 children, to the church to pray that God may give us His grace. In spite of our faithfulness, we continued to be poor and we continued to suffer. In my mind, the question echoed and re-echoed; why are we still poor? My grandparents kept telling my parents, especially my mother, that we were poor because we still did not pray enough. The contradiction is that we have been

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150Eco ([1988] 1992: 138) is not specific in regard to her primary socialisation simply indicating that “as a child to my 15th year, I did have an attraction to the study and practice of religion” whereas Francisco ([1988] 1992) does not indicate a great deal about her primary religious socialisation other than to indicate that her “religious upbringing was not that strict [because her] parents were always out of town for business” but she does indicate that her maternal grandfather indirectly had a major influence in moulding the behavioural expectations that were placed on her by family members by his declaration, at the time of her birth that her looks indicated that she “would be a very good follower of the Virgin Mary”.  

praying, we have not done anything evil or wrong, yet nothing has changed. We were impoverished as ever.

Odeng, ([1988] 1992:114) becomes convinced that prayer and hard work alone are insufficient, “I have learned in my life that it is not enough to pray. One has to do something if only to become free”. Out of this conviction Odeng becomes involved in action for social reform, in particular for land reform. Odeng’s husband joins Odeng, in her commitment to this cause, even though Odeng’s mother is vehemently opposed to her initial involvement in this movement; “when my mother heard that I was attending these study groups, she was angry and at times she would whip me”. The cost of Odeng’s commitment of working for social reform is extremely high, culminating in the brutal murder of her husband by the military, leaving her widowed with five children. And yet paradoxically, even though she appears in a worse position than initially, she maintains a belief in Divine providence “Surely God will be with us for he always takes the side of those who are oppressed.” Her standpoint in this regard appears similar to that of Flores ([1988] 1992:131) who refers to the religious consciousness which she received through her home environment as being that of experientially knowing that “God exists and is good to people”.

In most cases these women’s religious socialisation in the family setting was followed by secondary religious socialisation through the formalised religious instruction they received either in Catholic educational institutions or through catechetics classes. For the main part, these experiences of secondary religious socialisation were not particularly positive experiences. Most women finding the moralistic and legalistic tenor of the religious instruction they received, together with excessive ritualism, to be an oppressive, alienating, fearful and empty experience. Bacani ([1988] 1992:106) describes the effect on her thus:

Before I received first communion at age nine, I was under the mentorship of a religion teacher from our parish. She required us to do so much memory work not only confined to prayers but also to gestures; how to kneel, how to approach the altar, how to genuflect and how to open one’s mouth in receiving the body of Jesus......she left me a remarkable notion of God: He was an old man who sees everything I do, say and think. He throws all those who disobey Him to hell! Alas! God was not a woman nor a good shepherd. He was a strict policeman who runs after bad and wicked people.
Jannie’s childhood feelings about her catechetics classes, although similar, were a little more ambivalent as she recounts “I learned to love this subject because of the colorful visual aids......[but] there were also pictures that haunted me as a child”, and she speaks about losing her “capacity to rely on collective efforts to face daily problems....[but rather becoming] an individualist and develop[ing] a moralistic attitude.....the ‘police force’ within me began to work”. Francisco ([1988] 1992:147) says that her initial religious upbringing “was not that strict” even though she describes her parents as conservative, but of her schooling experiences she relates that she “learned the sexist language of the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments and other religious beliefs”. Arboleda ([1988] 1992:127) found that institutional Catholicism’s excessive ritualism became empty and meaningless for her:

five times a day we prayed......[from grade school] all the way to high school when we did it with a twist. We combed our hair, we copied assignments, we talked about our crushes, we did a lot of “unholy” things while we prayed. Eventually, this form of prayer lost its meaning for me and I refused to pray.

Eco ([1988] 1992:132) also reports that she “never liked rituals - going to mass, novenas, rosaries - that were so much a part of a Catholic’s life.........The church institution seemed hollow with so much emphasis placed on empty rituals and their importance”. By contrast Rose ([1988] 1992:141) who studied in non-catholic schools and makes no mention of catechists has very positive memories connected with her parents regular participation in ‘Mother of Perpetual Help’ novenas at Baclaran in MM because of the pasalubong (presents linked with return from a journey) her parents brought on their return from this activity. Rose says “I associated these pasalubong with Mother of Perpetual Help. Because of this I came close to her since my childhood”. Later Rose eagerly joined her parents in this religious practice and says “I would always pray to Mother of Perpetual Help instead of praying to our Lord Jesus Christ”.

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151 Jannie illustrates some of these and they are connected with the same themes that disturbed Bacani, ‘the all seeing eye’ and ‘the fires of hell’.
Where have all these experiences led these women in their lives? All continue to be believers in God and most continue to identify themselves as Catholics,\(^\text{152}\) four even live as members of women’s religious communities.\(^\text{153}\) This current positioning however can only be genuinely understood by considering a further dimension of these women’s stories. This dimension is the influence of additional life experiences which have enabled them to reconnect with the relational, affective and social dimension of religious activity and to reclaim a strength, a power within, as an essential element of Divinity, rather than concentrate their attention and their religious activities towards a distant remote being. For Bacani ([1988] 1992:108-109) it was the experience of finding that “God was sleeping in my very essence” and that she found that her immersion and involvement in people’s daily life experiences of struggle and pain “made me experience God in me and wherever people strive to be fully alive.” San Agustin ([1988] 1992:111) expresses it as:

> crisis has changed my life. Before, I practically turned away from Christianity. It seemed to be a religion only of words. There was so much said on Sundays, but nothing seem [sic] to come of it the rest of the week......All these changed when crisis struck.....I started to find meaning in prayers......I learned how to compose my own prayers......now I believe I have the Holy Spirit with me.

Jannie ([1988] 1992:117) speaks of a movement from where “the ‘Christian in me claimed to be superior, right and dogmatic’ to reconnecting with her base unthreatening understanding of God that she had imbibed from her Ifagao people but which had been overlaid with another conception of God in catechetical instruction. Ester ([1988] 1992:123, 126) speaks of “the blossoming of a dormant spirituality that breathed with passion for life”. Reflecting on the significance of this changed perspective she says:

> I was precisely a Christian in name only because my religion did not demand more from me when it should have. My religion has limited faith to a personalized relationship with God instead of pursuing a communitarian perspective!

Arboleda ([1988] 1992:130) speaks of coming to know “the revolutionary Christ” through her association and interaction with the poor and that she came to a

\(^{152}\) Odeng was not specific in this regard and Eco ([1988] 1992:139-140) indicates that “Yes, I believe in God; no, the Church is not part of my belief” but goes on to say “Today, I join my family at mass every Sunday not because of my Sunday obligation but I feel that in some way I must give public worship within a community; it need not be a Catholic Church”.

\(^{153}\) Bacani, Jannie, Ester and Rose.
broadened vision of “God the Mother, the courageous women-leaders in the Bible, the new images of Eve, Magdalene and the Virgin Mary [and that]........this new perspective gives me a glimpse of the world through God’s eyes”. Although Arboleda does not make any mention directly of ‘the Pasyon’ in her reference to the “revolutionary Christ”, the people with whom Arboleda was engaged were members of the ‘Smokey Mountain’ squatter community among whom Beltran resided. People whom Beltran (1987) indicates were deeply influenced in their perceptions of Christ by their familiarity with the chanting and recitation of Pilapil’s ([1884] 1949) Pasiong Mahal known colloquially as ‘the Pasyon’. Flores ([1988] 1992:135-136) recounts that “the early years of Martial Law were harrowing ones” and goes on to contend “religion was farthest from my mind having been taught by historical materialism to rely on our own strength and struggles”. After some time in the midst of this experience of violence and injustice, Flores became involved with a different experience of church, relating that

I became part of church people engaged in liberation of both body and soul, religious and lay people who risked their lives for the poor, deprived and oppressed. Gone was a life of isolation in the convents, endless prayers and charity work. Together we participated in the small people’s struggles wherever it took us.

This paradox of becoming stronger within, of gaining power through being personally drawn into experiences of hardship and suffering appears to be at the heart of these women regaining a sustaining religiosity or spirituality. In particular, the spirituality that seems to lie at the heart of the appeal of the ‘Pasyon’ text for the Filipino masses is a spirituality other than passivity, and one which was frequently articulated in the lives of many of the women with whom I have worked in this research.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the literature on survey studies of the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary urban Filipinos. In particular I have looked for evidence to suggest that women in the Philippines are positioned differently from men in respect of their religious beliefs and practices. I found that Filipino women were generally perceived to be much more frequently and visibly engaged

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154Original emphasis.
in religious practices than Filipino men. However, this does not necessarily mean that Filipino women are more religious than Filipino men or that Filipino men are irreligious. It does suggest though, that women frequently appear to occupy an important intermediary role between the human community and the supernatural. ISSP results, in particular, indicated that almost all Filipinos, regardless of gender, believe in God and also in “the rightness” of their belief. Overall from the survey studies the religiousness of Filipinos did not appear to differ markedly on the basis of age, class or locality. The research on Filipino religious beliefs and practices based on survey work, while interesting, is of limited value because the research instrument severely limits the value of the results obtained. This is because its findings are based primarily on the assumptions of those who have designed and analysed the survey questionnaires, as to which criteria are adjudged most appropriate for assessing Filipino religious beliefs and practices, rather than being based more directly on Filipino respondents own categories of meaning and expressions of religious practice. I moved from a consideration of research on Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices in general in the first part of the chapter, to a discussion of past religious practices focused predominantly on the ways in which women were engaged in religious practice and leadership in pre-colonial times. There are a number of other aspects of pre-colonial religious practice, particularly the ritual use of images and altars and the place of feasting that have obvious links with forms of religious practice in widespread use today. While I do not trace indications of the links and connections in the literature between these past and the present religious practices in this chapter, I do explore in greater detail the relationship between the past and the present in this regard in chapters five, six and seven.

My discussion of a segment of the literature on contemporary urban women’s lives, from the perspective of their experiences of religious socialisation, suggests that, in order to understand the place religious beliefs have in contemporary Filipinas’ worldviews, it is necessary to take account of multiple interactive levels of experience and consciousness. Further, religious ritual practices are in themselves only a starting point for exploring the influence of religion in the lives of contemporary women. I take up issues connected with these insights in more detail in chapters four to seven where I probe the intersection of religious influences in the lives of Barangay All Holies women. I have briefly discussed the effect of Spanish colonisation on women’s religious leadership role in the Philippines and I take up further discussion in chapters three and six on the extent to which the gendered role of religious leadership in the Philippines has been
redefined or merely re-aligned. I have however, not dealt in the present chapter with literature concerned with the more general ways in which the colonisation process affected Filipino religious consciousness. This is the focus of my next chapter in which I deal with the subject of colonial interchange and religious cultural interactions.
Table 1: Trends in Indices of Filipinos’ Religious Fervour with Gender, Locale, Class and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICES OF RELIGIOUS FERVOUR</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>LOCALE</th>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have strong or very strong belief in their religion</td>
<td>Females &gt; Males</td>
<td>MM ≥ other urban &gt; rural</td>
<td>Elite and middle &gt; poor &gt; working</td>
<td>45+ ≥ 35-44 ≥ 25-34 ≥ 18-24 age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe themselves as very or extremely religious</td>
<td>Females &gt; Males</td>
<td>MM = rural ≥ other urban</td>
<td>Elite and middle &gt; poor &gt; working</td>
<td>45+ &gt; 35-44 = 25-34 age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend religious services at least once a week</td>
<td>Females &gt; Males</td>
<td>MM &gt; rural ≥ other urban</td>
<td>Elite and middle » working ≥ poor</td>
<td>18-24 &gt; 25-34 ≥ 45+ ≥ 35-44 age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in other church activities or organisations about once a month or more frequently</td>
<td>Females &gt; Males</td>
<td>MM &gt; rural ≥ other urban</td>
<td>Elite and middle class » working ≥ poor</td>
<td>35-45 &gt; 45+ = 25-34 &gt; 18-24 age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree or strongly agree there is a God who concerns himself (sic) with every human being personally</td>
<td>Females = Males</td>
<td>MM ≡ other urban &gt; rural</td>
<td>Elite and middle &gt; poor ≥ working</td>
<td>18-24 &gt; 25-34 = 45+ ≥ 35-44 age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray once a day or more frequently</td>
<td>Females &gt; Males</td>
<td>Rural ≥ other urban &gt; MM</td>
<td>Working &gt; poor &gt; elite and middle</td>
<td>45+ ≥ 35-44 &gt; 25-34 = 18-24 age groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel somewhat close or extremely close to God most of the time</td>
<td>Females &gt; Males</td>
<td>Rural ≡ MM &gt; other urban</td>
<td>Poor ≥ working ≥ elite and middle</td>
<td>All ages similar and high percentages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have had a ‘born again’ experience</td>
<td>Females ≥ Males</td>
<td>All locales same</td>
<td>Poor &gt; elite and middle ≥ working</td>
<td>45+ ≥ 18-24 ≥ 25-34 = 35-44 age groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have had a turning point in their life when they made a new and personal commitment to religion</td>
<td>Females = Males</td>
<td>Rural ≥ other urban &gt; MM</td>
<td>Poor &gt; working &gt; elite and middle</td>
<td>25-34 ≥ 18-24 = 45+ ≥ 35-44 age group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

155 Summarized from data given by Arroyo (1992) where in the above and following tables ≥ is slightly greater % (2-3 percentage points difference); = is equivalent %, (only one percentage point difference); > is greater %, (more than four but less than 10 percentage points difference); » is much greater %, (ten or more percentage points difference).

156 Neither Arroyo (1992) nor Mangahas and Guerrero (1992) clearly indicate the criteria used to differentiate classes other than that results for elite and middle classes are reported as one unit.
### Table 2: Indices of Filipino Religious Beliefs and Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGIOSITY INDICES ex 1991 ISSP results</th>
<th>CORRELATES OF RELIGIOSITY INDICES</th>
<th>RELIGIOSITY INDICES ex 1991 ISSP results</th>
<th>CORRELATES OF RELIGIOSITY INDICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Beliefs</td>
<td>Belief in life after death</td>
<td>Personal Efficacy</td>
<td>Agree life is only meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself Agree we each make our own fate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in the devil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in heaven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in hell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in religious miracles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk Beliefs</td>
<td>Belief in good luck charms</td>
<td>Fatalism</td>
<td>Agree people can do little to change the course of their lives Agree life does not serve any purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in fortune tellers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in faith healers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in horoscopes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural Experiences</td>
<td>Having felt a powerful spiritual force</td>
<td>Religious Practice</td>
<td>According to frequency of prayer According to frequency of attending religious services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having had a religious turning point in one’s life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having ever been ‘born again’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Grounding</td>
<td>Right and wrong should be based on God’s law</td>
<td>Relationship with God</td>
<td>Belief about God at present Closeness to God Persistence of belief about God Strength of belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right and wrong should be based on society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right and wrong should be based on personal conscience</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Providence</td>
<td>Belief in the existence of a concerned God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree life is meaningful because God exists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree the course of life is decided by God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

157 Summarized from data given by Abad and de los Reyes (1994:1-2)
**Figure 1: Age Distribution by Gender of Philippine and NCR Population aged Fifteen Years and Over in 1990 and 1995 Censuses**

Chart constructed from calculations made using National Statistics Office publications (1992:5; 1997:5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Base</th>
<th>Percent of total male/female population over 15 years of age per five year age cohort for Philippines and NCR in 1990 and 1995 censuses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>FIVE YEAR AGE COHORTS FOR POPULATION FIFTEEN YEARS AND OVER</td>
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<td>Philippines 1995 (male)</td>
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Chapter 3:

Colonial Interchange and Religious Cultural Interactions

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the ways in which cultural conceptions of gender, religion and power have intersected in the social change processes attendant on colonisation and evangelisation in the Philippines, with particular attention to the effect on women’s lives. Colonisation has been shown to affect women in complex and, quite frequently, contradictory ways. Thus conclusions about the effect of colonisation on women depend on the criteria of assessment being used and the structure of pre-colonial social relations. Further, the end results of colonisation are influenced by the frequency and intensity of contact between the indigenous population and the colonisers, as well as by the gender balance of the colonisers, most commonly overwhelmingly male. Contributors to Etienne and Leacock’s (1980a) edited volume discuss changes in women’s economic, social and political roles in societies in the Americas, Africa and the Pacific following European colonisation. In all but two of the societies, Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia and Tlingit of Alaska, discussed in Etienne and Leacock’s (eds.) (1980b) work, it was observed that pre-colonial gender relations changed markedly in ways that generally disadvantaged and subordinated women, but not all women in the same society were affected in the same way.

Bowie et al.’s (eds.) (1993) work is also concerned with the effects of colonisation on women but focuses more directly on the activities of male and female missionaries and the ways in which women’s lives have been affected by their evangelisation in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Bowie (1993:5) holds that no simplistic conclusion can be drawn about whether the gospel is liberating or oppressive for women influenced by missionary teaching, as it can be both depending on perspectives and the time frame under consideration. The women whose lives are described in Bowie et al.’s (eds.) (1993) volume found, in a similar manner to the women who contributed personal testimonies in Mananzan’s (ed.) ([1988a] 1992a:105-151) volume, discussed in the previous chapter, that their experience of religion in their
lives had been both oppressive and liberating. Jeffery and Basu’s (eds.) (1998) work exploring linkages between religion, women’s activism, nationalist movements, and race and class intersections also emphasises that “the relationship of women to politicized religion is paradoxical and complex” (Basu, 1998:4). In the same passage Basu goes on to argue that simultaneous comparative analysis of elite and ordinary women, of local communities and nation states, together with analysis of religious textual traditions and everyday religious practices are needed in order to appreciate “the complexities of women’s gendered, religious, and community identities”. Thus in this chapter I am concerned with examining, from the perspective of the Philippine milieu, what can be gleaned from historical accounts about the ways in which gender relations, the exercise of power and the practice of religious beliefs intersected in the social relations of pre-Hispanic ‘Filipino’ peoples. I connect these observations to present day Filipino religious beliefs and practices, gender relations and the exercise of ‘power’ in the light of Filipinos experiences of colonisation and evangelisation. In the last main section of this chapter I explore the way in which what constitutes religious practice, and in particular what it is to be ‘truly’ Catholic, has been defined predominantly by men without reference to women’s experience. Yet, the majority of those who are most actively engaged in Catholic religious activities in the Philippines, and in most other countries, are women.

Women’s Social and Religious Standing in Pre-colonial ‘Filipino’ Society

Infante’s (1975) research suggests that greater egalitarianism operated in pre-Hispanic societies in the island archipelago than appears readily evident in contemporary society. In addition to examining the degree of involvement of women in religious practices as discussed in chapter two, Infante also reviewed the literature of the colonisers’ early contact period and cultural minorities from the perspective of women’s experiences as daughters, wives, mothers, and their adult standing in the community, particularly in terms of their participation in various rites and processes of socialisation. Infante (1975) concludes that generally females were not discriminated against in indigenous Filipino society, except to some degree in the case of divorce; indications in the main being that they contributed fully and interdependently with males in all facets of the social life of their communities. Infante reports that no marked preference was shown for either male or female
children, similar rites and celebrations were held on the occasion of a child’s birth, regardless of whether a boy or a girl; both boys and young women were disciplined “without distinction” (Infante, 1975:21). Principles of government, custom and religious beliefs etc. were often learned by both boys and girls hearing community songs during times of work and feasting, through listening to epics being recited and participation in various ritual celebrations (Infante, 1975:14-21, 130,132, 138-143). Pre-marital virginity was not highly esteemed but cases of rape were severely punished; descent was usually traced through mother’s and father’s lines; generally girls and boys inherited equally from both their father and their mother. Land was also equally divided between sons and daughters, but among some groups of people the rule of primogeniture was followed regardless of a child’s gender. Alternatively in some societies the eldest son inherited the best property of his father and the eldest daughter the best property of her mother, while among some other peoples where there was only a single representative of either sex among the children, they tended to receive a slightly greater inheritance (Infante, 1975:52-59, 124). Divorce was common but it was harder for women than men to present a just cause for divorce and the financial costs were sometimes greater for the woman than the man where the grounds for divorce were similar but the process was initiated by the woman. In cases of divorce, children were usually divided equally between father and mother (Infante, 1975:65-88, 123-6). Women contributed a large share to the support and maintenance of the family, the household being considered their natural domain but they also bore the burden of agricultural production, were weavers, spinners, potters and traders; and whoever be the head of the household the wife was seen to have a big say in its direction. Many Tagalog women knew how to read and write and were expert guitar players, other Filipino women were also very skilled in playing other instruments and dancing (Infante, 1975:113-4, 130-4, 137). Women occupied different hierarchical positions in the community (Infante, 1975:147-8).

In terms of social roles in the community, according to Salazar (1989), in indigenous ‘Filipino’ society, some mature women in each local community occupied a prestigious position through their management of esoteric religious, medical and socio-cultural knowledge, (as ‘babaylan’ and ‘katalonan’); while some men acquired prestige through demonstrating expertise in managing technology, (as ‘panday’), displaying skill and courage as military strategists and combatants, (as ‘marharlika’), and exercising political acumen, (as ‘datu’). Women, however, were not specifically excluded from the technological, military and political fields and demonstrated skills
in each, (cf. Kintanar and David, (eds.) 1996 ) but were less commonly leaders in these spheres in the same manner in which they clearly exercised leadership in the religious domain. Neither were men excluded from religious leadership, as I indicated in the previous chapter. A few men did exercise this role. They were known as asogs and dressed and acted like women. The economic and social welfare of the community depended on the successful interplay and co-operation of those specialised in the religious, medical, socio-cultural, technological, military and political dimensions of life. Successful agriculture depended on the ‘datu’s’ administration of land and deployment of persons indebted to him, in tandem with the ‘panday’s’ blacksmith skills in manufacturing agricultural and military implements, the ‘marhalika’s’ prowess to defend land and resources in battle, and the ‘babaylan’s’ ability to read seasonal signs in nature and the heavens and enact appropriate ritual activity to accompany planting, harvesting, and military campaigns as well as her expertise in healing and preventing sickness and injury. In his historical research on the ‘catolonans’ and ‘babaylans’ Santiago (1995:155) observes that the status of the priestesses was high, noting that:

As remuneration for their services, the ministers received a good part of the offerings of food, clothing, and gold, the quality and quantity of which depended on the social status of the supplicant. Thus the priestesses filled a very prestigious as well as lucrative role in society.

The priestesses were one part of a much broader schema of religious belief and practice. There are abundant indications that in this schema most ‘Filipino’ peoples prior to Spanish colonisation believed in a distantly located supreme creator deity,

158 Food and money offerings, (as illustrated in Plates 48-51 depicted in chapter six), and occasionally clothes, are still made as an integral part of contemporary Filipino religious rituals and the priest continues to be the main recipient of these offerings.
159 Emphasis mine.
160 While Tagalogs definitely believed in ‘Bathala’, according to Scott (1994:80) indications are less clear in the case of whether Visayans, as Chirino ([1604] 1904 ex Jocano 1975:141) has suggested, believed in ‘Laon’ as a supreme being among the deities they worshipped. It seems more probable, Scott claims, that ‘Malaon’ was one of many names Visayans attributed to their principal deity as the early Jesuit, Alcina, has argued. Demetrio (1990:33) makes similar claims whereas Jocano (1981:10) attributes other names to the principal deity of Visayans. Some other ‘Filipino’ indigenous peoples recognised a supreme deity under other names, Scott (1994:168), and Jocano (1981:8, 11, 13-14, 16).
“Bathala”\(^{161}\) ……described as ‘may kapal sa lahat’, (maker of everything)”, (Scott, 1994:234) and a multitude of close at hand spirit entities, primarily referred to as ‘anitos’,\(^{162}\) permeating the natural surrounding environs. On death the deceased were believed to become ‘anitos’, joining the plethora of spirit entities from whom help, guidance, and favour could be sought, and to whom thanksgiving could be rendered and ritual sacrifice in the form of ‘maganitos’ offered for:

fertility of crops, newlyweds, or domestic animals, for rain or fair weather, for victory in war or plunder in raids, recovery from illness or the control of epidemics, or the placating of the souls of the deceased (Scott, 1994:84).\(^{163}\)

As an integral part of this veneration of ancestor spirits small images were fashioned from stone, wood, clay, shell, ivory, gold and other materials. These images, variously referred to as ‘tao-tao, bata-bata, larawan, licha’,\(^{164}\) were, in Scott’s (1994:86) words, “guardians of family welfare and the first recourse to in the case of sickness or trouble”. Because of the prestigious spiritual mediating role priestesses exercised, Santiago (1995:156) suggests that the images which represented their ancestresses were made from particularly valuable materials and especially venerated. These anito images were honoured in specially prepared altars in peoples’ homes in pre-Hispanic times as indicated in the following excerpts from Chirino’s ([1604] 1904 as cited by Jocano, 1975:144) account of religious practices at the time of Spanish contact:

individuals however made offerings, each one for his own intention or need, and in his own house……..I saw many houses furnished on the outside with small platforms made not unskilfully, of cane, and on these stood some little wooden idols………and in front of the idols was

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an earthen pot containing some hot coals and a little of some disagreeable aromatic

Shifts and Continuities consequent on Colonisation

In my introduction to this thesis I have indicated that religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines are intertwined in complex ways with the processes of Spanish colonisation and Catholic evangelisation. In particular, religious authority was used to legitimate political control which in turn, through the Patronato Real (the Royal patronage of the Church), was used to support the introduction and enforcement of Castilian moral and religious values. Being seen to effect a change in religious consciousness was used as a primary moral justification for, and legitimation of, Spanish colonisation of the peoples of the Pacific island archipelago which the Spanish ‘christened’ Las Islas Filipinas (the Philippine Islands). The Spanish government justified their sovereignty over the inhabited Philippine Islands on the basis of a 1493 papal ruling “Inter caetera” granting the Catholic Spanish monarchs political dominion over newly discovered territories to the degree deemed necessary to ensure that ‘the gospel’ could be freely preached, new converts protected and the Catholic faith preserved (cf. Aragón, 1969:3-10). Labayen (1995:44) observes of the colonisation process in the Philippines that “in the case of Spain religion was the predominant matrix and carrier of the culture she imposed” through the instrumentality of Spanish Catholic missionaries. With the introduction of their worldview the colonisers challenged and partially reconfigured Filipino gender formulations and precipitated changes in the ways in which power was conceptualised and operationalised. Mananzan’s ([1987] 1991) research suggests that there existed an ambivalent attitude towards Filipino women in the writings of Spanish men during the early years of their conquest in the Philippine Islands. There are indications of surprise at the apparent degree of independence of Filipino women and their lack of obvious deference to males as necessarily or ‘naturally’ occupying a ‘superior’ social status in gender relations. For example, females were observed to have equal

165 Agreement first formalised between Pope Julius II and King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain whereby the Pope granted the Spanish Crown the right to present candidates for vacant ecclesiastical offices in return for Crown meeting the financial costs of sending missionaries to the Indies and providing military support for their activities (cf. Rafael 1988:147; see also Bolasco[1990] 1994a:9-10).

166 The “Inter caetera” rested on the prevailing worldview of Catholic Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries that the Pope, as “Vicar of Christ” was the pre-eminent human representative of God on earth and as such had been delegated divine authority over the whole world.
educational opportunities to males, both being able to read and write, with even some indications that women may have been more proficient in this respect than men. Further, equality of learning avenues extended into the area of sexuality as it was noted that “young girls are given social liberty to deal with the best of the men...the youth of both sexes learn to know and to fall in love with each other” (Mananzan [1987] 1991:10 citing Paterno 1887:241) however prostitution was reportedly non-existent. On marriage a woman did not automatically renounce her own name to take on that of her husband, and in some cases where the woman exerted considerable social influence, the man became identified by reference to her. 

Surprise was shown by other authors that “it is men who give the dowry at marriage” (Jocano 1975:81 citing Loarca [1582] 1903) in the Philippines, contrary to practices in Europe, even though this practice was variously interpreted as regards to what it implied about women’s status. Loarca ([1582] 1903 as cited in Jocano, 1975:82) expresses surprise that “in case of a quarrel [men] take sides with their wives’ relatives, even against their own fathers and brothers”. Women in some regions, especially the Visayas, were also reported to be able to freely decide, without moral sanction, whether or not to have a child regardless of their marital status. Children were named by their mothers. Further according to Jocano (1975:180 citing Colin [1663] 1906), women were the ones to circumcise their sons. Women were not seen to be beholden to men for their economic self-sufficiency (Mananzan [1987] 1991:11, 14 citing Valdes 1891:337 and Paterno 1887:241 respectively). Guerrero (1992:2) claims that in the writings of the Spanish in the three centuries 1590 to 1898, especially in the initial period of Spanish contact with the indigenous population:

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168 See also Jocano 1975:81 citing Loarca [1582] 1903.


174 See also Feliciano, 1993:56-7 and Romero, 1979:1.
there is...a sense of outrage against the native Indian woman...sure of her sexuality which seems to be treated matter-of-factly. There is also the sense of wonderment that the Filipino woman was free to conduct herself without much of the inhibitions that restricted her European or Spanish counterpart.

The influence and industriousness of Filipinas in indigenous society at the time of colonisation elicited both praise and condemnation. Mananzan ([1987] 1991:12-13 in citing Martin 1986:222) highlights that women were regarded as “the more serious and formal partner in the making of contracts”. Women were credited with having great resilience, endurance, business acumen and thrift; and also a more industrious demeanour than men. On the other hand women were also portrayed at times as being selfish, hard, ungrateful, and obsessed by greed, (Jocano 1975:186, 231 citing Colin [1663] 1906 and Quirino and Gracia 1958 respectively).

This discernible ambivalence was accentuated in matters pertaining to religious practice and moral judgements derived from the religious worldview of the Spanish. As outlined earlier in this chapter, the indigenous female religious practitioners, ‘babaylans’ and ‘catalonans’, commanded respect and prestige in their local communities. However, as noted in chapter two, the Spanish friars perceived them as a direct threat and serious affront to their conceptions of male religious superiority, coming as they did from a worldview heavily influenced in particular by the misogynist aspects of the theological teachings of Saints Augustine and the Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas, (refer to Mananzan [1987] 1991:20-22; Ruether, 1983; Johnson, 1995). Women were imaged as being completely lacking and deficient in matters spiritual, as Mananzan ([1987] 1991:22) illustrates in citing an extract from Gracian in Boxer (1975:99) indicating the attitude of “Fr. Francisco de Vitoria, renowned as one of the founders of international law” who wrote:

Woman does not have spiritual knowledge nor is it fitting that she should have. It therefore follows that she cannot discriminate in spiritual matters.....

On the other hand women’s obvious influence and the greater apparent interest of women than men in matters religious in the community could not be disregarded.

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The Spanish were not slow to recognise the sway women held in religious matters in indigenous communities and the importance of especially targeting women for the success of their evangelisation efforts, Santiago (1995:167) claims that:

Knowing the previous religious role of Filipino women before the Conquest, the Spanish missionaries apparently reached out to them and their children comparatively more than to the men, who seemed less inclined to religious matters.

Whether ‘reaching out’ is quite the right term to use is debateable but nonetheless what appears to have happened is that there was a deliberate and concerted effort on the part of the early Spanish missionaries to redefine women’s religious consciousness and social role in the community. In particular the Spanish friars sought to transform the nature of women’s religious role in society from that of ‘babaylans/catalonans’ to ‘beatas’, precursors of contemporary Catholic women’s religious communities.

There is evidence that, within the confines of the multiple constraints placed upon them, Filipino women have developed a diverse range of responses to the efforts made by the all male hierarchy of institutional Catholicism to restrict and confine their public activity and to subordinate them to fathers, husbands and male clerics. In differing ways, Veneracion (1992) and Santiago (1995) have explored the nature of the shifts which occurred. In some aspects these shifts have been dramatic but in other respects the changes have involved a gradual series of shifts and re-alignments over centuries. Some women took a path of resistance that largely ostracised them from the religious elite of Catholicism and this is documented in the work of Guerrero (1992), Brewer (1996) and Santiago (1995). Guerrero and Santiago trace examples of the continuity of women’s resistance to relinquishing their role in community religious leadership as ‘babaylans’ and ‘catalonans’. In particular, Santiago (1995) documents evidence of the ongoing presence and activities of ‘babaylans’ and ‘catalonans’ throughout the first century of Spanish colonisation, into the eighteenth century, and through to the early nineteenth century when “seven priestesses (six of whom are named)...withdrew...to the crater of Mount Banahaw, the sacred volcano of the Tagalogs.....to be able to perform ‘maganito’ rituals undisturbed” (Santiago, 1995:160). The descendants of these priestesses together with the followers of other spiritual mediums, male and female who congregated in the Mt. Banahaw area continue, into contemporary times, practicing elements of pre-Hispanic religiosity intertwined with aspects of Christianity.
In March 1997 I had the opportunity to spend twelve days in the Mt. Banahaw area as part of a spiritual pilgrimage with a group of seminarians and religious sisters of the Inter Congregational Theological Center (ICTC) co-ordinated by Sr. Rosario Battung, RGS. During this time spent with the indigenous religious groups based there, I experienced at first hand a number of religious rituals centred on the veneration and reverence of nature spirits, and participated in religious practices led by priestesses associated with ‘Ciudad Mística de Dios’ (Mystic City of God) Community’s annual celebration of Holy Week, (March 10th to 17th every year). As well as this I attended some of the rituals of the ‘Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios’ (Church of Three Persons, One God) also led by priestesses. The ‘Ciudad Mística de Dios’ celebrate a ‘Mass’, with many elements of their dress and ritual having direct similarities with pre Vatican II Catholic practice but also with some discernible connections with early Spanish descriptions of the ‘babaylans’ dress and practices. My purpose here is not to dwell on the detail of these rituals, which have been well documented by Pesigan (1992), Marasigan (1985), Gorospe (1992), and Obusan (1991; 1994b). However, what is significant is that the symbolism in the rituals of the indigenous religious movements based in the Mt. Banahaw locality, and their religious discourse, especially that of the Ciudad Mística de Dios and Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios, is strongly nationalistic and directed towards ushering in a new political order in which women will occupy a central position by virtue of the spiritual power they possess, where spiritual power is regarded as the ultimate power through which the course of all human life is directed. The Ciudad Mística de Dios movement is particularly characterised by a counter-hegemonic, nationalistic, político-religious discourse as I experienced during their Mahal na Araw (Holy Week) celebrations and as Quibuyen (1991) discusses in his analysis of the movement. These contemporary indigenous religious movements provide one thread of continuity with women’s role of religious leadership from the past to the present. It is a thread interwoven with strands of Catholicism as the foundress of the ‘Ciudad Mística de Dios’ groups, Maria Bernarda Balitaan, was a Benedictine nun who left her convent way of life to found the indigenous religious movement, and is now venerated by her followers as a saint. Her feastday is celebrated by members of

Religious of the Good Shepherd sisters congregation of which Sr. Rosario is a member as well as being an EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians) member and facilitator of the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF), the Forum for Interdisciplinary Endeavours and Studies (FIDES) and the Theologians for Renewal, Unity and Social Transformation (THRUST) and foundation member of Zen Center for Oriental Spirituality in the Philippines.
‘Ciudad Mistica de Dios’ on one of the principal Marian feastdays of Catholicism, August 15th. Isabel Suarez, the current leader of the ‘Ciudad Mistica de Dios’, or ‘Suprema’ sometimes also referred to as the woman-Pope of ‘Mistica’, has moved from her original Catholic religious affiliation to lead the religious movement, in response to a divine call she claims to have received to this effect, following on from a miraculous healing she received as a child at Mt. Banahaw. Although none of the Barangay All Holies women with whom I was involved, indicated direct links with any of the Banahaw communities, some women with whom I had occasional contact in a neighbouring barangay frequently spent time in Mt. Banahaw with various of the communities based there. On the occasions that I visited Mt. Banahaw, people from some Catholic parishes in MM and surrounding provinces had come there on pilgrimage during the Lenten season. This is because the Lenten time, particularly Holy Week, is regarded as a privileged time for undertaking ascetic practices for the accumulation of spiritual power. To come to Mt. Banahaw and complete a pamumuwesto (a ritualised pilgrimage to the different venerated nature shrines in Banahaw) is an arduous task requiring a high degree of asceticism, and thus the route to the acquisition of spiritual power. Members of Filipino women’s religious communities also visited Mt. Banahaw and participated in the ritual life of Ciudad Mistica de Dios, and Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios. Some of these women religious visited Mt. Banahaw only occasionally, but others like Sr. Rosario Battung, SGS, and Sr. Felicitad Dacayanan, MIC, whom I also accompanied to Mt. Banahaw in 1995, maintained regular contact with communities there. They were convinced that the Mt. Banahaw locality was a sacred place of concentration of supernatural and cosmic energies, and that the members of the indigenous religious communities residing there have creatively received Christianity in ways which have enabled it to be harmonised, in their way of life, with the preservation of their peoples’ cultural heritage from pre-colonial times. From this conviction they regularly offered MM based theological and anthropological students, who wished to avail themselves of the offer, the opportunity of an introduction to the way of life, religious beliefs and ritual practices of the members of indigenous religious movements based in the Mt. Banahaw locality with whom they maintained very respectful and amiable relations. In the past the attitude of the clergy, particularly non Filipinos, was generally less than sympathetic towards the indigenous religious movements based in the Mt. Banahaw

177Sr. Felicitad, an anthropologist who was at that time on the staff of UP anthropology department, is a member of the religious sisters congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC).
locality. There has however, been a significant shift in this regard in the years following Vatican II, particularly among some Filipino clergy as is clearly evidenced in the work of Marasigan (1985), a Filipino Jesuit priest, who writes in the introduction to his study of the *Tatlong Persona Solo Dios* community that “I have learned not only to relativize the meanings and values from my Western education, but also to respect the indigenous meanings and values revealed in the symbols of popular piety” (Marasigan, 1985:2). Similar sentiments are expressed by Gorospe, another Filipino Jesuit priest, in his pictorial essay on Mt. Banahaw religious movements (Gorospe, 1992).

Those who continue the ‘*babaylan/catalonan*’ tradition as priestesses or female spiritual mediums are a subject of interest among a number of contemporary researchers as illustrated in the work of Villariba (1996), Alaras (1995), Pesigan (1992), Obusan (1991), Balajadia (1991), Quibuyen (1991), Foronda (1989), Bulatao ([1982-83] 1992) and Velez (1977). However, it is not my intention in this thesis to discuss, in depth, those who can be considered to have continued the ‘*babaylan/catalonan*’ tradition in a rather direct way through their leadership of indigenous religious movements in the Mt. Banahaw locality. This is because my primary focus is concerned with the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary Filipinas in Barangay All Holies and neighbouring localities, none of whom indicated any direct involvement in the indigenous religious movements connected with Mt. Banahaw. However, some background consideration of women’s leadership of indigenous religious movements in Mt. Banahaw has been necessary. This is because even though the women with whom I worked in Barangay All Holies, unlike the women engaged in indigenous religious movements in Mt. Banahaw, did not consciously make a link between the ‘*babaylan/catalonan*’ tradition and their involvement in religious leadership at the local community level, I believe a connection exists between these past and present practices. I contend that the widespread involvement of women in religious leadership at the local level, which I observed in Barangay All Holies and which I discuss in chapter six, is the consequence of an ongoing translation process over centuries, through which Filipinos have avoided cultural rupture by establishing, in local level practice, symbolic links of association with the past into the present. Although the ongoing resistance of ‘*babaylans*’ and ‘*catalonans*’ to the redefinition of their role and standing in the local community was important, it was not the only avenue through which indigenous women responded in the face of the new religious worldview the Spanish sought to establish. And it is these alternative responses that I see as being
particularly relevant in terms of the place which religious belief and practice plays in the lives of contemporary Filipinas as it is with variations on these forms of practice that the women among whom I worked most readily identified, as I discuss in more detail in the following chapters. These responses, some more radical than others, are all inter-related ways in which women responded to the Spanish missionaries attempts to usurp women’s religious authority and redefine gender relations and women’s religious responsibilities.

Some women recognised the influence and the prestige of the religious practitioners of the new colonial order and sought to align themselves with these newly developing centres of power by becoming members of ‘third orders’ and prayer confraternities and other associations (Fernandez, 1979:82-84). Third orders were laypersons affiliated with the monks, friars and nuns of the major Catholic religious orders of the Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians. Santiago (1995:164) notes that “laywomen of the third order were generally known as ‘hermanas’ (sisters) but the more deeply involved ones were called ‘beatas’ (blessed women) ........[while] the general term for a male member of the third order was ‘hermano’ (brother).” Santiago (1995:167) further documents that initially most of the women who joined the third orders were of the ‘hermana’ type, married and living with their families. Others who, Santiago (1995:167-168) claims may or may not have “been formally admitted as members of the third order......[but] were probably regarded as beatas.....[were] founders of ‘capellanias’ or chaplaincies. By way of example, Santiago notes that “In 1605 alone, seventeen native women, together with their husbands, and only three widowed or single women donated ‘capellanias’ in the province of Pampanga”. These ‘hermanas’, or affiliated laywomen were not bound by any vows but did, with special permission, on occasions - usually of a liturgical

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178 Those without legally or canonically binding solemn vows.

179 Although the Jesuits did not have provision in their rule for the establishment of third orders they did foster the establishment of ‘beaterios’, (refer following footnote) housed in diocesan institutions, the most enduring of which was founded in 1684 and continues into the present day as the Congregation of the Religious of the Virgin Mary.

180 ‘Beatas’ lived together in communities called “beaterios”. Santiago (1995:165) observes that the ‘beatas’ of the Hispanic world were analogous to the beguines of the Netherlands and Germany, but for which no equivalent existed in the English-speaking world. See also Lisón-Tolosana’s (1988) work on ‘the beatae’, independent thinking, religious women of sixteenth century Castile.

181 These were pious trust funds established for the support of priests.
nature - wear in public, a special form of attire which conferred on them a certain status or prestigious standing in the local community.\footnote{182}

The response of other indigenous women to the religious worldview introduced with Spanish colonisation was to become ‘third order’ members of the second type. Akin to ‘\textit{beatas}’ in the original sense of the term, these women took simple vows and lived initially singly and later together in groups but without family; although most of the first were women who had been married but were now widowed (Santiago, 1995:162). They actively engaged in corporal works of mercy, providing places of refuge for aged women, caring for the sick and did not live an enclosed cloistered life as did the ‘\textit{monjas}’\footnote{183} of the women’s contemplative monasteries founded in the Philippines from Spain, but which indigenous women were prohibited from joining. Santiago (1995:165-6) notes that although the ‘\textit{beatas}’ essentially lived as nuns or communities of unenclosed religious women they had no legal standing as such because of their race and thus became “victims of discrimination and power play between the local prelate and the religious orders and the government officials” which made their lives particularly difficult.\footnote{184} In a differing context many of these women displayed similar qualities of tenacity, courage and resourcefulness that characterised the resistant ‘\textit{babaylans}’ and ‘\textit{catalonans}’. With their characteristic independence of spirit they also appeared to share in something of the same manner of persecution suffered by their beguine sisters half a world away in Netherlands, Germany and France. The beguine sisters were women who have been described by Jantzen (1998:79) as being “a multi-layered threat to the powerful in society, especially to the ecclesiastical authorities, [being] strong, independent women who were under the authority or neither husband nor priest, but rather banded together for mutual help.” Lisón-Tolosana (1988:58) found that the \textit{beatae} of sixteenth century Castille exhibited similar characteristics claiming that:

in their dream of being lay-religious, the sixteenth century \textit{beatae} were ahead of their times. Today their initial vision and roles have been accepted, although not in all their aspects, as contemporary personages

\footnote{182}{See Del-Pilar Garcia’s (1995b:6) description of a 19th century Spanish traveller’s observations on” the ubiquity of “cofradia, hermandades and religious archi-cofradias........in the Philippines”.

\footnote{183}{Spanish term for nuns of enclosed, contemplative orders.

\footnote{184}{According to Santiago (1995:166) Philippine ‘\textit{beaterios}’ were particularly disadvantaged in this regard, in a way which did not apply for ‘\textit{beaterios}’ in Spain or Latin America. This was because “the basic assumption in the Spanish court was that Filipino women, including ‘criollas’ (Spanish women born and raised in the Islands), were neither worthy nor competent to form religious communities.”}
(mods, rockers, punks, etc.), who are far more traditional in their anti-structural *communitas* than they realize, prove.

Although the Philippine *beaterios* were possibly not as independent as the European beguine communities since the Philippine *beaterios* were, in the main, initially under the patronage or guidance of male friars, it may be significant that one of the earliest and enduring of the Philippine *beaterio* foundations has evolved into one of the largest and most influential Congregations of religious women in the Philippines.\(^\text{185}\)

This *beaterio* was founded by a Filipina reputedly renowned for her “courageous and enterprising spirit” (Ferrares, 1995:10) under the guidance of a German Jesuit who could be expected to be conversant with the beguine communities from his native land. There is a continuity to the present time with this thread of women’s response to the changed religious worldview. Today there exists over two hundred and thirty congregations of religious women in the Philippines, (refer Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines, 1997) of which approximately three quarters have Filipina members.\(^\text{186}\)

Within this group are many women whose qualities of leadership, resistance, courage and innovativeness in working for the reclamation of women’s spiritual heritage have frequently been acknowledged, (Bühlmann, 1979:157-172; Fabella, 1993; Kristina Gaerlan, 1993; Hilsdon, 1995:38-39; Mananzan, [1988a] 1992a; Roces, 1996:60-61; Roces, 1998:178-180). A consciousness of continuing the *babaylan/catalonan* tradition is certainly emerging among some of those who are members of this sector of religious sisters communities.\(^\text{187}\)

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\(^{185}\) Religious of the Virgin Mary Congregation which was formerly known as *Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús* founded in 1684 by Ignacia del Espíritu Santo Iucuo with the assistance of Fr. Paul Klein, SJ.

\(^{186}\) Of those congregations of religious women in the Philippines who do not have Filipina members, some have not been approached by Filipina applicants, others are recently arrived in the country and have refrained from accepting Filipina applicants in at least the first five years of their residence in the Philippines in respect for a directive issued by the Association of Major Religious Superiors of Women in the Philippines, (AMRSWP). In this directive, newly arrived overseas congregations were requested to respect a five year moratorium on recruitment of Filipinas until they have some familiarity with Filipino culture and take account of this in their formation training programmes, preferably conducted in the Philippines.

\(^{187}\) This was evident at the Institute of Women’s Studies founded by Filipina, Sr. Mary John Mananzan of the Benedictine order, and also in meetings and activities organised by the Women’s Desk, established through the initiative of the female arm of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines, (AMRSP). At workshops, seminars and other activities organised by these and other women’s organisations, I participated in the celebration of dramatic rituals and female led liturgies in which, in a spirit of reclamation, direct reference was made to women’s historical role as priestesses in Filipino society.
Guerrero’s (1992), Brewer’s (1996) and Geremia-Lachica’s (1996) work document that the Spanish Friars particularly targeted the *babaylans/catalonans* because of the threat posed to the Friars’ religious authority by these women’s influence in their local communities. However, there are indications that the Friars’ influence in changing gender conceptions and religious consciousness in the lives of the great majority of the women may have been much less pervasive than is generally inferred in feminist discussion of Spanish colonial rule. For although the Spanish attempted to implement a policy of resettlement to reduce, or congregate, the scattered indigenous rural population into larger town settlement areas, the policy was largely unsuccessful. Instead what developed around the parish church was a town administration area (*cabecera*) in which the clergy and the indigenous elite mainly resided with most of the population remaining dispersed in small hamlets (*sitios*) having only intermittent contact with the Friars when they periodically came to celebrate religious services in the small *visita* chapels in the rural areas (cf. Phelan 1959).

There are some parallels between the situation which pertained in the past and what I observed to be happening in urban localities with rapid population growth, such as in Barangay All Holies. In large urban parishes like All Holies Parish, the present parish structure in some way replicates that which pertained during the Spanish colonial period. The large parish church has been established in a private subdivision where the Parish priest lives, and around which the more elite sector of the local population are congregated. Outside the immediate Parish church locality are many small ‘outlying’ chapels. Outlying chapels, not so much due to being physically distant from the Parish church but more by being socially separated. In Barangay All Holies most chapels and subchapels are only a few kilometres from the Parish church with several less than a kilometre away in distance. However, they are socially distant by existing outside the boundaries of the private subdivision in which the Parish church is located. By virtue of this fact they have only intermittent contact with the Parish priest who usually only periodically presides over the celebration of religious services in these chapels. For the remainder of the time, the local neighbourhood community is under the religious leadership of mature women of the locality. These women are in charge of the organization of religious services and localised neighbourhood religious devotions, including the recruitment of guest priests for those formal religious celebrations where a priest’s services are deemed necessary but the Parish priest is not readily available. Because the greater majority of the population have been relatively removed from direct contact with religious authorities, both in the past and today, gender conceptions may not have been as
dramatically influenced through this avenue as has at times been suggested, (cf. Quindoza-Santiago 1996:145-147, 163-164).

Sobritchea (1990) posits that possibly the public education system of the American colonial rule was more influential in widely reconfiguring gender relations along patriarchal lines than Spanish colonial rule. This is because according to Sobritchea, during Spanish rule “education of females was very minimal.....limited to daughters of well to do families......[and] formal training beyond the primary grades were generally a male privilege” (Sobritchea, 1990:72). Thus Sobritchea argues: since the women of lower social classes had limited access to Catholic education, they were not as much affected by patriarchal values and norms. They remained active in economic production as traders, farm workers and weavers, and in such community functions as folk healing and conflict mediation (Sobritchea, 1990:74).

Although the city of Manila was a different context from that which prevailed in the rural areas, Camagay’s (1995) study indicates that during the 19th century there were thousands and thousands of working women in Manila, both married and single engaged in a wide range of economic activities. However, the emphasis during the American colonial period of dramatically expanding the public elementary and high school education system had the effect, Sobritchea argues, not of improving women’s status but of more widely and extensively limiting and privatising their spheres of activity. According to Sobritchea (1990:79), education under American colonial rule populariz[ed] among the masses what used to be a practice common only among the privileged classes, that of limiting the woman’s sphere of involvement to household management and certain vocational activities. [Thus] American colonial education......by strongly emphasizing domestic skills and moral teachings........... delimited the career opportunities of women to those compatible with their mothering and housekeeping roles.

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188Sobritchea (1990:71-72) points out that contrary to popular belief the introduction of a public education system in the Philippines did actually precede American colonial rule as state run schools had first been established following the 1863 education decree and that even though forty three percent of these schools had been opened exclusively for girls there had been many obstacles to their success, their establishment had been strongly opposed by the Catholic clergy, they were poorly funded and they were poorly attended because of the harsh disciplinary measures employed by the teachers.
While some women persisted in very visible and public roles of religious leadership, most women, it would appear, maintained the practice of home based rituals and participated in occasional public, communal celebrations of the new religious rites. There are indications that these women identified, in the rites introduced by the Spanish, points of similarity and continuity with their previous religious practices, for example, in terms of the place of ‘anitos’ and saints; of the celebrations of ‘maganitos’ and feasts and fiestas; of the use of ‘tao-tao, larawan, licha’ and statues, images and iconography; of ‘anting-anting’\(^{189}\) and pious objects, relics and holy water; of prayers and rites for the sick, dying and dead; and of the use of wine, candles, flowers, food offerings, sacred songs and drama in religious ritual.\(^{190}\) These alternative responses are not divorced from the response of the ‘babaylans’ and ‘catalonans’ who tenaciously resisted capitulation to a new world order, although they are of a less overt and radical manner, such responses are on a continuum with the responses of those who persisted in adhering to the central elements of their pre-Hispanic worldview. These alternative responses in no way represented sheer acquiescence to Spanish ways but were, for the main part, creative and pragmatic forms of response that enabled women to claim a place within the new order from which to continue aspects of their pre-Hispanic religious beliefs, blended and redressed in the outer forms of the Spanish worldview. I contend that this type of response of the majority of the women flowed out of a process of cross-translation and cross-interpretation of the kind described in Rafael’s (1988) work which I discuss in the following section of this chapter. Further, in a number of circumstances, contrary to the colonisers design, religious beliefs and practices became important foci around which movements of resistance developed under local community religious leadership, (Sweet, 1970; Lee, 1971; Sturtevant, 1976; Shoesmith, 1978; Ileto, 1979; Cruikshank, 1979; Bolasco, [1989] 1994a), leading ultimately to the struggle for independence in the Philippine Revolution of 1896-1898. However these politico-religious movements were noticeably led predominantly by men although the overall membership of the grass-roots organization was frequently composed of both men and women.

\(^{189}\) Tagalog term having similarities with what are usually referred to as amulets in English, i.e. small objects worn or carried on one’s person which are believed to be imbued with extraordinary powers which impart protection, healing or extraordinary capacities, etc., but in Tagalog usage anting-anting may at times also refer to objects not worn or carried but power filled entities which one positions oneself close to in order to be empowered.

\(^{190}\) For further elaboration on these points of similarity and continuity mentioned only in brief here, refer to later chapters.
In reflecting on the similarities between the popular uprisings in the period 1840-1940, as discussed by Sturtevant (1976), and that of the 1884-1886 rebellion on Samar, Cruikshank (1979:29-30) describes all these uprisings as “movements of outrage and vision by men and women outside elite circles against both Spanish and Samareño politico-religious hierarchies” and suggests that although men came to predominate in such movements this was “probably because of the central role of military activity” because within the movements “there were sub-groups made up solely of women and an occasional example of an individual woman accorded great respect as a religious leader”. According to Geremia-Lachica (1996:54), one such woman was Estrella Bangotbanwa, “notable among the babaylans in Panay during the second half of the 19th century…..believed to possess supernatural powers”. However, during colonial rule operating as it did under the terms of the Patronato Real political, military and religious leadership, which had been complementary to each other and largely differentiated along gender lines in pre-Hispanic times, became conflated and concentrated at the local level in the hands of Spanish friars and so in the words of Geremia-Lachica (1996:57):

> the natives had to look for a religious leader parallel to the priest and the female babaylan was not the answer. She may have had a strong following as a leader but she was not male like the friar…..the natives saw the urgent need for a warrior leader. It was a period of persecution for the babaylanes who refused to give up their traditional faith and the natives were beginning to rebel against the heaviness of the colonial yoke…..With his gift of healing, supernatural powers and the capability to lead and wage war, the male babaylan non-asog warrior eventually emerged and took over.

Here Geremia-Lachica argues that in answer to a specific set of evolving social conditions Filipinos ‘reconstructed’ the babaylan identity from a feminine gendered one to a male gendered one possessing combined political leadership and military prowess, the strength of which would be drawn from the ultimate power of spiritual potency so as to be able in a sense to ‘fight fire with fire’. As a consequence the babaylan leaders in the movements of resistance to Spanish and American colonial rule were reportedly all male, (Cullamar, 1981:5; McCoy, 1982:166). Thus “the influence of male-centred Hispano/Catholicism……tipped the balance in favour of the male shaman” as Brewer (1999:33) observes. There had always been a few males, known as ‘asogs’ and ‘bayogs’, displaying certain traits of femininity who exercised spirit-medium roles in pre-Hispanic society. Nonetheless, the religious
leadership role prior to colonisation had clearly been a feminine gendered role because as Brewer (1999:34) emphasises:

In the relative gender symmetry prevalent throughout the archipelago at this time, the temporary or permanent male/female inversion of the bayog served a threefold purpose. It gave the male shaman authority in a sphere that would otherwise have been denied him. It reinforced the stereotypical boundaries of femininity, but in so doing it also, importantly, reinforced the normative situation of women as shaman. Given this reality it must be argued that spiritual potency was dependent, not on identification with a neuter ‘‘third’’ sex/gender space,’ but rather on identification with the feminine – whether the biological sex was female or male.

Recognising that their traditional female religious leaders were systematically being targeted and persecuted, and that the indigenous political elite appeared to have sold out on the cause of self determination through co-operation and accommodation to their foreign oppressors for the sake of their self-enrichment and aggrandisement, the masses sought what they believed would be the most expeditious way to extricate themselves from their oppression and subjugation. Their response in the form of recurring religio-political uprisings under the leadership of male babaylans was not a wholesale renunciation of women’s importance in the spiritual domain but a pragmatic and ‘temporary’ step taken to unite against a common enemy to regain first and foremost self determination. This claim may not appear immediately obvious here in view of Filipinos’ predominantly Catholic religious identity and the all male ritual specialists of Catholicism’s priesthood. However, as I argue in my conclusion and illustrate in the following ethnographic chapters four to seven, women’s religious influence in the informal sphere has always remained strong, and increasingly it is being reclaimed and becoming more visible in the formal sphere. Women’s spiritual leadership is being ‘reclaimed’ in a transformed way neither as predominantly a reinstitution of past practices nor as a usurpation of Roman Catholicism’s patriarchal model of priesthood but as religious authority rooted in channels of feminine mediation. It is a prima facie illustration of Aguilar’s (1988) argument, discussed in chapter one, that where both men and women in a society experience the effects of overarching subjugation by an external oppressor then first and foremost they unite in a common effort directed towards self determination. In colonial contexts nationalism takes precedence over feminism. It is only when men and women through a united effort have prevailed over their external oppression that
consciousness of issues of gender inequalities needing redress may begin to surface, although it is not necessarily automatically guaranteed that they will. According to Cruikshank (1979:29) in his reflection on the Samar rebellion in the light of Sturtevant’s (1976:80-81) research, the Spanish, due to “a preoccupation with and fear of Filipino elite nationalism” coupled with “disdain for lower class” Filipinos, misunderstood and underestimated the indigenous movements of resistance led by seemingly mystical fanatics. Filipinos fought and finally achieved independence from Spanish colonial rule in 1898, a fight in which women were vitally engaged as Apilado (1996), Camagay (1996), De la Cerna (1996), Locsin-Nava (1996), and Policarpio ([1924] 1996) have illustrated. However this Filipino independence was quickly usurped by the imposition of American colonial rule through which another level of influence on Filipino religious consciousness was introduced via the widespread establishment of schools and the deployment of American missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic. During this period movements of resistance, partially set in a framework of religious belief and practice, continued to emerge (Covar, 1975a; Love, 1977; Marasigan, 1985; Obusan, 1991). Even after Independence from American colonial rule, religious movements rooted in a particular conceptualisation of the relationship between the spiritual and the material world continue to exist on the margins of post-colonial society, challenging the gender relations in mainstream political and religious institutions and the ways in which power is operationalised in these institutions (Alaras, 1994; Balajadia, 1989; Dagmang, 1995; Del-Pilar Garcia, 1995a; Foronda, 1989; Del-Pilar Garcia, 1995b; Gorospe, 1992; Pesigan, 1992; Quibuyen, 1991; Van Velzen, 1994; Villariba, 1996).

**Religious Cultural Interactions**

Attention has frequently been drawn to the widespread adoption of Christianity in the Philippines, particularly Catholicism, as being a major point of demarcation and differentiation of Filipinos from their Asian neighbours. At the same time however, there has been considerable discussion and analysis of the perceived incongruity between Filipinos’ religious affiliation as Catholics, or as Christians, and their manner of conduct in everyday life (Bulatao, [1965] 1992; Miranda-Feliciano, 1990).

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191 As I noted in the introductory chapter the Philippines is often regarded as being an anomaly in so far as it is the only country in Asia wherein the widespread acceptance of Christianity is found.
Filipino religious beliefs and practices have been described as being “split-level” (Bulatao, [1966] 1992), or Christianity that is in some way deficient (Ma. Carmen Gaerlan, 1991:137). It has been contended that Filipino Catholics, in the main, are either not well versed in the official doctrines and teachings of the Catholic Church, or else appear to operate out of what are considered to be less than “authentic” or “orthodox” interpretations of Catholic doctrine (Lynch and Makil 1968; Makil and Lynch 1972; Bulatao, [1966] 1992; Schumacher, 1984). Related to this is the observation that Filipino religiosity has commonly been labelled “folk Christianity” or “popular religiosity” in ways that suggest that religious consciousness is only partially developed or immature. For example, Balajadia (1991:125) speaks of certain groups engaged in folk religiosity as having “confused recollections of certain Catholic teachings on the Blessed Trinity, angels, devils, saints, heaven, hell, bible, priesthood and other doctrines”, while it is stated in one of the most influential recent declarations of the institutional Philippine Catholic Church that, “for most of our people today the faith is centered on the rites of popular piety....because the ‘unchurched’, the vast majority of our people, greatly lack knowledge of and formation in the faith” (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines 1992:8). Obviously, here the majority of Filipino people who have Catholic religious affiliation are considered ambiguously by Church hierarchy, in one respect as being “our people” but, at another level as not truly constituting ‘the Church’ as they are identified as the “unchurched”. Belief is conceptualised primarily in cognitive terms as ‘knowledge’ to be acquired and ‘formation’, that is instruction to be given. From these perspectives Filipinos are ‘not really Catholics’, or ‘not really Christians; they are judged to be lacking measurable belief and to be engaged in practices that communicate values and meanings at variance with others’ interpretations of the beliefs and practices constituting Catholic or Christian religious belief and practice. There is an implicit assumption made here, on the basis of singling out particular

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192I should say of this paper which has been so widely and so frequently quoted in discussions of Filipino religiosity that at a later time Bulatao indicates a significant shift in his position as indicated in his contribution to an open forum during the 1977 Filipino Psychology National Conference (Mercado, 1977:100) in which he acknowledges, “I was brought up to think of folk religion as something inferior. But it is a fact that I really did have a change of heart.......I asked a question: ‘Who is the better Christian - the one who uses handkerchiefs in order to contact Christ or the one who uses concepts in order to contact Christ?’ I think neither one because it is faith that contacts Christ and faith can be shown either with handkerchiefs or with concepts. That was my big change of heart.”

193This declaration refers to the Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, held in Manila, January 20th- February 17th 1991. The membership of this Plenary Council was predominantly male (87%), the overall gender breakdown of the Plenary membership being: male clergy (66%), male laity (21%), female laity (11%) and women religious (2%).

194The quotation, cited here, comes from p. 8, paragraph n. 13 of the Conciliar Document. The emphasis given in the quote is as per the original.
attributes for attention, divorced from their relationship to other factors operative in the cultural milieu, that there should exist a unified, singular understanding and interpretation of what constitutes Catholicity or Christianity. But several Filipino authors (Obusan, 1991:68; Sevilla, [1978b] 1989:306; Gonzalez, 1991a:7; Alaras, 1994:63; Del-Pilar Garcia, 1995b; Marasigan, 1985:1-6, 34-41), have contested this negative valuation of Filipino religiosity as Mercado (1977b:viii) does in his critical reflection on the observation that:

The ordinary Filipino Christian has been called a “folk Christian” or a veneer Christian,\(^{195}\) that is, only \textit{externally} Christian but \textit{internally} not. He \textit{sic}\(^{196}\) has been relegated to the stage of peasant society. Peasant religion is generally considered inferior to urbanized religion. He also has an allegedly magical mentality whereas a rational mentality is supposed to be superior in terms of religiosity. The ordinary Filipino’s so-called utilitarianism, his externalism, and incompetence in intellectual distinctions make him religiously immature. In other words, the average Filipino Christian is allegedly split-level.\(^{197}\)

But are the above-mentioned claims true? Does the Filipino not have genuine religious experience in his popular devotions...? Are the experiences in these devotions genuine or split-level?\(^{198}\)

From an anthropological perspective, it is impossible to espouse a religious affiliation and embrace a particular religious orientation in life unaffected by cultural factors. There never has been, and never can be, a living out of religiosity divorced from the cultural milieu. It is an illusion to conceive that religious belief and practice can exist divorced from the cultural realm. Religious praxis cannot stand in the abstract, it

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\(^{195}\)Possibly, Mercado, a Divine Word missionary priest, is alluding here to the following passage in the Papal document \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} (Pope Paul VI, [1975] 1976:n.20, p. 25), “what matters is to evangelize man’s [sic] culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in \textit{Gaudium et Spes}” [referring to the Vatican II Document: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World].

\(^{196}\)The characterisation of the average Filipino Christian here as a male by a ‘Filipino’ speaking person’s use of the male form of the third person singular pronoun in written English may not necessarily be intended to be as engendered a statement as it appears to be when read in English. This is because in ‘Filipino’ the third person singular ‘siya’ is non gender specific and I frequently heard Filipinos from different social classes use he/she interchangeably when using English as a medium of communication. Some women in their life story conversations when speaking about their mother would refer in one sentence to her as ‘he’ and in another sentence refer to her as ‘she’ and do likewise in speaking about their fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers etc. Similarly I heard priests giving homilies in English referring at one stage to Jesus as ‘he’ and other times as ‘she’ within the one discourse.

\(^{197}\)Mercado would appear to be alluding here to Bulatao’s ([1966] 1992) “Split-level Christianity”, although not specifically citing it.

\(^{198}\)Emphases as per original.
must be enacted in and through cultural forms and yet in much of the discussion of religious praxis in the Philippines, this appears to be only partially appreciated. Mulder (1992:3-10) is critical of the concept of syncretism, contending that religious belief is but one expression of an overarching frame of reference constituting people’s culture. Gonzalez (1991a:7) argues along a similar line in noting that:

> the emerging insight of both theologians and cultural anthropologists is that the Christian message finds expression in the beliefs, values, ethos and mores of expression of an accepting community. There is no such thing as a pure Christianity.\(^{199}\)

In the description of Filipino religiosity as “split-level Christianity” or “Folk Catholicism” (Lynch, 1975b) or ‘popular piety’ or even as syncretism, there is a constant tendency towards dualism to conceive of religion being able to exist at base in some ‘pre-cultural’ form of ‘pure’, ‘official’, ‘orthodox’ practice that is then considered to be in some ways mutated, diminished or rendered partial and unofficial in certain aspects through interaction with culture. However, in the spirit of his change of heart referred to earlier,\(^{200}\) Bulatao shifts his position from “split-level Christianity” to an acknowledgment of the inseparability of the expression of religious belief from cultural embodiment. From this changed position Bulatao ([1982-83] 1992:70-71) points to a need for a change in perceptions within institutional Catholicism claiming that:

> the Church itself must be aware that the experience of this faith [in Jesus, the Son of God] is bound to be different in a Graeco-Roman culture, in a Chinese or a Southeast Asian culture. What is at stake is each culture’s right and privilege to seek and find God...........Post-Vatican II translation problems now show that absolute, objective unity in meaning is impossible, and in fact has always been a myth...........Ultimately, one has to say that God is ineffable, is beyond containment within the confines of human reason...........Each culture provides the symbols in which the human person gains an insight into God.

People’s religious beliefs and practices are, at one and the same time, both a cultural way and a component of the culture of various peoples. Just what constitutes culture and how to define it can be discussed at length. As I indicated in chapter one, the

\(^{199}\) Emphasis as per original.

\(^{200}\) See footnote n. 192, p. 138.
very concept of culture is at best precarious in contemporary anthropological theory. I admit to the partial nature of cultural configurations and agree with Gupta and Ferguson (1997d) on the constructed nature of the concept of culture. Yet in the absence of a satisfactory alternative, I continue to use the term ‘culture’. And I propose, in very broad terms, that culture, at least in part, has to do with how people, in general and in subgroups, within any particular society manage their social relations, where the management of these social relations, at both a personal and communal level, inherently involves communication of the meanings and understandings people have of themselves, others and the world at large. Meanings and understandings which are communicated one to the other via some medium, of which religious practice and ritual is an integral part, but of which formal spoken language is only a small part. The meanings and understandings so communicated are not static but rather in a dynamic process of change, transformation and renegotiation. Mulder (1992) argues that religious belief and practice in the Philippines is one manifestation of an overarching Southeast Asian cultural paradigm through which Filipinos can in certain respects be differentiated from their Javanese and Thai, Asian neighbours who are respectively affiliated with Islam and Buddhism. Equally however, Filipino’s religious beliefs and practices align them more closely with these same Asian neighbours than with those practitioners of Catholicism who come from a cultural base outside Southeast Asia.

In terms of religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines, the inter-related processes of colonisation and evangelisation, have precipitated a dynamic interactive interchange that continues into present global interactions, where there is, in Appadurai’s (1990:5) terminology, ubiquitous “disjuncture and difference” because: at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way.

In respect of the Philippines, Covar (1975b) has reflected on this phenomenon of indigenisation noting how Filipino religiosity expresses itself in creativity and fusion of cultural perspectives and understandings. According to Covar, cultural understandings of authority, and concomitantly power I would argue, are central to the ways in which this religious indigenisation process is read and interpreted. Appadurai suggests a reading of indigenisation in terms of rupture and dissonance, whereas Covar interprets the process more in terms of alignment and harmonisation.
Covar claims that in the Philippines legitimate authority is exercised not primarily for the purposes of achieving domination but rather to achieve a certain level of harmony. In this understanding authority and power are to be read primarily as processes of mediation and thus no level of authority is absolute; it is gradated and has a fluidity. Covar (1975b:87) further proposes that in Philippine organisational patterning “the material and the spiritual, are well recognised and delineated” but the two are not opposed to each other in a form of dualism but rather are conceived of as together forming part of a whole, a unity. A consequence of this understanding is that in a context of balance and harmony, the spiritual will always be found in the presence of the material and vice versa, or in Talisayon’s (1994:125) terms, “the average Filipino, from pre-Spanish times to the present, believes and lives in a world that is simultaneously material and spiritual. He [sic] is also both animistic and monotheistic”. These two faces of human existence and spirituality are delineated but not separated, there is no whole if either is missing, they are recognisable entities that interact with each other in the formation of a whole much as the warp and woof do in the woven cloth. As the pronoun “He” in the above quote from Talisayon’s research stands for ‘the average Filipino’ it obviously refers to both ‘he’ and ‘she’ but much of the literature dealing with the cultural expression of religious belief and practice pays little or no attention to the gendered expression of religious practice. However in the context of writing on ‘Katutubong Kaalaman’ (Indigenous Knowledge), Obusan (1994a:34-35) contends that:

> to speak about popular culture is also to speak about popular religion......Popular religion......becomes a vehicle through which cultural meaning is brought from the past to the present. One of the other very important aspects of these popular movement [sic] is the role of women.....popular movements were strongly feminist.

The place of religious belief and practice in women’s lives in the Philippines cannot be properly understood without attending to the gendered nature of religious practice in the Philippines. In lieu of this I take up this subject for more direct discussion in chapter six.

Appadurai (1990:5) posits that in the cultural economy of global interactions, “the dynamics of such indigenization have just begun to be explored systemically”. This, I contend, is poignantly true in respect of religious traditions, particularly

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201 The symbolism of weaving has been regarded as one of the basic metaphors of Filipino cultural life (cf. De Leon ex cover of ‘Pamararaan’ edited by Obusan and Enriquez 1994; see also Fabella, 1993).
Catholicism, because of the tendency of many to fail to appreciate the resultant implications of every proclamation and expression of the Christian message being a culturally mediated communication of religious beliefs, and as such a complex dialogic phenomenon involving many levels of interpretation and translation, necessarily giving rise to a transformed cultural mediation of religious beliefs. In the wake of the deliberations of Vatican II and the later Papal document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Pope Paul VI, [1975] 1976) there has been greater attention paid to this indigenisation process out of which has arisen a call for an inculturated approach to the process of evangelisation. With this call for an inculturated approach has come a partial shift towards recognition that the communication of religious beliefs, especially religious doctrine and dogma, believed on one hand to be ‘divine revelation’, are in another respect, at best, an effort to capture and communicate in the finite language of a particular historical period and cultural milieu the effects and implications of an experience of the interface of human-divine interaction (cf. discussion of Marian dogmas by Coyle, 1998). However, the shift has only been partial because there is lack of consensus as to exactly what the concept of inculturation refers to and as a consequence differences concerning the implications following from an acceptance of the concept. As Greinacher and Mette (1994) indicate, some conceive of the Christian message and beliefs, as lived, understood and interpreted by a particular authoritative body of persons, not as one among many ways and perspectives on life, but as the way: as an absolute, and as a ‘culture-neutral’, independent, static entity that can be assimilated into any culture, across historical time frames, thus in this understanding inculturated evangelisation is finding appropriate vehicles of incorporation of this ‘independent entity’ within specific cultures. It is allowing for some variation in external trappings (cf. Lynch, 1975b; Schumacher, 1984) but not for changed meanings and interpretations. Bolasco (1994b:202) contends that “colonialism and expanding Christianity were premised on a culturally specific concept of truth [and in adhering to this].......Christianity barged in on Asia, presenting itself as sole mould of religion”. Beidelman (1982) also reads missionaries’ activity in this light. Although acknowledging a diversity of approaches among missionaries, Beidelman (1982:19) posits that

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202 Official 1975 Papal proclamation on “Evangelization in the Modern World” wherein some partial, official recognition was given to the complex interaction between culture and religious beliefs and practices.

203 The term “inculturation” emerged in the 1970’s in Catholic theological circles (Arbuckle, 1996:37; for Arbuckle’s earlier work in this field see also Arbuckle, 1985; 1983), see also Beltran (1987:8) and Mercado (1992a).
for all the terminology, the missionary maintains that his [sic] beliefs are true and those traditionally held by converts are not. 

And thus Beidelman concludes in terms of the African context of his research that] this means an attack on traditional life since African beliefs about the supernatural relate in diffuse and complex ways with beliefs about other aspects of their society.

This is in contrast to understanding inculcated evangelisation as meaning that every culturally mediated proclamation of the gospel is necessarily differently interpreted by the people of another culture through their experience of the mystery of divine-human interaction in their own lives. The evangelisers’ communication of the gospel as a unique and mysterious moment of divine-human interaction is heard through the recipients’ experience of divine-human interaction. This gives rise to a two-way transformational interaction. Saunders (ed.) (1988:3) discusses this transformative process in depth and emphasizes that it is “continual [and] dynamic......internally and externally stimulated - not simply and solely due to culture contact.......[and] something other than syncretic composites of two or more religious systems”. In an anthropological understanding, the articulation of, and the ritual and symbolic communication of, the experience of this mystery of human-divine interaction is what, at its core, religion revolves around. Doctrines, dogma and ritual are all directed towards communication of the meanings and understandings of the mystery of this experience of transcendence. Religion as a cultural expression pointing to the experience of mystery cannot be static as Knitter (1980:17) emphasises in discussing Christianity as a religion from a Catholic perspective:

none of the religious forms of Christianity - creeds, codes and cult - can be absolutised into one-and-only, unchanging statements of truth. But in this regard Catholic hierarchy and theologians have not been consistent; they have not exercised the same caution and reserve as the early Fathers did in elaborating the ‘communicatio idiomatum’; they have tended to identify the divine with the human. In affirming the divinity of its founder, the Church has become insensitive to the essential ambiguity of its hierarchical offices, its doctrinal and ethical teaching, its sacramental system, its life and practice, in short, its religion.204

204 Emphases as per original.
In the Philippine milieu Rafael (1988) explores in depth the impact of the “communicatio idiomatum,” the effect that the translation and interpretation of language had on the manner in which the processes of colonisation and evangelisation were at one and the same time received and subverted in Tagalog society. Rafael demonstrates different understandings and concepts of translation between the colonisers and the indigenous people. For the Spanish colonisers, translation involved structuring, equating and establishing boundaries and ordering limits through grammars and vocabularies. Whereas for Tagalogs, as exemplified in Tomas Pinpin’s work, discussed by Rafael, translation was a much more fluid process. One association led to another variation tenuously connected with another corresponding association providing, a set of seemingly disparate linking points, lists of signifiers, creating in the process, a flow, a rhythm that enabled speech to continue and most importantly exchange to take place. For Rafael (1988:213) Tagalogs “give in to colonial authority, but they do not give up”. That is to say they seemingly receive the missionaries’ discourse, in fact they work very hard to recognise some terms of the missionaries’ language with which they are able to make meaningful associations in terms of their social order so that they can establish a relation of exchange with the Spanish, but not on terms completely aligned with the Spaniards’ expectations. In Rafael’s (1988:211) terms:

Christian conversion and colonial rule emerged through what appeared to be a series of mistranslations...[yet] such mistranslations were ways to render the other understandable. Each group read into the other’s language and behavior possibilities that the original speakers had not intended or foreseen.

Catholics in the Philippines express their religiosity in a number of forms at variance with the ways in which Catholic belief and practice has been defined, formulated and interpreted in different cultural milieux, even while sharing other points of convergence in external form and practice without necessarily ensuing uniformity in meaning. It is precisely because Filipinos have not been prepared to divorce their religious and cultural beliefs from one another that the forms of their religious practice and the meanings of these in their lives appear discordant when the criteria of evaluation is premised on an acultural lens of interpretation of religion. Related to this is the reason why I have refrained from using the term “Roman Catholics” in

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205Although this term can have a very specialised meaning in theological usage (Maas, 1999), its literal meaning is ‘communication of idioms’ and it is in this more literal sense that I am using it here.
referring to Catholics in the Philippines as I noted in the introduction. I find use of the term particularly problematic from an anthropological perspective. The term “Catholic” in its broadest sense means universal and worldwide (see Elliot et al. 1997:107; McBrien, 1994:3). In this understanding as McBrien (1994:5) points out:

it strikes some Catholics as contradictory to call the Church Catholic and Roman at one and the same time.

For these Catholics the contradiction flows out of the sense that the Catholic Church has lost its very Catholicity as the government of the Church is perceived to have become increasingly Romanised and steeped in a localised culture. In this milieu it is operating out of an understanding of itself which grants a particular localised cultural tradition precedence over all the other cultural interpretations and expressions of religious belief and practice of those who deem themselves Catholics.

It is against this backdrop that Mananzan (1995b:178, 180), concurring with Pieris (1988:74), laments that “sadly, in the process of becoming Christian, the Philippine Church was forced to cut off its Asian roots”, with the result, she contends, that “the Philippine Church is the most un-Asian Church in Asia”. In the context in which she is writing, Mananzan is obviously referring in particular to the Catholic Church in the Philippines. But I question whether Filipinos have in fact cut off the Asian roots of their religiosity in the practice of their Catholicity. It is possible for Mananzan’s contention that the Philippine Catholic Church is the most un-Asian Church in Asia to be valid without it also necessarily following that Filipinos have cut off the Asian roots of their religiosity. It does not necessarily follow that the ordinary Filipina/o’s concept of being a Catholic and being religious corresponds with the Church’s

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206 See footnote n. 22 p. 10.

207 Not an Italian or even a particularly contemporarily Roman culture, but a Vatican state culture which is anachronistically Roman.


209 A paper presented in an international research seminar for Catholic Missionary Congregations held in Rome, May-June 1995, and immediately following a prior paper presented by Mananzan (1995a). In this first paper Mananzan (1995a:164) clearly indicates that her focus is on the Catholic Church, she is less clear in either paper as to the extent in which she conceives of Church to refer primarily to the hierarchical members occupying a leadership role in the institutional body of the Catholic Church in the Philippines and beyond, or alternatively to the community of all those persons having a Catholic religious affiliation in the Philippines. It seems that both conceptions of the Church are employed at different points in both papers.
understanding of Catholicity and religiosity, where the terminology “the Church” is being used to refer to the clerical hierarchy of the Catholic Church institution in the Philippines and beyond. At heart here are two very different models of understanding the Catholic Church, as Lord (1994:227) elaborates in her ecclesiological analysis, one model is based on the concept of the church as a papal monarchy which:

stresses the centre - the Vatican, Pope and Curia aiming at one single doctrinal vision, one form of liturgical expression, one moral code……a highly clerical model with little room for the laity

or a second model based on the concept of church as local community which:

views the Church as decentralized with faith embodied in various cultures, thus giving rise to diverse, regionally based forms of Catholicism.

Much of the literature dealing with religious beliefs and practices in the Philippines fails to clarify sufficiently how the terms ‘Christianity’, ‘Catholicity’, ‘Church’, ‘religion’ and ‘religiosity’ are being understood and employed in differing contexts. The terms are not always being used in the same ways and at times are conflated with one another in confusing and ambiguous ways. Reyes (1970:42-43) claims, on one hand, that in the Philippine context the term ‘Church’ is commonly used to mean Catholic religion but, on the other hand, he holds that those who have Catholic religious affiliation are members of the Catholic Church in the Philippines although they only very marginally identify themselves as constituting, in practice, the Catholic Church, observing that:

when he [sic] (the average Filipino Catholic) is really confronted by issues germane to the Church, he reveals almost spontaneously what he personally feels and thinks by equating the clergy with the Church. And he does this without even batting an eye at the inconsistency of his definition of Church and his reference to the clergy as the Church.

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210 In this vein also see Beltran (1987:125) who claims, “The people also think that the Church is composed only of bishops, priests and religious.” Similarly Dañguilan (1993:xii) clarifies in her work, “The Church can refer to a community. For the purposes of this book, however, the Church refers to the institutional, hierarchically structured organization represented by the Pope and the bishops at the upper level and composed of the clergy and laity at the lower level.”

211 As Reyes likewise appears to do in his characterisation of the average Filipino Catholic as a male and yet as indicated earlier this statement made by a Filipino may not necessarily be intended to be as engendered a statement as it appears to be when read in English.
Reyes fails to critically comment on the equation of ‘religion’ with ‘Church’ but Mathews (1996:73) takes up the problematics of this conflation in some detail insisting that it is important to distinguish:

between the notion of religion in its substantive aspect, and Church as the institutional aspect of religion, i.e., the institutionalized, organized hierarchy of a governing body, a collegiate of clerical officers and affiliated laypersons. [Where Mathews (1996:83) argues that] the cultural conditioning, the traditional values and outlook of Filipino culture, are in fact religion in a substantive sense.

In a very basic form, this understanding of religion has to do with the beliefs people hold, about the meaning and nature of their existence, their perceptions of the absence or presence of the supernatural and their relationship to this domain in their lives. Beliefs which guide them in the practical living of their lives and engender certain ritual and symbolic practices through which they communicate their values and worldview to one another from generation to generation. Beltran (1987:142) advocates an approach along these lines in arguing that:

folk Catholicism and messianic movements in the history of the Philippines........can be understood better if they are seen as integral factors which are not merely sets of beliefs but ways of life.

In the passage from Reyes (1970:42-43), cited above, there is implied an understanding of the Church, which is doubly distanced from women’s context because it refers primarily to the clerical hierarchy as distinct from “the average Filipino Catholic”, who in turn is defined in terms of masculine gender. And yet, paradoxically, there are indications that the Christian message, especially the scriptures, may not have been ‘heard’ and received in the Philippines in as patriarchal terms as they often appear when translated in English and other European languages. This is because the Spanish missionaires mainly evangelised in the ‘Filipino’ languages but left very specialised religious terms in Latin or Spanish, (cf. Rafael 1988), languages which remained largely unintelligible to the masses. However, scriptural stories were recounted in the vernacular, and were widely circulated orally, leading to the development of printed versions, first in the form of De Belen’s work as early as 1703, (see Javellana 1990), and later to those like Pilapil’s ([1884] 1949)(Pilapil, [1884] 1949) ‘Pasyon’ so frequently recited in contemporary ‘Pabasa’ celebrations. But, as I indicated earlier Filipino languages are generally less engendered languages than English and other European languages, such as
Thus it appears that initially Filipinas heard the scriptures in a manner similar to the way in which Grosjean (1987) claims that she, and other women, received the Bible in Japan. Grosjean says:

> It would not have occurred to us to conceive of the Bible as a book to be used for the oppression of women. We did not receive it that way, and we have not experienced it that way. Part of the problem with the Bible for American feminists stems from the nature of the English language. Unlike English, the Japanese sentence does not require a subject; so we do not need to say “he” instead of “God”……Moreover, in Japanese we have one word for “person” or “people” and another word for “male human being.” Passages which in English seem to exclude women are not a problem for Japanese women. The stress on male imagery is very weak compared to English. When the Bible came to us, we studied it directly, not through the eyes of Westerners. From the beginning we understood its words as including women.

Filipinos, male and female, enact their deeply held beliefs in ways that communicate the meanings of their broadly based experience of human-spirit interaction (cf. Talisayon, 1994) and because the symbols of religiosity are polysemic (cf. Turner, 1967; Bynum et al. (eds.) 1986), Filipinos are able to read in the symbols of Catholicism’s rituals and iconography meanings that are in harmony with indigenous Filipino religious beliefs. Religious belief and practice are deeply enmeshed in symbolic expression, the translation and interpretation of which hinges on all the elements of one’s prior experiential and conceptual ‘knowledge’. In line with such an outlook Agapito Illustrisimo, the founder of an indigenous Filipino religious movement *Tatlong Persona Solo Dios*, believed, according to Marasigan (1985:39) that:

> the native culture and the European culture of the Roman Catholic Church were equal though different, and that God could not be conceived as favoring one culture over another, and as endorsing the paternalism of Roman culture over the native culture of Filipinos.

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212 See footnote n. 196, p. 139. Apart from the example given in this footnote of ‘siya’ meaning either ‘he’ or ‘she’ in Tagalog, ‘ang kapatid’ can mean either ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ depending on the context; ‘mga tao’ means ‘people’, (male and female) and is one of the terms used in the translation of the English term ‘mankind’, rather than the term ‘mga lalake’ or ‘kalalakihan’ which means ‘men’, while ‘mga babae’ or ‘kababaihan’ is the term for ‘women’.

213 Three Persons One God.
Catholicism's adherents worldwide are primarily found in Central and South American countries, in Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Ireland, the Philippines and to a lesser degree in other countries throughout the world. In the main, these adherents are not deeply steeped in the Roman base of Catholicism’s clericalism and its traditional patriarchal theology. Today, as in times past, the religious practices of these ordinary Catholics are richly endowed with symbolic forms and actions. Thus Catholics derive and regenerate meanings from their religious practices through establishing affective associations of continuity with deeply held local beliefs and practices, rather than through the application of theological exegesis or hierarchical directives and proclamations. The universally proclaimed dogmas and doctrines of Catholicism are formulated in the abstract by those who through their learning and training are least localised, but the practice of Catholicism by the masses is deeply rooted and embodied in local cultural expressions. As Miles (1985:8) highlights:

although they claim to speak universally, the men who wrote the normative texts of the major world religions in fact represent an atypical perspective in relation to most people of their cultures. Literate, educated, and culturally privileged, these authors cannot provide trustworthy descriptions of women’s self-esteem and their esteem in communities.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that, paradoxically, in my research into contemporary urban women’s practice of religion in the Philippines, it is only by attending to the diversity of interpretations and perceptions associated with cultural representations, the course of history, colonial interchange, agency and personal and communal identities that contradictions come to be understood as the two faces of one continuum. Representations that are the most unitary and complete, devoid of differences, caveats and contradictions are the most problematic in terms of meaningfulness and insight. Thus I have emphasised the importance of multiple perspectives in contemporary anthropological analysis because people do not lead unidimensional lives but rather are engaged in a wide range of interactions and social relations with others which affect them differentially. I have described ways in which colonialists have interpreted Filipinas’ indigenous religious practices. I argue that religious belief and practice are always culturally embodied and reliant on
symbolic expressions that never have a single definitive interpretation. I highlight ways in which colonisation has affected the intersection of gender relations, the exercise of power and the practice of religious beliefs in the Philippines. I argue that there are indications that the efforts of the Spanish to reformulate gender conceptions were not as effective and far-reaching as has frequently been assumed to have occurred. In the chapters that follow I turn to contemporary women’s own reflections on the place of religious belief and practice in their lives, intertwined with my observations and descriptions of these women’s roles in the religious practices of their local communities in MM. In so doing, I continue to explore links of the past with the present, as I attend to the detail of localised religious practice in Barangay All Holies.
Chapter 4:

Women, Family and Inner Strength

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that, contrary to popular ‘stereotypical’ images of Filipino family relations, Filipinas commonly exercise considerable influence and leadership at family level. I contend that Filipino women’s family level influence and leadership is frequently derived from the ways in which they access and channel spiritual power. The chapter opens with a brief discussion of common “typifications” of Philippine family relations and some of the problems and shortfalls I perceive in such images. Following this, my discussion of the experiences, and position, of Barangay All Holies women in family relations serves to highlight that common representations of men as the head of Filipino families are too simplistic. Both men and women commonly exert influence and power in Filipino families but most often in ways quite different from one another. I focus, in particular, on the way in which women’s power and influence in family relations is rooted in an inner strength. Paradoxically, this strength is derived from, and manifest in, the capacity to endure and prevail in the face of experiences of economic hardship and other forms of deprivation and exploitation; such as sickness and death, isolation and loneliness, threat and abuse. I illustrate how women, in their life story conversations, repeatedly made reference to the influence and strength of their mothers and grandmothers, and how several of them considered that they had received a share in this same quality in their own lives, when the circumstances of their lives were such that they needed to draw from inner reserves of power. I explore the ways in which women’s inner strength is perceived to be connected to their ability to access and harness spiritual powers. The inner power to which the women refer, evidences spiritual potency, and at root subverts and confounds notions of power derived from coercive force, material wealth and status. Paradoxically, it was in the face of those circumstances where women appeared most powerless, due to others’ exercise of coercive force, their lack of ready access to financial resources, and lack of prestige, that women’s possession of inner power became most evident. The women with whom I was engaged, in Barangay All Holies, were quite clear about the difficulties which they, their mothers
and their grandmothers had encountered and the resultant suffering which they acknowledged was involved. Yet their manner of reading these experiences was such, that they admired their mothers and grandmothers and wished to emulate in their own lives the same qualities of inner strength they saw displayed in these women’s lives. Further, while acknowledging that Filipino women are frequently alienated from economic and political bases of power, I argue that in the Philippine milieu where the spiritual realm permeates life at all levels, any analysis of women’s social positioning must also give due consideration to women’s agency in the spiritual domain. Through their harnessing of spiritual powers, women exercise a central role in harmonising family social relations.

**Images of Philippine Family Relations**

The Filipino family is commonly envisaged as being ideally composed of a household of extended kin, centred around the core entity of a nuclear family of father, mother and children. The father, who is perceived as the family head and provider, is deemed to be assisted by the mother’s provision of nurturance, home-making managerial skills as well as social and religious guidance. The parents are considered to be bound together in harmonious relations with their children, who are perceived as being essentially extensions of their parents, to whose wishes and plans they are obliged to defer, (Hollnsteiner, [1970] 1975; Medina, 1991:14-17, 51, 123; Catalan, 1995). In her presidential address to the Psychological Association of the Philippines in the middle of the 1990s decade, Catalan (1995) hankers after a mode of Filipino family relations which reputedly existed in the recent past but which is, for her regrettably, being eroded in the present. According to Catalan’s (1995:4,62),

| The family-man was regarded unquestionably as the head of the family and his wife was the keeper of his home, the dispenser of his earnings, and the first teacher of his children not only of the three R’s but also the Christian doctrine. It was rare for a wife to seek outside employment. Her place was the home. Many a husband resented the very idea that his children would be unattended to and uncared for by his wife. | staying home, keeping track of each other’s |

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214 This address was delivered at the thirty first annual convention of the Psychological Association of the Philippines, held on August 19-20th, 1994 at the Science Teacher Training Center Auditorium, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City and was published together with a number of other articles from the proceedings in the January-June, 1995 volume of the PSSC (Philippine Social Science Council) Social Science Information cited here.
whereabouts, working, playing and praying together did wonders in keeping the family together.

In Catalan’s (1995) representation of ‘typical’ family relations cited here, the man is indisputably characterised as the dominant party in the relationship as ‘head of the family’ in possession of wife, home, earnings and children. Although the relationship between partners in a marriage, in prior times, has been ‘typically’ portrayed as one of interdependence in a two parent household, there are indications in my data to suggest that such ‘typical’ households may in fact have been less common in practice than widely believed to be the case. Many of the women spoke of growing up in varied household arrangements, but frequently those in which their fathers were absent for a significant portion of the time. It is also doubtful as to how frequently ‘the family-man’ was in actuality perceived by other family members as ‘unquestionably the head of the family’ and, in fact, it may not have been so ‘rare for a wife to seek outside employment’ as Catalan (1995:4) suggests was the case. Camagay’s (1995) study, for instance, details that during the 19th century there were thousands and thousands of working women in Manila. Although information from the 1990 census suggests that in the Philippines overall less than forty percent (39.2%) of the female population aged fifteen and over were in the labour force while in the NCR close to sixty percent (58.3%) only were in the labour force, I am doubtful as to how accurately the census figures reflect the prevailing situation. This is because I noticed that on a number of occasions the information given by Barangay All Holies women in the course of life story conversations shed quite a different light on information obtained in response to the survey type questions asked for the purpose of obtaining base data information which could be related to census information. In response to the base data survey questionnaire a number of women described themselves or their mothers as “Maybahay lang” (just housewives) and yet in the course of our conversations and in my ongoing interaction and participation in their lives it became clear that they ran a dressmaking shop, or a sari-sari store, a bakery or some other small food store, or operated a home based buy and sell

Camagay (1995) details that both married and single women worked in a range of occupations. At least 17,500 were employed as workers in four cigarette factories, (Camagay, 1995:5); there were at least 1,550 registered women shopkeepers in 1887, (Camagay, 1995:24) and thousands of market stall operators, (Camagay, 1995:23); in addition there were betel nut street vendors, door to door milk and mango vendors, (Camagay, 1995:29-37); Manila also abounded with seamstresses and embroiderers, sometimes working from their own homes, at other times employed in workshops en masse, hundreds at a time, under the supervision of either Chinese mestizos or nuns, (Camagay, 1995:39-44); women and girls of varying ages, (6 to 71 years old) worked as household helps in a variety of capacities, at least 265 were registered but it can be assumed more were working in this capacity than those registered, (Camagay, 1995:45-60, 151-159); while yet others worked as teachers, midwives and prostitutes, (Camagay, 1995:6–118).
business, or were in effect joint partners with their husbands in home based business enterprises, providing daily secretarial, cashier and clerical input services to the business operation. Others operated a small scale laundry service, either taking in washing and ironing that they performed in their homes or carrying out these services in the homes of the more affluent in return for remuneration. On a commission basis, other women were engaged in the marketing of produce and various items brought in from the neighbouring provinces by kin or friends, and still others were engaged in facets of the waste recycling industry, collecting bottles, cans, papers, cardboard etc. So although the first answer was often that their employment and occupation was that of being a housewife and mother, and thus those who would declare themselves in a census as not being in the labour force, it often became clear in the elaboration of their lives that they, and their mothers before them, were actually engaged in various kinds of employment in the pursuit of a livelihood for themselves and their families. It is further questionable how frequently all family members, that is father and mother and children in fact actually ‘worked, played and prayed together’ in keeping with the idealised image of the Filipino family which it is claimed has been lost but to which, efforts of reclamation should be directed. It is, therefore, my contention that there is no typical, in the sense of stereotypical, residence arrangement or mode of social relations today, nor has there been in the recent past. In the literature pertaining to families in the Philippines, there is recognition, on one hand, that “there is no such entity as the Filipino family [because] there is no characteristic or behavior that is uniform to all”, (Medina, 1991 #4:7, see also Hollnsteiner, [1970] 1975:215, 226), similarly there is also a level of acknowledgement that “family structures and patterns of relationships are not static”, (Torres, 1995:54). Yet there still persists a propensity in the populist press, in educational texts, Catholic discourse and social science literature for setting aside this actuality in favour of presenting a generalised view of Filipino family relations, regarded as a partially lost ideal, which is hankered after and towards which efforts of reclamation must be directed. In her study Medina (1991:7) presents “modal patterns or traits which are commonly perceived or accepted as typical” and yet indications in my research are that the household arrangements of many families differed markedly from the idealised and generalised image of family relations depicted in much literature on Filipino families. Peterson (1993:571) argues that due to beginning with an implicit assumption that “family equals household equals coresidence”, there is a lack of adequate description of the

216 Emphasis as per original.
217 Italics as per original.
actual circumstances of Filipino families. My research suggests that the living
arrangements of families today, and their mode of relations with one another have
many forms, just as they have also had in the past. In the Philippine milieu the
institution of the family has been a resilient, versatile and flexible entity. At the same
time it has also been brittle, constrained and insecure. In short ‘the family’ in the
Philippines is a complex entity, never static, continually being constituted in multiple
ways in response to ever changing contingencies. It is only valid to speak about
family breakdown in the Philippines by becoming fixated on a single, narrow model
as constituting a ‘norm’ of family life in the Philippines. Nevertheless a narrow,
stereotypical image of what is considered to constitute the norm of the Filipino family
has deeply penetrated popular consciousness, such that those women who have spent
significant periods of their life in contexts at variance in some way from the
representation of “the typical Filipino family” have read their experiences as being
exceptions rather than what I contend has in fact been part of the common range of
variation in Filipino family relations. Rather than perpetuate this image of the typical
through an over-emphasis on seeking to identify patterns of commonality, I, concur
with Abu-Lughod (Abu-Lughod, 1993:14) on the need to “highlight the constructed
quality of [the] ‘typicality’ so regularly produced in conventional social scientific
accounts” so as to avoid factoring out differences, contradictions and complexities, as
less than authentic facets of cultural descriptions. Ramirez (1984) differs from the
general trend in literature on Filipino families in that she highlights the contradictory
forms of family relations which are operative. These contradictory forms, Ramirez
argues, arise from a culture of insecurity around which social life in the Philippines
revolves. She contends that this culture of insecurity has its roots in a plethora of
opposing small groups forming the basis of Philippine social structure, where the
interest of the small unit can only be advanced at the expense of other non group
members. Ramirez argues that family relations are paradoxical at many levels. For
example, she observes, that Filipinos pride themselves on stability of family life as
evidenced by the almost complete absence of official divorce and legal separation.
Yet the existence of querida arrangements, whereby a married man sets up a separate
household for his mistress and their children, is also readily acknowledged to be
widespread. Although there may be negligible evidence of official divorce and
separation, phenomena commonly attributed to the Catholicity of the Philippines, this
is, Go (1995:15) has argued, less a reflection of the stability and harmony of marriage
relations than of “the difficulties - financial or otherwise - in obtaining legal
separation and annulment from the Catholic church and the state”. Accordingly, as
Go observes, the actual number of marriage dissolutions practically occurring in the Philippine milieu, albeit ‘unofficially’, are masked because there is no officially sanctioned state or church mechanism for their recognition. Ramirez notes that although the family is supposedly a haven of peace and security, there is frequently little shared companionship between husband and wife.

Barangay All Holies Women’s experiences of, and position in, Family Relations

In this section I primarily discuss facets of the family experiences of eleven women some of whom are Catholics and some of whom are followers of Islam, some of whom reside in affluent sections of the neighbourhood, while others live in squatter localities, most are married, two are not and the women come from a variety of ethnic groups. Although my focus is predominantly on these eleven women, in discussing their family experiences, details of a number of other women’s lives are also recounted as these women relate aspects of their mothers’, grandmothers’, sisters’, daughters’ and mother-in-laws’ lives. In other chapters I also discuss dimensions of still other women’s lives, but in the accounts which follow I concentrate predominantly on my life story conversations with four married Catholic women, Mina, Babette, Lily and Clara, currently residing in two of the relatively affluent subdivisions of Barangay All Holies; one single Muslim woman, Khadija, residing in an affluent private subdivision in a neighbouring barangay to All Holies; three married Catholic women, Paz, Marietta and Delia, residing in a squatter area neighbourhood in Barangay All Holies; two married Muslim women, Minang and Fatima, from a low income Islamic compound in a neighbouring barangay to All Holies, and one Catholic religious sister, Joy, from a large, low income family belonging to an international community of religious sisters residing in a private subdivision in Barangay All Holies. In listening to the life-story accounts of these women from Barangay All Holies and nearby neighbourhoods, I found, in contradiction to the stereotypical image that men are reputedly those heading family households, that women had been very influential in the leadership of their families and households in the last fifty plus years. However, my research suggests that there

218Marriage legislation in the Philippines directly reflects Catholic conceptions of the indissolubility of validly contracted marriage. In Catholic conceptions, a contract of marriage is either always in effect until the death of one or both parties, or until it is nullified and deemed to have never been in effect in those cases where circumstances have been judged to exist which invalidated the contract entered into from the very outset.
is a greater degree of congruence between the Barangay All Holies women’s interpretation of their lives and the commonly held perceptions that in their lives women more nearly approximate the ideal of being close to God, hardworking, faithful and loyal, (refer to Lynch and Makil’s findings 1968). There is a perception among many of the women from Barangay All Holies and surrounds, that their fathers and/or husbands have failed to a greater of lesser degree to live up to the ideal of providing adequately and holistically for their families; a perception which becomes clearer by considering some of the detail of these women’s lives and that of their mothers.

For instance, Mina, who was in her mid fifties when she first conversed, at length, with me about her life experiences, read the context of her growing up as an experience of being without family:

as I was growing up, I, of course I envied my classmates who had their families, they had a complete father and mother and brothers and sisters which I never had, and there were times when it was difficult for me.

Mina is a teacher residing for the past twenty years in private subdivision A,219 in which the All Holies Parish church is located. Mina, like many women currently living in MM, has ‘roots’ of attachment and connection in multiple locales. Mina was born in Quezon Province,220 which she designates her home province, and she was raised in Quezon Province and MM although her mother and father originated from Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur respectively. Mina was an only child who spent her early childhood in Quezon Province, living in a dormitory with her widowed mother and other girls attending the high school where her mother taught. Mina’s father had died in World War II soon after she was born. Later, during the period of her high school and teacher training education, to which she refers in the excerpt cited above, Mina was a boarder in Manila at an all female high school and college run by German religious sisters. A dialectic exists for Mina between the difference of her own lived experience as a child and a particular, deeply embedded image in her consciousness of a ‘complete’ family being comprised of a father and mother with children living together in one dwelling and surrounded by other kin members, living in close

219See p. 70 for Map 2 of Barangay All Holies and surrounding locality, which shows the location of this and other subdivisions and squatter areas referred to in this chapter.
220See Map 3, p. 71 of Philippine geographic regions and Provinces for location of Quezon Province and other provincial localities referred to later in this chapter.
proximity to them. As she relates her life experiences Mina negotiates between conceptual and experiential understandings of family and kin. At a conceptual level having a ‘complete’ family and the facility to draw on kinship ties in one’s native ethnic milieu is conceived of as a vital, indispensable source of life empowerment. Mina experienced that her mother was able to prevail, removed and physically distanced from this life source of a ‘complete’ family and close proximity to extended kin. This is for Mina a riddle, and evidences possession of a great inner reserve of empowering strength, an attribute Mina frequently emphasises in the course of her life story conversation. In speaking of her mother Mina says:

She was a very strong woman, I would say that because first of all she was more or less uprooted from her native Province, she was so adventurous she went to another Province, very far away at that time, and then she had a living for herself.......she was able to fend for both of us in spite of the loneliness.......she was a very, very strong woman, she had a very strong determination and will power.......we were just living in the dormitory.......we don’t have any relatives there or anything.......She was very hard working and she fended for herself and for me.......she was an exceptional woman I would think and if I had one half of her courage and her, —perhaps—, but I do admire my mother........it must have been lonely for her, because, you know, my father died early but she never did remarry. She was really strong, I tell you.

Although not widowed like her mother, Mina continues to experience the anomaly of seeming family ‘incompleteness’ in her own married life as she grapples with being alone in the care of their children while her husband, from Negros Occidental Province, is engaged in marketing work with a multi-national drug company:

when my husband would be on his trips which was often, very often it was like being a military wife, I would be on my own and I was made to act as father and mother, you know, and it was not easy, especially the children were coming, there were five of them remember and I never had any younger siblings, I never knew how to relate with young boys because I never had brothers and so it was difficult for me, yes, but I think again, maybe I get a little of my mother’s strength

As previously, Mina’s focus turns to the strength her mother embodied within herself, which paradoxically Mina now sees herself as being given a share in, both as consequence of, and empowerment for, living through and beyond the experience of hardship. Mina also continues living in contexts in which she lacks proximity to extended kin, due to transferring from one place to another because of her husband’s
job, and emphasises the difficulty of this, “For us to be transferring in one city sometimes three times, four times, O my God that was hard”. And yet Mina and her mother experience themselves as strong women capable of independent pursuit of the means of self-support221 in localities distant from their natal kin, and of providing adequately for the needs of their children in the absence of their husbands even though the circumstances of the absences are different.

Mina’s experience of growing up in a fatherless household and needing herself to double as father and mother to her five children during many periods in her married life, was shared in varying degrees by other women in her age bracket, some of whose fathers had served in the armed forces even though they had not necessarily been killed in conflict. For example, the experience of Babette, one of Mina’s neighbours who had lived in subdivision A for the past twenty-two years, was that of “being abandoned” by her father. Babette’s father came from Pampanga Province and her mother from Manila. Babette, in her early fifties, was born in Pampanga but moved to Manila with her mother and siblings when she was aged ten. Babette, who described herself as a housewife, had college training in business administration and did initially work in this field. Babette describes her father, a Colonel and dentist in the military, as “a very, very great womanizer” going on to say, “and you probably will not believe it if I tell you--ah, we are all thirty five children of my father”. So Babette recounted that it was her mother, through dressmaking and running a grocery store, who provided in every way for Babette and her four sisters, whom she describes as being “the last family”. As she reflects on her parents Babette says:

my father really was not a good provider, it was my mother who did everything, financially, emotionally, spiritually; it was really my mother............She knew many things. I think I’ve gotten that energy from my mother.

Babette contrasts her mother’s talent and resourcefulness with her father’s lack of responsibility, care and provision for their family.

221 Although she moved from place to place as a result of the work postings her husband received, Mina continued in her teaching career in a variety of different postings from elementary to university level, taking extended maternity leave with the birth of each child and receiving some assistance with child care through hired help financed by her parents-in-law and through assistance from some of her husband’s kin (cousins) in return for board.
My mother had a small grocery store; she had a dress shop, my mother. And to think that my mother was not even College level, she was not even a high school student. She was really very good, talented you know. She knew many things.

Although Babette notes early in our conversation, “fortunately, at present I have a husband who can at least provide for the family” which contrasts to her experience in her natal family, there are other ways in which Babette’s experience in her conjugal household parallels that of her mother’s. Babette indicates that her husband from Bulacan Province, who operates his own agricultural chemical business, has afforded her little in the way of companionship and direct involvement in the upbringing of their five sons. For although Babette’s husband has provided well for their family’s financial upkeep, Babette emphasises that she has, in fact, had to exercise the leadership role in the socialisation of their children, and that her husband has been unprepared to share responsibility with her in this regard. So in effect while both Babette’s natal and conjugal families are nominally classified as being male headed households, they have, in important respects, been largely female headed households. In the course of so reflecting on her experiences, Babette also tells us, as somewhat of an aside, that her husband had also grown up primarily in a female headed household, his father having died during his childhood and his mother never remarrying. In speaking specifically about family relations in her own marriage, Babette says:

my own marriage is not really that good because although my husband is not a womaniser, but he is a workaholic. He works Monday to Sunday, Holy Week, Christmas, name it, three hundred and sixty five days a year. Well at first I resented it. The children were growing up and I was demanding from him some of his time but, you know I don’t think he is just the type that ah, that can really give much. I don’t know. Sometimes I want to blame that because he was orphaned at a very young age, I think he was only nine years old when he was orphaned by the father; the mother lived until we were married already. But he probably did not know how to become a good father in the sense that he can devote some of his time to the children because he did not experience having a father himself and that thing I am trying to understand. I just continue to pray that someday he would realise the importance of his being the father and that it should be him who should lead the family, not the mother.

Like Mina, Babette struggles here with her inability to reconcile her own experiences with the socially received image she has of what constitutes ‘true’ or ‘proper’ family relations. In reality, she experiences that it is she who is leading her conjugal family, despite a deeply entrenched image she has that the father and husband is, and should
be, the leader of the household in a ‘typical’ Filipino family. Babette experiences this dissonance despite having emphasised that both her grandmother and her mother were very influential role models in her life.

Lily, like Mina and Babette was a Catholic, who was in her early fifties, married, and a doctor by profession, living in private subdivision B for the past thirteen years. Lily’s mother, from Laguna Province, was a teacher but during her early years of marriage ran a store in Pampanga. Lily’s father, from Batangas Province was in the military and later engaged in security work in a national housing and a sugar estate and owing to the nature of his work was away from their household for extended periods of time. Thus, Lily spent her early years immersed in a household of extended maternal kin who made important contributions to her socialisation. It was the emotional warmth that they bestowed on Lily and her siblings, two sisters and two brothers, which helped to broker the tension in Lily’s parents’ relationship, and their aloof approach and strictness towards their children. In her recollections of her parents’ relations with her and growing up in the midst of extended kin, Lily says:

my mother, she is loving and very sort of strict........she was not open like I am open to my children now, she has a very different attitude.........very repressed........she is really very strict, she cannot express affectively what she feels inside...............and we didn’t really like her, although we knew she was very supportive of us and we knew she cannot deny us anything if it is possibly within her means.....

........my father was with the army, he had a very regimented idea of raising a family. When he comes home we just pay respect and then we go to our rooms, everyone shied away from my father, even my mother was afraid of my father........The respect is there. The love that you can say, affectionate and showy, and playful really towards a father, there was none at all........beneficial, fruitful, parental affection between a child and a father, there is nothing at all.......So the relationship that we lacked in the father, from the father was somehow diverted to uncles, you know to a father figure around us. And somehow before the closeness to the mother222 there were aunties around us and her best friends who somehow became surrogate mothers to us,

222Lily had previously spoken of how around twenty years ago her mother markedly changed “the closeness which was not apparent became apparent already, a lot of people saw the change in her” and Lily attributes this change to spiritual influences, “she joined the charismatic community of Fr. Dees.....there was a tremendous change of her, in attitude, in outlook........always she talked about God’s Divine Providence and providential love, and it was not the punitive God anymore”.

I mean cuddling or touching were not lacking because these were people who knew the situation.

In contrast to Babette and Mina’s experiences, Lily’s relationship with her husband originally from MM, was very different to theirs and to that which she experienced existed between her mother and her father as she explains:

it was very lucky also that my husband was very patient, very tolerant, he knew I couldn’t cook. He cooks, and he does things really in the house. He doesn’t need a wife actually........he sews, he launders, he irons, he cooks, he is the carpenter, he’s the plumber, he is everything.....and that’s I think the gift of the Lord to me. So, slowly, slowly, I know--he is not, you know--he does not abandon [me] and he knows that I was busy in this kind of a thing, my profession, and he compensated it with something else. So he had a fixed hour from the office and he goes home. So it was manageable, and, and it was a working relationship; he did not complain. He was very understanding; he was very supportive.

The qualities which Lily values in her husband: patience, tolerance, understanding, supportiveness, have many similarities to those which Lily identified as evidencing strength in the women of her family:

my grandmother is very matriarchal and she had a very great influence in my life......I think the women in my family had the most say, had the greatest influence in my life because I have seen them as very strong women, in fact they are martyrs sort of. They are very patient, they are very tolerant, they protect the family, very protective.

Men sometimes embrace this route towards influence and authority although it is more usually the ‘modus operandi’ of women in the Philippines than men as I highlight in further discussion of this point, in the next chapter, in relation to Roces’ (1998) work.²²³ Lily’s experience illustrates that it is not appropriate to stereotype all men’s behaviour as being of one kind and all women’s behaviour as being of another kind. As I contend in the following chapter, there are foci around which women’s and men’s behaviour are more commonly clustered as avenues to influence and power, but at certain points and in certain circumstances the behaviour forms of each shade into one another.

²²³See p. 232.ff
In the life experiences of Khadija there are similarities with Lily’s experience of relations with her mother, grandmother and father but also differences. Khadija is not a Catholic but a Muslim whose family comes from Lanao del Sur Province in the Mindanao region. Her mother was a business woman and also engaged in local level politics, serving a term in office as mayor, while her father was in the judiciary. Khadija was single and in her late twenties at the time of the conversation documented here, spending part of her time residing in subdivision H, in the barangay adjacent to Barangay All Holies, but for the greater portion of her time she was resident in Marawi City employed in a business managerial position. In terms of the family setting in which she grew up, Khadija recounts:

actually we [Khadija and her two brothers and two sisters] grew up in the care of our grandparents.......because my Mum was studying here in Manila so my grandmother took care of us. So in a way we grew up in a conservative manner, following the culture of our religion in and of the family........my grandmother got married at the age of fifteen, and then my mother also got married at the age of fifteen............My mum is the only child, so we stayed at the house of my grandparents, my Mum’s parents, all of us we stayed together

Khadija goes on to highlight how her grandmother taught Khadija and her siblings, both male and female, to all contribute a share of the household work and develop the skills to be able to care for themselves at any time, even though they were an affluent upper-class family. Khadija speaks of being close to both her parents, particularly her father.

A number of the other women with whom I worked described family circumstances with some similarities to those in which Mina, Babette, Lily and Khadija grew up. For instance, Paz described dramatically changing life circumstances. Paz, had two lengthy periods of residence in squatter area 1, totalling almost seventeen years, commencing in 1980, and broken only by a brief span immediately after her marriage, when she lived in cramped rented accommodation in Makati City.224 Paz’s mother is from Leyte Province and her father is from Camarinas Norte Province, but Paz grew up in MM in a household with her father, mother and elder sister, in contrast to the

224 Although this municipality of MM is frequently represented in the mass media and tourist literature as one of the elite neighbourhoods, recent classifications concerned with identifying the distribution of the poorest households in Metro Manila, (Tabunda and de Jesus1996:9) on the basis of 1990 census figures, identify over 24% of households in Makati City living on or below the poverty line, that is, having a 1993 monthly reported income level of less than P4,000.
circumstances of Mina, Babette and Lily’s experience of growing up. In her early years of childhood Paz’s tailor father, and dressmaker mother, ran a small clothing business together in Makati City, which provided comfortably for their family’s needs. Then Paz’s father suffered a prolonged severe illness, her mother and her sister also became ill, precipitating a transition point in Paz’s family’s circumstances:

after that my father got sick of hepatitis……..so the business, the shop was closed and besides my mother got sick and my sister also got sick so we cannot pay the rent of the shop so, we decided to transfer to another place...and my sister stopped studying, O.K. she needs to stop, and I was the one who continued studying.......I think we are really very poor at that time.....I need to have a side line of work while I am studying, working student, so I made sewing also, but this time embroidering bags, colorful bags......my father was not able to get a job again so I need to support my study. My sister she was really trying to find a job for her but she cannot because she is an undergraduate....so what do we do? I continue embroidering bags and my father sometimes.......somebody will call him up to make a dress for them, but it is seldom.......and we are very much in need of everything.

As a consequence of this Paz decided to approach her paternal uncle with an offer to tutor his younger children in return for some monetary assistance to meet her high school education costs as he and his family were financially much better positioned than Paz’s family. While her uncle agreed to the arrangement, Paz did not experience relationships within the extended family to be particularly amiable, rather she experienced much tension, and relations with these kin still remain very strained. Recalling this phase in her life Paz recounts:

So I was forced to help their children to learn. I have this tutoring every Saturday and Sunday; I have to teach his children..........my auntie, the wife of my uncle, sometimes I feel that she doesn’t like ..........sometimes she will show me a frowning face meaning that she doesn’t like the idea. I stomached it, the fact that I wanted to finish my studies,..........it is really very hard for me and besides our relatives doesn’t even invite us whenever they have occasion because we are poor, because we have nothing to give on their occasion of wedding, you see we have lots of--ah, belittling

This same strain in extended family relations continued with Paz indicating that she was not happy to have these relatives in attendance at a ‘despidida’ (farewell) party for her prior to her recent overseas migration to New Zealand. By this time Paz’s circumstances had significantly changed again as Paz had maintained herself in regular fulltime employment since her third year in College, and had successfully completed an accountancy degree, qualifying as a certified public accountant. Her
husband born in Japan, of a Japanese mother and Ilocano speaking father from Pangasinan Province, was an electrical engineer working as an overseas contract worker in Thailand, regularly sending home remittances, which provided the bulk of their financial support which was supplemented by Paz’s earnings. This enabled them to send both their children to middle class, private Catholic educational institutions even though they reside in a squatter locality on untitled land. Their dwelling however is reasonably comfortable for residences in this locality because Paz has been able to finance its construction through money she has accumulated from commission on a land transaction she brokered between another relative and a business contact. For over eight years, during the period of her husband’s overseas contract work in Thailand prior to their migration to New Zealand, Paz managed a female headed household composed of her son and daughter, her maternal uncle plus a live-in helper from her mother’s home province of Leyte, and Paz’s elderly parents living in adjunct, semi-attached accommodation, operating a small ‘sari-sari’ store. Although, in the course of her life-story conversation with me, Paz did not dwell particularly on her mother’s influence while she was growing up, she does emphasise that her elder sister exercised a leadership capacity in their family and was quite influential in directing the course of her life. Paz recalls that when she first started College her sister was already working to provide some income for the family and so she enquired of Paz:

“What course do you want to get?” my sister asked me. So I said “I want marketing”. “No, you study accounting; in marketing there are less opportunities for you and I don’t like. No, if you will not study, if you will not get accounting I will not let you study”.

In another scenario, Joy, who was in her early thirties and a member of an international community of religious sisters residing in subdivision A, had some experiences similar to Babette in that her father was not a particularly good provider due to his habit of Mah Jong gambling. Through his gambling Joy’s father eroded his natal family inheritance and it was only possible for Joy’s family to be able to secure a home through the efforts of her mother’s savings. Joy’s father had a variety of occupations, being a college teacher at the time that her parents first met, later joining the police force and rising to a provincial command level before resigning and working as a travelling salesman, thus, as in the case of Lily and Babette, Joy’s father was frequently absent from their home. Joy was the youngest of thirteen siblings and one half brother of an extra marital relationship of her father. Joy speaks of receiving
much more affection during her childhood and adolescence from her father than from her mother, of whom she says “I saw her as being sensible and responsible but was never that close to her”. Joy also indicates in other ways that various tensions and strains existed in their family relations. This is exemplified in the strained relationship between Joy and her eldest sister which began from their first meeting, when Joy, who was six years old, heard her sister, already married with four children of her own, admonish her mother, “Why did you bear this girl?” Relations between the two sisters did not improve when, at her sister’s insistence, Joy had to go and live with her in another province after their mother died suddenly when Joy was aged nineteen and still attending college. And so, on Joy’s sister’s terms, Joy was obliged to care for her sister’s, third born, epileptic son for two years in return for her board, while she completed her accountancy degree at college, after which time she ran away back to her home province. Joy recalls her two years with her eldest sister as being a particularly lonely time as her friends were not welcome at her sister’s place. Joy regarded Zamboango del Sur where she had grown up since age five as her home province, even though she was born in Basilan and her mother came from Surigao and her father from Cebu. Joy’s maternal grandfather was an affluent and prominent Aglipayan who had severed kin relations with his daughter and disinherited her when, against his wishes, she had eloped with Joy’s father after having some years earlier secretly converted to Catholicism. Just prior to her death Joy’s mother confided to Joy that while Joy’s maternal grandmother had been alive she had maintained some clandestine contact with her daughter, providing her with financial help and food resources, despite the resolve and action of Joy’s maternal grandfather. However, because of the rupture in family relations caused by Joy’s parents elopement, there had never been any opportunity for open relations or any contact with other maternal kin.

In another case, Minang, like Joy, also moved from her natal home to reside with other kin on the death of one of her parents. Minang, who was thirty and had been living for eight months in a Muslim compound in squatter area 12 in a neighbouring barangay to All Holies, described herself as a housekeeper. She was from Cagayan Province where she grew up a Catholic. But, in the second year of her studies for an education degree, which she was unable to complete due to financial constraints, she converted to Islam on meeting and marrying a Muslim in Marawi City. Minang’s

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225 Provincial Capital of Lanao Del Sur Province.
parents were farmers and she lived with them and her six siblings, two brothers and four sisters, but not with any extended kin, until she was in the last year of elementary school when her father died. To enable her mother to support and educate Minang’s three younger siblings, after her father’s death Minang was taken in by a cousin who provided board in return for home help services from Minang while she completed her elementary and high school education. But to meet the cost of her high school tuition Minang secured additional employment while studying and continuing to perform domestic work for her cousin in return for her board. One of Minang’s neighbours, in the Muslim compound, was Fatima from Lanao del Sur Province. In recounting her experiences of growing up, Fatima recalls that her father was rarely at home because he was away in different parts of the province with his business. At the time of my initial interaction with Fatima, she was in her late twenties and had been living in the Muslim compound for six months while her husband was abroad in Kuwait. Two months later however, she left to join her husband in Kuwait, once he had obtained permission for her entry and was able to send her the money required for her fare. Fatima was rearing her deceased sister’s daughter as her own, and in addition to the two of them, Fatima’s recently married younger sister, Mimi, aged eighteen, and Mimi’s husband lived with Fatima in the sparse single room accommodation in the Muslim compound, while Fatima’s mother, although not living permanently with her, frequently visited.

These women’s experiences are only part of the picture of the way in which family life in the Philippines is lived as the life stories of still other women show both marked and subtle differences again. In contrast to many of the other women, Marietta, who was the sixth child in a family of eleven from Catanduanes Province, says that although her family was big with eleven children and both her parents, plus an aunt and an uncle living in the one household, her memories of her childhood and growing up are those of having lived in a happy, loving family environment in which they helped each other and continue to assist one another up until the present. Marietta’s father worked in the public service and her mother operated a ‘sari-sari’ store attached to their home. Marietta describes herself as a housewife since she has not worked in paid employment since the second of her six children was born twenty-six years ago, but prior to that she worked for five years in an affluent family, as a live in tutor for the young daughter of an academic who has since migrated to the United States. While in this employ Marietta met her husband, from Tarlac Province, who was working as a driver for the same family and later worked as a taxi driver and mechanic. Marietta and her husband are on good terms with one another without any
marked tensions in their relationship and although Marietta claimed that her husband was the head of their family, two of her grown up daughters who were present at the time of our conversation had no hesitation in chiming into the conversation with the remark, amidst some hilarity, “but Mama has the final say, she makes the decisions in our household”. Marietta did not seriously contest their viewpoint, other than to protest that she had improved with age, being more accommodating to others’ points of view now, than previously. Marietta’s eldest daughter, Ching, is married to a merchant seaman who spends most of his time working abroad on an international shipping line so Ching and her three children live together with Marietta, her husband and their other four unmarried children. Marietta’s other married daughter, Lori, lives in another part of MM but Lori’s eldest son has lived mainly with his grandparents in Marietta and her husband’s household, just as Marietta’s eldest son had lived mainly with his grandparents in the Province until the completion of his high school.

Finally in contrast to Marietta’s happy childhood experiences, Delia from squatter area 1 says of herself, “Sad to say I did not experience to be a child”. This was because Delia’s mother was a severe asthmatic and at a very early age Delia had to assume responsibility for many of the family household duties caring for her six younger siblings, four brothers and two sisters. Delia’s father was a farmer and she describes her family as being poor, partly because her father sold most of his land to help meet the continued cost of medical treatment for her mother who frequently had to be hospitalised. Delia has ambivalent feelings about her father whom she describes as being “a very, very strict person” going on to recall of her growing up experiences that “I have to do my chores and go to school and have a high grade; that is the very strict rule of my father.” In further elaborating on her chores Delia explains why she felt that her father placed extremely heavy demands upon her as a child:

When in elementary school I had to be home at five so that I could cook the family’s dinner and then get up early at four o’clock so I can wash our clothes and then I can cook our breakfast. Sometimes you know children are playful, I work and I play and my father will be cross, “What are you doing?” Other children have time to play, I not……..I felt it because you see my classmates, their fathers are not very strict. You have to be careful not to make a mistake or he will get angry.

Although Delia feels that she carried a heavier burden in some ways because of being the eldest she says that her father was strict with her brothers and sisters also and that
progressively they also had to share in helping her with the household activities; both her brothers and her sisters. Delia also says, in a somewhat similar manner to Lily that she never really experienced affection from her father, “I did not experience to be hugged by my father, maybe when I was a small baby but not since I can remember.” On the other hand Delia says of her father:

If he did not make us strive so hard we would not have finished our studies; this is a credit to him…..he taught us to study hard and have a diploma because that is the only thing he can give us.

Delia further adds:

I saw his love for my mother is really, really strong. He is not irresponsible……he sees to it that he can give us our needs….he really strived hard and with God’s help, we are seven, all of us finished school in College, except my youngest sister who got married at fourteen in second year high school.

In reflecting on her close relationship with her siblings, Delia also pays tribute to her father’s positive influence as she recalls:

I am close with my brothers and sisters and I thank God that my father taught them to respect me and until now they really respect me. Whatever I tell them they obey and if they don’t like they tell me, “Ate, [elder sister] I don’t like”. They also seek my advice.

Although Delia’s relationship with her siblings is strong, it is not without some tension also as Delia indicates in speaking of her youngest sister, Kelly who currently lives with Delia and her husband and their children, Delia says:

sometimes Kelly is my problem……because she is hard headed, oh my God! But I cannot blame her because she did not experience to be free because she got married too early for her age

Kelly married at fourteen but has since separated from her husband due to the violence and beatings she suffered from him. Kelly has two children who are being cared for by her parents in Mindoro Occidental Province. While I have highlighted that there are some similarities in the ways in which Delia and Lily experienced their father’s relations with them, there are also clearly differences in these two women’s family experiences. This is particularly so in the closeness which Delia experienced existed in her parents relationship in contrast to the tension in Lily’s parents’ marriage. Further, Delia’s relationship with her mother also differed significantly from that of Lily’s because Delia says of her mother:
she was a very, very loving person…. [and] even though she is sickly, when she is in our house [that is when she is not in hospital] she took care of the family, she cooked, she washed our clothes. She is our attorney; she is the one who defends us with our father when he is angry. She is really loving.

In the course of her life story conversation Delia speaks of various networks of assistance and obligations between different members of their extended family. Delia’s father had actually been adopted out to his mother’s childless sister and husband who reared him and whose farm he inherited. This couple whom Delia describes as “very, very loving”, became grandparents to Delia and her siblings, but Delia notes that they also had intermittent contact with Delia’s father’s biological parents, who later in life had separated and had further children by other partners. In addition, during Delia’s years at elementary school, Delia’s father’s young cousin assisted with some of the house keeping duties in their home in return for her board while still attending high school. Delia also did chores for her mother’s sister in return for assistance with her education expenses. Delia’s maternal grandmother also helped with some of the costs of her education. Delia explained that her mother’s family were in a position to assist in this way because most of these family members had money from the remittances of relatives working abroad. In fact Delia elaborates that:

the uncle of my mother who was living in the States gave me my allowance from second year College onwards. He helped me in my studies for two years and because of this he wanted me to be his wife; he wanted to get me in the States. He is a widower, but I don’t like. His children told me I have to look after him because he is already old, but my father did not allow me.

Similarly in her own family, two of Delia’s siblings who are seamen are based abroad, one in Copenhagen and the other in Singapore. Both of these send remittances home, not only for their own wives and children but also for the support of their mother, and for repayment of some of the debts incurred by their father in the course of their growing up and being educated. In addition, from his earnings, one of these brothers has purchased a tricycle, which another of Delia’s brothers, a mechanic, operates, as a means of family income as well as assisting his father in farming. At the time of our life story conversation Delia, originally from Mindoro Occidental Province, was in her late thirties and had been married for seven years, although she had eloped with her present husband, Pedro, an Ilocano from Cagayen Province, eight years earlier and had four of their five children prior to them actually formally contracting their marriage. Delia indicated that although Pedro had wanted them to marry from the
outset it was she who had declined because she was unsure that she wanted to commit herself to marriage at that point. This was because she had been deeply hurt by the break-up, at the instigation of her fiancé’s family, of a prior four year engagement. Recalling this phase of her life Delia says, “actually I did not have plans of marrying then because I am hurt and broken hearted. I cannot love him [Pedro] to the fullest, I feel I still love the other man”. Delia indicated that she eloped because she feared her father who had counselled her against her relationship with Pedro as he already had two children by a prior relationship, Delia says, “My father did not like it because he said it is difficult to deal with it, with a man with children”. Although this situation is a common reality in many Philippine families it is rarely explored in discussions on Philippine family relations but is another element in the complexity of Philippine domestic encounters which Dumont (1994) reflects on in his paper on matrons, maids, and mistresses. Delia admits that, years later, she does struggle with the dynamics of the resultant social relations. This is because in the last eighteen months Pedro’s first born children, now in their early twenties, have sought him out and taken up residence in Delia and Pedro’s household, after their mother’s current partner evicted them from their mother’s household. In speaking of this context Delia indicates that her relations with Pedro’s daughter are particularly tense:

They came into our house only lately, about eighteen months ago Pedro told me he wants to take his children so I said ‘okay lang’ [that’s just O.K.] because I know it is his responsibility and I thought it is as simple as that; but it is not as simple as that. The boy is okay, you cannot hear anything from him, but his elder daughter, I think sometimes she wants to ruin our relationship because sometimes she tells Pedro something that is not true, maybe because she is trying to get the love that she has missed out from him……She told my brother-in-law that every time she sees her father, she is hurt, she is angry. She has many demands and even though I do good things for her, she still has these comments, bad comments, about me.

Family relations are complex with sub groups existing within the whole, with competing and opposing interests. The public face of Delia and her husband’s marital relationship is harmonious, and Delia generally speaks well of her husband saying:

I have many, many good experiences with Pedro……I learn so many things from him. He taught me how to cook Illocano, yes he is a very good cook and a very good singer also…………he helped my parents a lot in terms of financial, my parents, my sister, my relatives, my
children……he is generous to them………if he has, he gives.

However, Delia also reveals that considerable strain exists in their relationship. In large measure this appears to be because they have divergent conceptions of appropriate gender roles in family relations and control of the family’s economic resources. According to Delia, her husband subscribes to a model of family relations closely allied to those outlined by Catalan (1995) so that Delia identifies the tension as follows:

You see I wanted to work that I have my own money. Before I really wanted to work but Pedro don’t like me to go to work. He told me he must be the one to earn money for us……it is as if he treated me as his own, oh my God. But I don’t like that. I don’t like that because I am not treating him as my own, he has his own likes and dislikes and I respect him for being himself ……..sometimes my mother needs money and I cannot ask him, “you give me money for my mother”, I cannot, I am ashamed to, and what I do is I will get the money that my brothers gave me and that is the one I send to my mother……but really with our needs in the house, with the needs of his children, he really gave money for that but for my own money, he did not give me my own money and that’s very hard for a woman.

Delia had graduated College with a Bachelor of Liberal Arts and worked with the National Statistics Office and an oil exploration company prior to her elopement with Pedro. In fact in their current circumstances Delia, in terms of her clerical and secretarial inputs, is a defacto partner in their home operated business, but she is not accorded, by her husband, access to and management of a proportionate share of the economic resources of this family business. In Delia’s words

Before, when he was still an employee, he gave his money to me but now when he gives me money it is as if he is an auditor and he will audit all my expenses…..I cannot understand why he is not giving me money for myself. I think it is unfair. I work for us. I have my own little needs…..How about when I am with somebody and I have no money of my own. What do you do with your companion, you stay home, ah?

Delia comes from a family background in which she has a sister married to a policeman who has continued in her teaching career and a sideline of hairdressing and manicure work which she learned from her maternal aunt who ran a beauty shop in their home province. And while Delia’s mother, with her chronic illness, was not in the paid labour force, she did operate a market stall and sell farm produce door to door in their neighbourhood when her health allowed it. Delia concludes that
ethnicity is the reason that she and her husband have such different conceptions about the role of women in family relations:

You know the Ilocano and Bicolano have different cultures, even if we are both Filipinos. For Ilocanos the girls really don’t work and the father is the one who provides for their living, and the woman is in the house, keeping the house and so on, so forth, taking good care of the children

These conclusions of Delia’s are indicative of the ongoing circulation in popular consciousness of a currency of ‘stereotypical’ images in respect to family relations, as Delia and Pedro’s differences cannot be solely attributed to their ethnicity. This is because other women reported that their husbands, belonging to different ethnic groups, had similar expectations to that of Delia’s husband, and yet I also met many Ilocano women from both higher and lower socio-economic brackets who were actively engaged in the workforce both before and after their marriage. By the same token I met other non Ilocano women whose expectations were similar to those of Pedro as evidenced in Babette’s comment “I still subscribe that the women should really be at home taking care of the family” or in the expectations of married life voiced by Lily’s neighbour Clara whose father is Bicolano, while her mother is from Quezon Province. Clara recalls:

when I got married, my idea then was very idealistic. I thought I would be an ideal wife, work at my leisure, you know, and then do the household work of a wife, and my husband comes in and I would be here and waiting for him meal cooked and everything like that, only to find out that when I got married that is not it.

On marrying, Clara realised that if she did not continue with her work in the public service, it would be impossible for them to ever earn sufficient to establish their own household, independent of her in-laws with whom they lived for the first ten years of their married life, and Clara’s husband was only too happy for her to continue in her employment.

Mina, Babette, Lily, Paz, Khadija, Joy, Minang, Fatima, Marietta, Delia and Clara originate from different parts of the country, with many different ethnic groups represented in their kinship links and there exists marked variation in their socio-economic status. Family is not a unified localised entity but a dispersed and fractured reality among people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. I have sought to illustrate that there are some threads of connection in these women’s family experiences and yet each woman’s life is also quite different. Further similarities and
contrasts can be discerned in the lives of other women whose experiences I discuss at other points in this ethnography. I have sought to listen to the stories of individual lives in all their particularity, to appreciate the richness of the fabric of human experience that defies ready “typification”. Many women with whom I was engaged in this research have frequently operated in practice, even though not in name, as household heads and been particularly influential members in their families. However, as Ramirez (1984) contends, because there has been an over-emphasis on women occupying a mothering role, both of their children and their husbands, Filipinas have been seen as being more motherly than wifely. Although not emphasised in Ramirez’ work, an over focus on the mothering qualities of Filipinas, also deflects from due consideration of women as persons in their own right and the inherent and particular qualities which they possess and the ways in which they simultaneously live out their identities as daughter, sibling, worker, community member etc. Further I concur with Ramirez that although mutual co-operation and interdependence for the purpose of economic advancement are indicators of the existence of close family ties, frequently there simultaneously exists a great lack of harmony within family relations. Unity exists in opposition to external threat or force. Hence the Filipino family is paradoxical, being both a source of security and cause of insecurity. It is this complexity and ambiguity that I perceive to have been an ongoing feature of family relations in the Philippines. Families are clustered within families wherein widely different and contradictory forms of family relations are experienced within any one person’s lifetime. In the midst of this complexity, Barangay All Holies women, in varying ways, attributed the ability of themselves, or of their mothers or grandmothers to endure and prevail in adverse circumstances, to having embodied within themselves strength or power derived from spiritual sources.

**Women, Inner Strength and Spirituality**

In the course of their life-story conversations several of the women held that there is an interconnection between women’s inner strength, prayerfulness and coping with difficult life contexts. For instance, Babette in speaking of her mother says, “my mother was very religious” and goes on to indicate that she sees an interconnection between her mother’s capacity to cope and the religious quality of her life which she regards as being more a matter of spirituality than religiosity. Babette differentiates
between religiosity and spirituality; she speaks of her mother having been helped through having a personal relationship of communication with God, by praying the rosary, a Marian based prayer, on a daily basis. Babette does not consider her mother religious in terms of being particularly engaged in formal church rituals and activities:

my mother, I did not even see her go to church regularly, but I always saw her pray in the house. In the evening she would ask us all to gather round and pray the rosary. And when she prays, she really, I think she prayed fervently. Maybe that’s why I am thinking now, is it really religion that draws us close to God or our own good nature...........My mother was not the kind who was ritualistic, you know somebody who would follow rituals, no I just saw in her that she had that personal relationship with God, in her own way, and that helped her a lot....Yes I think religiosity is very much different from spirituality. I don’t think my mother was religious, I think she was spiritual because she really applied in her daily life what is supposed to be applied.

I noticed that many of the Barangay All Holies women used the term religious in two distinctly different ways, sometimes within the context of the one conversation. They used the word ‘religious’ at times to mean religiosity, in terms of being preoccupied with participation in religious activities and rituals in contrast to ‘being a religious person’, as equated to ‘being spiritual’ or ‘being good’. They noted that frequent and regular participation in ritual, devotional and Church activities was indicative of ‘being religious’ in the sense of religiosity. A number of Barangay All Holies women noted that although religiosity was frequently a feature of women’s lives, such religiosity may or may not be indicative of ‘being religious’ in the sense of being a spiritual person, as this depended more on the quality or tenor of a person’s whole life, particularly their social relations, rather than simply their religious practice. This overlap of meanings is illustrated in the following extract from a conversation I had with Dina concerning what it means to ‘be religious’. Dina, from an affluent upper class family, has spent all her life in MM. Against her mother’s wishes she married a man below her social class from a professional middle class background, but is now widowed in her early forties and the mother of two single daughters. She works in an executive secretarial capacity in the tertiary education sector and is active in local level religious leadership in a chapel, other than ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ and Holy Mary Blessings, located in private subdivision K,226 an

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226See Map 2, p. 70 of Barangay All Holies Research locality.
affluent section of the locality administered by All Holies Parish. The relevant excerpt from our conversation ran as follows:

**Dina:** You always see the women in Church. They go to Mass every day. You see them praying the rosary; praying these novenas and prayer books but they quarrel with each other, they criticise their neighbour. We have that here so I wouldn't say it is a gauge in saying that they are religious.......I would say that being in the church, or working in the church or praying in the church, does not really mean that they are religious.

**Mary:** O.K. Are you able to articulate for me what ‘being religious’ is if we have come to an agreement that it does not equate necessarily to church activity; so what is the essence of ‘being religious’?

**Dina:** OK being religious for me would mean someone who leads a prayerful life, somebody who does not forget, or who always takes note of church activities, who remembers, church celebrations; anything that has to do with church activity, that is being religious. In contrast to spirituality, because being spiritual would mean,--it does not necessarily mean that the person keeps on praying. A spiritual person would be someone who loves their neighbour as themselves, as they love God. For me, that is being spiritual - I have something to say about being religious also. They follow a pattern in their prayer life, in their church activities. There is a pattern whereas - being spiritual, it just comes when the need arises. That’s being spiritual - I mean - doing something good whenever possible. For me that’s being spiritual. Again, I repeat, that it does not necessarily mean that they lead a prayerful life.

Here Dina appears to use the term ‘religious’ in two quite different ways. In the first instance she uses it in such a way that it does not necessarily equate with a high level of involvement in church activities and rituals but later she uses ‘religious’ to mean a large degree of involvement in church rituals and celebrations and ‘being religious’ in this manner she contrasts with ‘being spiritual’ which she does not see as necessarily implying a lot of involvement in prayer but rather being connected more with a person’s quality of relationships. I found other women also showed a similar tendency to Dina, of using the term religious in different ways in the context of the one conversation. For example Babette, as I have already indicated, described her mother as not being religious in terms of not being particularly engaged in formal church activities. In remarking of her mother, Babette says, “I don’t think my mother
was religious, I think she was spiritual”, and yet in the very early stages of our conversation Babette describes her mother as being religious in the context of a comparison of the past with the present saying:

On the role of women today.  I grew up in a family of very conservative women. The disposition of my mother was very religious........so I do not really subscribe to the modernisation of the world today...........probably it is because of the family background. I think it really makes a big difference when you grew up in a family of, you know, the traditional way, the conservative way

This excerpt from the very beginning of our conversation indicates that the reading of many terms, among them the term “religious” but also the terms “traditional” and “conservative” can only gradually be understood in the context of the ongoing conversation rather than having a particular fixed meaning, the understanding of which is necessarily immediately comprehensible for people of different backgrounds in different contexts. In the course of our conversation Babette clarifies that by referring to her mother as being religious she does not mean that she is frequently engaged in Church activities and the practice of religious rituals but rather that she holds a particular view about life and the world in which she believes that ultimate control of life is in the hands of a spiritual entity, God. Babette very directly associates her mother’s capacity to prevail in the face of oppressive personal circumstances, to her successfully accessing spiritual sources of empowerment, a capacity which appears to Babette to be passed on from mother to daughter through the generations Babette speaks of having “gotten that energy from my mother” and of her grandmother having passed on this same spiritual inner reserve to her daughter, Babette’s mother. Paradoxically for Babette it is the very hardships and adversity of life that draw out this power to its full potential. In reflecting on the source of her mother’s spirituality Babette expresses it thus:

so what made her spiritual I think was the influence I think of the mother, my grandmother, and at the same time probably the trials in life that she encountered, that she experienced. You know I think sometimes it’s the trials that makes us closer to God.....I think that is one of the factors that made her religious or spiritual, I think it is the hardships in life, problems and the influence of the mother.

227For instance, Babette’s experience of family, as detailed earlier in this chapter, is considerably at variance with Catalan’s (1995) description and parameters of a ‘traditional’ and ‘conservative’ Filipino family.
In reflecting on the dynamics of her father’s relationship with herself and her siblings, Delia also gives indications of believing that paradoxically she is strengthened through enduring and submitting, in one respect, in the face of her father’s strictness:

I don’t remember ever rejecting my brothers and sisters, we fought but with love, we really love each other, that is the trait planted by my father. He is the one who really moulded us........You see my father now when I talk to him, he respects my decision and I think he respects me. Well I thank him for that because he taught me how to respect him also.

Within her father’s strictness Delia also identifies an inner strength derived from her father’s religiousness, which mediated to some extent his strictness. Delia recounts that her father allowed her a more lenient schedule during her high school days so that she could attend weekday Masses associated with Legion of Mary activities and the weekly Marian novena, and goes on to note: “My father is also a religious man. When it is ‘Mahál na Araw’ [Holy Week], my father is the one who is leading the ‘Pabasa’; he is the one who taught us to sing the ‘Pasyon’, the book of sufferings”.

Delia’s submission to her father, as well as her attitude in relation to her husband, is not mere acquiescence. She does not simply surrender her own identity, her own convictions, but she seeks to find a path through her pain without direct, overt confrontation. For Delia, the way to prevail in the face of tensions and strain, lay along an alternative path. It is a path aimed at harmonisation of relations, which Delia perceives as being one of her key female responsibilities:

I keep that [the difficulties in her relationship with her husband] secret from others, even my mother because I want that the respect for Pedro is there. Even though they are my mother or my sister I don’t want them to judge Pedro because Pedro is good. He has many good ways, good traits........[so] when I am angry I don’t talk much, my mouth is shut........I prefer to shut my mouth, not to talk because when I am angry I can tell words that can hurt you, so I prefer not to talk. I don’t want to hurt somebody........I want our house happy and I really don’t want to hurt others’ feelings.

It is this same attribute in her mother, her ability to mediate through tension, conflict and differences that Delia most appreciates:

our mother........the way she showed her love for us is the one when she always defend us from our father. But she always, I remember she always told us you must love each other, you must love each other.
Don’t fight. When you have something you give it to your brother, you give it to your sister, that’s what she said.

Delia goes on further to express her belief that ultimately her life is directed by spiritual power,

I think that is the root of everything. When you fear God and you obey God, everything will be under control......when you fear God you will not do evil. You will be good and I think the success of one’s life is when you put God first in everything you do and then he will do the rest with your lives.

There are very close parallels between Babette’s and Delia’s reading of their life experiences and sections of Ileto’s (1979:24) work where he argues that there is an understanding of power in the Philippines, (particularly spiritual power, which the common ‘tao’ ultimately consider to be the most potent of powers) wherein it is held that “various types of sacrifices......focus or concentrate in oneself some of the energy suffusing the universe”. This understanding is closely aligned to that of Anderson’s (1972) work on Javanese concepts of power as I earlier discussed in chapter two.

In other respects Babette’s conclusion that her mother “was spiritual because she really applied in her daily life what is supposed to be applied” and Delia’s conviction, as cited above, that “when you fear God, you will not do evil, you will be good”, echoes Ileto’s conclusion about the religiosity of the followers of Felipe Salvador, the leader of the Santa Iglesia religio-political movement of 1894-1910. Ileto (1979:255) contends that for Salvador’s followers, religion “was not just devotion to God and concern with the supernatural, but a way of organising their daily lives”. Babette makes the distinction that her mother’s spirituality does not originate primarily in religious practices directly connected with church attendance and associated rituals but more with her mother’s intrinsic qualities, or in her words her “own good nature”. Delia likewise says, “every day I pray, but no particular time, no particular place, even when I am in the comfort room and I feel like praying, I pray......and after praying I feel comfortable, I feel eased”. Although Babette emphasised that her mother was not ritualistic she does link her mother’s, and her own, spirituality, at base, to Catholicity as when she recounts:

I remember my grandmother; she taught my mother all the teachings of the Catholic Church, this and that; she taught the same to us, but it is not really that kind, you know, to the letter where she would do this

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228See p.102.

229See excerpt from Babette’s life-story conversation, p. 176.
and do that because that is the Church teachings; no that is not really the kind.

Delia similarly emphasizes the Catholicity of her grandmother and her influence in her life. “My grandmother on my mother’s side is really a very devoted Catholic and she sees to it that we pray our Angelus, our prayer before meals and our rosaries and so forth”. Mina, like Babette, does not classify her mother as being particularly religious in the sense of being ritualistic, recalling that, “I don’t remember her spending hours on end in church....I don’t remember her praying novenas one after the other” but nonetheless Mina locates her mother quite definitely as a Catholic, in describing her mother as:

a person who lived her life as a Catholic......she may not have been very, very religious but she certainly followed what you have in the ten commandments and I find myself being like that.

Lily, who spent her childhood in her grandmother’s house, speaks, in a similar vein to Babette and Delia, of the very significant influence of her grandmother and also of her mother and maternal aunts, and connects the source of their strength to their prayerfulness, their involvement in Church activities and above all to their Marian devotion. In the excerpt cited here, I pick up Lily’s life story conversation at the point where Lily is emphasising that the women in her family have been those most influential in her life:

I think the women in my family had the most say, had the greatest influence in my life because I have seen them as very strong women. In fact they are martyrs, sort of. They are very patient, they are very tolerant, they protect the family, very protective......my mother and my grandmother and my aunts were really the conservative Filipinas; very religious and I think that the anchor of their lives is their faith. Ever since, when I was small, they were always going to Church...they were always prayerful... and then there was this - I would not say really a cult - but it is really the Virgin Mary which dominated their lives more than anything else, I think it was the identity. Being mothers also. But it is really, you know, the nature, second nature to the Filipinos being, identifying with the Virgin Mary....

Lily intimates here that Marian devotion is of special importance to Filipinos, a point to which I will return in chapter seven. However, of particular salience here is that Lily was well aware that her mother was in an oppressive marital relationship and that others, including her grandmother, had counselled her to extricate herself from the relationship. Lily’s mother chose not to and paradoxically Lily reads this not as
weakness but as a sign of strength, particularly of a spiritual nature, of which Lily seeks a share in her own life:

A lot of people called my mother a martyr, including my grandmother. Many, many times in our growing years I’ve heard talks that if my mother cannot stand my father, they should separate, but my mother said, “No!”. So I think what kept them together was us and the prayers and - I don’t know - my mother has emotional and spiritual strength and I hope I am capable of having something like what she had.

Lily indicates here that spiritual strength is a highly valued way of exercising power and being in ultimate control of a situation. Further, Lily holds that such spiritual strength is capable of undermining those who resort to the use of violence and external force. There is evidence in the life stories of these Barangay All Holies women, of a conception of power which Errington (1990) contends is widespread in island Southeast Asia. In drawing on ethnography from predominantly outside the Philippines, Errington (1990:5) argues that in this region:

to exert force, to make explicit commands, or to engage in direct activity - in other words, to exert “power” in a Western sense - reveals a lack of spiritual power and effective potency, and consequently diminishes prestige.

In the Philippines, spiritual strength and religious leadership are paths to respect and prestige, a point, which I develop in greater depth in chapter six.

From a different external religious tradition, but seemingly from a similar underlying spiritual perspective, Khadija indicates that her grandmother was most influential in teaching them to follow the religious ways of Islam. In particular she emphasises that it was her grandmother who was very insistent that she must attend Arabic school on Saturdays and Sundays in addition to her regular Monday to Friday schooling at a Christian elementary school, in order to learn Arabic so that she would be able to read and understand the Koran. Khadija also spoke of female relatives being particularly religiously influential in the informal sphere, speaking of one of her maiden maternal aunts whom she refers to as Lola (literally the kinship term for grandmother but sometimes used to refer to any close senior kin):

The other ‘Lola’ of mine she is very happy because she would tell me “Yes I have no husband but I am devoting my time to religious
groups”. I see her always giving to the children and then she always tells me that she is really happy.......There are a lot of single women who have done so much for the society, I know for a fact, just like my ‘Lola’, and then she is being respected.

Fatima also links the capacity of her mother to endure much sadness in her life, in having suffered the death of five of her eleven children, to the strength she derived from her prayerfulness, recounting that:

What was important in my mother’s life is always praying to God. Always reading the Holy Koran. Always praying, every hour of prayer she prayed with us.........Five times a day. That is of most importance in the life of my mother, always praying.

In a similar vein Joy says that what enabled her mother to cope in the hardships she suffered, with her husband’s gambling habits and having so many children, was her prayer. Other women like Marietta, as is further detailed in chapter six, followed in their grandmother’s footsteps, being very involved in local level religious leadership. In her local Santa Maria Birhen neighbourhood, Marietta, even though she frequently suffered poor health, was involved as a member of a number of religious confraternities and in leading prayers during Holy week and Marian devotions.

The prevalent trend which has existed towards generalising and stereotyping of Filipinas’ positionality based on the dualism of binary oppositions and/or complementarity rather than multiplicity, explains in part why there is such divergence in efforts to characterise the role and status of Filipino women. What exists in reality as a complex plurality is too frequently simplistically reduced to a singular, ‘the social construction of the Filipino woman’. In both the short and the long term, women’s identities and the boundaries of their social relations are frequently shifting and being socially reconstituted in response to external contingencies and internal realignments of priorities and allegiances and yet the net effect does not appear as fracture and disjuncture in individual women’s lives so much as threads of continuity. In reacting to the social construction of the Filipina in the social sciences literature, Aguilar (1988:28-48) argues that the Filipino woman is falsely portrayed in terms of either the “domineering” or the “ambiguous” Filipina. Aguilar (1988:42) reacts strongly to the characterisation of Filipino women’s status as

[^230]: See p. 221.

[^231]: I am alluding here to a section of Aguilar’s (1988:28-48) work by this title.
high, arguing that the weight of empirical evidence drawn from the life experiences of
the vast majority of women runs counter to any such conclusion. I agree, in part,
with Aguilar that the status of many Filipinas cannot be characterised as high, in so
far as they are exploited, economically disadvantaged and suffer physical and/or
psychological abuse, and yet I consider that the issue is more complex than Aguilar
postulates. In the first place, status is a composite, multifaceted phenomenon for
which many different criteria have been used as benchmarks as Angangco et al.
(1980) emphasise. Filipino women’s status has been assessed in terms of women’s
social location vis-à-vis men’s social positioning or from a comparative perspective in
terms of the rights, roles, educational opportunities and occupations of women today
relative to previous time frames or the relative positioning of Filipino women from
various backgrounds in respect of women in other countries on the basis of any, or all
of the aforementioned criteria. Each of these modes of assessing women’s status is
an assessment in part and the end result will necessarily be different according to the
criteria used. Further, when the status of particular women is considered relative to
other women there is not one unitary status of Filipino women. In a discussion of
feminist scholarship and colonial discourses Mohanty (1996) vigorously contests
methodological approaches that rest on assumptions which assign a unitary identity to
women in particular national and/or religious contexts. Mohanty (1996:183) argues
women are constituted as women through the complex interaction
between class, culture, religion, and other ideological institutions and
frameworks. They are not ‘women’ - a coherent group - solely on the
basis of a particular economic system or policy.

This is where Aguilar’s analysis appears to fall short. Aguilar is highly critical of the
portrayal of the status of Filipinas as ‘ambiguous’. In her concerted efforts to
demonstrate the ways in which many Filipinas are oppressed by authoritarian fathers,
husbands and religious edicts, exploited by capitalist relations of production,
disadvantaged in law, in education, and in employment opportunities and conditions,
and marginalised in public life, Aguilar’s theorising on the politics of gender relations
in the Philippines tends towards a totalising viewpoint at the other end of the
spectrum. In this perspective women seem to be perceived as helpless, victimised
pawns of oppressive social and political structures dominated by manipulative men in
a world order controlled by exploitative foreign interests and powers. Or,
alternatively, women are perceived to be passive, complicit and collaborative,
assisting in the perpetuation and reproduction of a disadvantageous, discriminating
social order which robs women of equality, justice and self determination. While these are undeniably faces of Filipino women’s contexts, they are only partial because they fail to take sufficient account of the variety of ways in which women create and respond to opportunities in their lives, how they circumvent, redefine and react to constraints in their lives, their manner of managing personal relations, exercising influence and effecting change. Some sense of this wider cross-section of women’s experiences, involving both oppression and their not infrequent effective, creative responses to the restraints and efforts of others to oppress, dominate and exploit them, is communicated in a range of Filipina life story accounts published in the works of Ticzon (1987), Bantug et al. (1992); Kalaw-Tirol (ed.) 1994, 1997; and Guerrero (ed.) 1997. Aguilar’s (1988) analysis rests on a particular conception of power that accords priority to the acquisition of wealth, the exercise of force, the physical control of the material means of production, but accords no value to other conceptions of power derived from cosmic and spiritual sources, and peoples’ capacity to access, possess and exercise such power. To an extent Aguilar (1991:157-172) acknowledges precisely this in subsequent research as she grapples with “paradoxes of domesticity”. To try to hold these, and other contrasting, faces of women’s lives in an encompassing field of vision, is one of the challenges with which the women among whom I have worked have confronted me, as they gathered me, at varying depths, into their life experiences.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have been concerned with filling out some of the detail of contemporary MM Filipinas’ experiences of family relations. In so doing I have tried to provide insight into some of the dimensions of these women’s identities. As I contended in my introduction to this thesis, the women whose lives are partially described here operate out of a great multiplicity of identities. The people, the interactions, circumstances, times and places that have been and are a part, in one way and another, of the experiences of these women’s lives are not readily charted. Some women from both poor and privileged backgrounds are engaged in a variety of occupations, while a few from each socio-economic group are not actively engaged in paid employment or the market economy; but a much smaller proportion than official statistics would suggest. These women’s activities however, are rarely confined solely to their homes. Most of the Barangay All Holies women with whom I worked,

\[232\text{See p. 7.}\]
were regularly engaged and influential in their local neighbourhood communities as I illustrate further in chapters six and seven. Just as these individual women’s lives are not static, but rather in a constant state of flux as they address their multiple responsibilities and changing life circumstances, so also their kinship relations are not confined to the one immediate ‘locale’. Rather, family and kin are dispersed throughout the Philippines and throughout the globe. Further, although these women were particularly candid about the strain, tension and hardship in their family lives and that of their mothers, they still obviously highly valued family relations even though the dynamics of such relations were inevitably complex. Many of the women described their lives as a continuous cycle of change through which they were constantly mediating their way. There is a fluidity to their experience; life is a process in which they are constantly engaged in multi-level negotiations in the midst of contradictions and ambiguities that are not so much oppositionally confronted as mediated through by recourse to personal inner strength and acumen. What I am exploring in this thesis are the outward signs that point to an inner quality in the lives of the Filipinas with whom this ethnography is concerned. An inner strength connected with these women’s core premises about life’s energies and the paths to harnessing and channelling these most fruitfully, in short their spirituality. In order to explore this intersection of religion and culture in these women’s lives and the ways in which religious traditions have moulded the fabric of their lives through providing avenues of resistance and empowerment, it is necessary to track back and forth between past and present cultural conceptions of women, gender relations and religion. The manner and nature of contemporary women’s involvement in religious practices in the Philippines has to be seen and listened to against the backdrop of the interaction which has taken place between Filipinos’ pre-Hispanic cultural understandings, Spanish cultural understandings intertwined with Catholic religious teaching and discourse, enmeshed in several layers of cultural embodiment, including that of American colonisation following on the Spanish era. Such a listening to the past and looking forward forms the basis of the following chapters.

In this ongoing engagement of religion and culture, attention has to be paid to the transformative effect of different understandings and perspectives impacting upon and engaging each other. Shifts occur; the cultural matrix of peoples’ values and outlook, and the beliefs they hold about the meaning and nature of their existence are not static, even in the face of the simultaneous existence of threads of continuity. Time and time again as Barangay All Holies women articulated their life experiences they
recounted stories of women being empowered with strength to cope in the difficult material circumstances of the here and now through processes of concentrating and accessing sources of spiritual power. It is a power beyond the merely human, which these women read as ultimately enveloping and directing the whole of their lives. They have a strong sense of being in relation with an ever present, all pervading spiritual presence, with whom the whole course of life is lived out and interacted. Even in the midst of the difficult life circumstances many have faced, virtually all the women whose life stories are discussed in this chapter displayed a great degree of resilience. Further, they frequently communicated quite openly and spontaneously that they located the source of this strength in the spiritual domain. In so doing these women communicated a religious worldview in which feminine personages, directly and unambiguously were conceived of as the usual mediators of spiritual power. This religious worldview differs from that commonly held in Christianity, particularly Catholicism, as interpreted and mediated through its all male hierarchy and male ritual practitioners, whose reading of women’s spiritual worth has been much more ambivalent. The resilience of the women whose lives I have discussed in this chapter emerges as strength, which, while not confrontational and openly forceful or militant, is not passive either. Instead, it is active, innovative, resourceful strength that is ultimately conceived through silence to have the last word, to prevail in enduring, to remain unbroken against all odds and all logic to the contrary. This mediation even extends beyond the grave to relations with the dead, who become part of an ongoing spiritual presence to their kin. Consequently, in the Philippines, family extends beyond the living to embrace the deceased and this is pre-eminently visible in the Filipino celebration of All Saints Day in which Filipinas are centrally involved in the mediation of harmonious relations between the living and the dead, as I will discuss in chapter five.
Chapter 5:

Filipinas and Family Communion of the Living and the Dead

Introduction

Women’s role in harmonising family relations, as discussed in the previous chapter, is further extended in their management of family relations between the living and the dead. This is particularly evident in women’s organization of the family reunion activities of the All Saints/All Souls Day celebrations. In this chapter, with the aid of a body of pictorial plates, I describe and analyse Filipinos’ celebration of All Saints Day in MM, especially their family pilgrimages to cemeteries. I discuss the similarities and differences in the ways in which these pilgrimages are celebrated in public cemeteries and private memorial parks. I demonstrate that this annual celebration is primarily under women’s leadership and connect this to women’s wider role in death and mourning in Philippine society. I explore the ways in which the social structure of the living is perpetuated in death in MM. I illustrate that, although Filipino kin and family are very dispersed and fractured, social identity remains contingent on both the living and the dead having a ‘home’ locale. Finally, in my discussion and analysis, I link traces of the past with the present and briefly relate the celebration of All Saints Day in the Philippines to wider ethnography on mourning practices and to dimensions of this celebration beyond the Filipino context.

Before proceeding to the detail of All Saints Day cemetery pilgrimages, a brief note of explanation is necessary in regard to the Filipino practice of collapsing All Saints and All Souls Days into one combined celebration. In the official Catholic calendar, All Souls Day on November 2, is more properly the day on which Catholics are especially encouraged to visit cemeteries and pray for the well being of those deceased persons who may not have attained the fullness of eternal happiness in the afterlife. On the other hand, All Saints Day on November 1 is regarded to be more a celebration of all those whose virtuous lives are deemed to have already merited them union with God in the eternal bliss of heaven. Although theologians and clergy may appreciate this distinction between the two
feastdays, for the ordinary Filipino catholic in MM it would appear that such
distinctions are of little import, even though many were aware that according to
official church authorities the day for visiting cemeteries should properly be
November 2. Many of those among whom I worked made a point of mentioning
this, claiming that originally and still in the provinces, All Souls Day is the
preferred occasion for making their cemetery pilgrimage, but no one was really
clear as to when or why the changed practice came about. However, it seems in
all probability that the practice began in the urbanised areas of the country during
Spanish colonial rule when the November 1 feast of All Saints Day was a Catholic
holy day of obligation and a state public holiday and thus it was easier for the
urban working class to visit the graves of their deceased on All Saints Day rather
than All Souls Day, but in the rural areas there was presumably less impetus for
such change. Now in the post Spanish era, November 1 is no longer a holy day
of obligation in the Philippines, nor an automatically gazetted public holiday in
the same genre as Christmas Day, Good Friday and a number of other official
holidays, but rather it is declared each year as a national holiday by Presidential
decree to allow people to continue their practice of cemetery visitation to honour
the dead on November 1. Nowadays, due to more and more internal migration of
people from rural areas to urban centres, there is a large flow of people on
November 1, not only within MM but also to and from the provinces, engaged in
cemetery pilgrimages. On those occasions when November 2 fell on or either
side of a weekend, the public holiday of November 1 was usually extended to
embrace November 2 also. Then many Filipinos extended their cemetery
pilgrimage through to November 2. Thus the two aspects of All Saints and All
Souls Day are merged in one celebration usually extending from October 31 to
November 2 with the pinnacle being the cemetery pilgrimage of November 1.

All Saints Day Cemetery Pilgrimages

In the five year period 1994 to 1998 I participated in a total of eleven pilgrimages
with women and their families from Barangay All Holies visiting various public
and private233 cemeteries in MM.234 The initial impetus for my study of All

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233 Private cemeteries are more usually referred to as Memorial Parks in MM.
234 I visited Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina in 1994; Bagbag Public Cemetery, Quezon City in 1995, 1996,
1998, Himlayang Pilipino (Filipino Cemetery/lit. resting place of the dead) Memorial Park, Quezon City in
1995, 1996, 1998; Manila South Cemetery, Makati in 1997; Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque in 1997;
Garden of Memories Memorial Park, Pateros in 1998; Libingan ng mga Bayani (‘Cemetery of the Heroes’
for veterans of the armed services), Fort Bonifacio, Taguig in 1995, (the respective MM municipalities in
which the various cemeteries are located are as shown in Map 1, p. 71).
Saints Day celebrations came in the form of a passing comment from Dr. Prospero Covar from UP anthropology department, in some preliminary discussions with him about my research interests in October 1994, when he remarked to the effect that ‘one place to see indigenous religion in practice was the cemeteries of MM on All Saints Day’. As a consequence of this remark I asked Nene, a Filipina friend, who was at the time assisting me in learning the rudiments of Tagalog conversation, about the celebration of All Saints Day and she invited me to join her and her husband on their pilgrimage to Loyola Memorial Park on November 1, 1994. In the days leading up to and following November 1, the MM newspapers carried numerous articles and photos related to the All Saints Day activities, indicating that the occasion was one of considerable public interest. By November 1 the following year I had come to know a much wider cross-section of women and in the course of our interactions it became clear that All Saints Day was certainly a significant event in their annual calendar, and one which they invited me to join them in celebrating. The All Saints Day celebration appeared in many respects a double-edged occasion for the women with whom I went on pilgrimage to the cemeteries. It was, on one hand, a pre-eminently festive occasion of celebration, (see Plates 4 and 5), especially for the children; on the other hand it encompassed moments of sadness and grief as those on pilgrimage revisited the circumstances of the death of their loved ones, as well as being an extremely arduous undertaking, especially for those from the lower socio-economic classes. Isabel, with whom I went on pilgrimage on November 1, 1995, spoke in terms of ‘making a sacrifice for the dead’, noting that “it was not easy to make the journey from one cemetery to the other amidst the crowds of others doing the same thing on November 1, but it is only one day a year”; thus she is prepared to make the effort and pay the cost that it asks of her. Siling, with whom I also went on a cemetery pilgrimage in 1995 on October 31, gave an explanation in similar vein, “we come for the purpose of making a sacrifice to show love and care for the dead; to undertake a little inconvenience and hardship for the sake of the dead. It is also a time for drawing strength from being together with each other”. Isabel and Siling, from very different socio-economic strata of Philippine society, share a common perspective on the

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Plate 4: All Saints Family Celebration at ‘Libingan ng mga Bayani’ (‘Cemetery of the Heroes’)  
Daughters, sons, affines and grandchildren of the deceased, together with some friends, picnicking on the gravesite of their kin in ‘Libingan ng mga Bayani’, November 1, 1995. All the crosses marking the graves in ‘Libingan ng mga Bayani’ are given a fresh coat of whitewash especially for All Saints Day.
Plate 5: All Saints Family Celebration at Manila Memorial Park

The carnival atmosphere of the All Saints Day celebrations is depicted here with family groups scattered all over the cemetery, which is dotted with tents. The occasion is also an opportunity for some urban poor to try to supplement their meagre income as can be seen with the ice cream vendor (on left side of frame) and others engaged in collecting waste for recycling (see woman and daughter with cart under tree on right side of frame). November 1, 1997.
undertaking in which they are engaged during the celebration of All Saints Day, even though what Siling deems sacrifice appears relative, when measured against the circumstances of Isabel’s pilgrimage, as the following account of various facets of each pilgrimage indicates.

Isabel, an unmarried Ilocano woman from Abra Province who was in her mid forties at the time of our cemetery visitation, had been living for the last twenty years in squatter area 10. She worked as a laundry woman in a retreat centre, and was the fourth eldest of nine siblings, three sisters and five brothers, three of whom were already deceased. Our pilgrimage together was first to Bagbag cemetery where two of her brothers were buried, followed by the journey to her father’s grave in Libingan ng mga Bayani Pilipino on the other side of MM, all by means of extremely crowded public transport. Isabel’s third deceased brother, and eldest sibling, who died in the armed forces, is buried in the distant Mindanao region in the south of the Philippines\(^{236}\) where he was stationed at the time of his death. Thus, it was not possible for Isabel to visit his grave, but his wife and children who still live in the Mindanao region would do so. Our All Saints Day pilgrimage group of seven, three children and four adults, set out at 7.00 am from Isabel’s house. The three children in our party were Isabel’s mga pamangkin (niece and nephews); the son and daughter of Isabel’s youngest sister who was unable to join us this year as she was making the journey to Bulacan Province with her husband and other three children to visit the graves of her husband’s mother and sister; and George, the only son of Isabel’s deceased youngest brother, whose grave we were visiting. George’s mother was away at the time in the Province visiting her sick mother. Also with us was twenty year old Lourdes, another of Isabel’s nieces, the daughter of Isabel’s eldest sister who had remained home to care for her aged mother, just recently discharged from hospital. Lourdes’ elder sister and brothers had gone with their father to visit the graves of his kin. In addition to Isabel and myself, our party included Inday, Isabel’s mahal kaibigan (very close friend) and workmate, who had been a particularly close companion to Isabel in the grief she experienced on the occasion of her father’s sudden death fourteen years earlier and also at the time of her brothers’ later deaths. Sadly, the following year we made the pilgrimage, not only to the graves of Isabel’s brothers, but also to Inday’s grave, as Inday died suddenly of unexplained fever a few weeks after our All Saints pilgrimage in 1995. Our

\(^{236}\)For the location of this and other provincial references in this section see Map 3 p. 71.
journey began with a five minute walk along alleyways through the squatter area to reach the tricycle stop, where five of our party filled one tricycle and two of us: with our food, water and umbrellas, squeezed in with three other passengers on a second tricycle; for the two kilometre ride to the main highway, where we anxiously awaited a jeepney into which we were all able to squeeze, only by seating the three children, six to nine year olds, on our laps. After a ride of several kilometres we arrived at Lagro where we had to disembark and join the winding queue to catch a second jeepney to travel a further few kilometres to the Quirino highway, Novaliches. At least this time six of us managed a seat with only Viola, Isabel’s six-year-old niece sitting on a lap. On disembarking from our second jeepney, Inday went off among the throngs to buy candles and flowers, (see Plate 6), while the remainder of us waited at the corner near where we would board a bus for the last part of our journey to Bagbag public cemetery. Obviously not everyone is on pilgrimage to the graves of their loved ones, as can be seen from Plates 7-9, which depict the thriving trade in flowers and candles on All Saints Day along all the routes to cemeteries.

Everywhere on the approaches to cemeteries on All Saints Day the roads were lined with stalls selling not only candles and fresh and artificial flowers but mats, bowls, stools and toys. In addition, a huge variety of foods were being sold both enroute and within the actual cemetery precincts: fresh and barbecued fish, meat and chicken, roasted nuts, fried foods, rice, soup, drinks, ice cream and candies, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables. Some of the vendors who are fortunate enough to be able to ply their trade close to a cemetery of their loved ones divide the time of family members between their stalls and their graves, attending to both concerns while some others make their cemetery visitation sometime in the preceding or following week. Still others are too far away from home provinces where loved ones are buried to be able to afford to make the journey home, although many, like Marietta or Delia, combine the journey to visit provincial kin with All Saints Day at least once in every five to eight years, a practice similarly followed by many Filipinos working overseas who try to arrange for their leave to be taken around this time of the year.

To make the last part of our journey we literally had to breathe in and, together with a multitude of others, squeeze onto a bus already filled well beyond capacity

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237 Inserted overpage together with Plates 7-9.
Plate 6: Flower Stall enroute to Bagbag Public Cemetery

Section of the large crowd patronising the street side flower stalls set up by vendors at one of the main transport junctions along the route to one of the major MM public cemeteries. November 1, 1995.
Plate 7: Candle Stall enroute to Manila South Public Cemetery

Candle, and drink vendors set up stands along the footpath close to the back wall of one of MM’s public cemeteries, November 1, 1997. Although trade is not as brisk here as in the more coveted sites close to the main gate of the cemetery, a steady stream of sales are made throughout the course of the day.
Cut flowers are turned into flower arrangements by this vendor who has entered into an arrangement with a ‘sari-sari’ store owner in the hope of reaping benefits for each other’s businesses. By allowing the flower vender to set up his stand alongside the store, the store operator, who has specially stocked up on candles for the occasion, is hoping that some who are looking to purchase flowers may at the same time buy some items from the ‘sari-sari’ store and similarly the flower vendor hopes that those wishing to make a purchase at the ‘sari-sari’ will also be attracted to his flowers. October 31, 1996.
Plate 9: Candle and Meat Stalls enroute to Bagbag Cemetery

Candles plus cooked and fresh pig and other food items are offered for sale along the streets by people living in the Bagbag public cemetery neighbourhood, while others rent out the use of their telephone as depicted by the woman in the centre of the frame utilising this service. Still others rent out the use of their toilet facilities. The vendors' stalls are meeting places for members of the local neighbourhood who take stock of the situation and converse with one another, having either visited their own deceased prior to the arrival of the All Saints Day crowds or else living too far away from where their relatives are buried to be able to afford to make the cemetery pilgrimage. November 1, 1998.
and cling on to any available piece of bus wall, ceiling or scarce railing to steady ourselves on our feet in the midst of the crush of people still trying to push their way aboard as the bus pulled away from the stop. As we alighted from the bus, the cemetery entrance was extremely crowded with throngs of people pushing through on pilgrimage to various parts of the interior, the majority of whom were women, children and youth with a noticeably smaller proportion of mature age men, (see *Plate 10*).\(^{238}\) Men and women members of charismatic and other religious groups, equipped with microphones and small sound systems were, depending on one’s perspective, entertaining, comforting or haranguing passers-by with their singing, preaching, bible reading and soliciting of donations. Carefully we picked our way across the cemetery, (see *Plate 11*), as there are no common access pathways here. Our journey took us up and down on the top of different height graves, large and small, around some where people were already gathered together on top, and around yet other graves which were cordoned off with rope or plastic packaging tie, in most cases because they had just been freshly painted. Each year, inevitably, someone in our party finished the day with paint stained clothes. In finding their way to the appropriate graves, people used trees and background buildings as landmarks. Every now and again we would come across a grave which had caved in, sometimes with part of the rotting coffin, and occasionally also the bones visible. While such points served as a reminder to tread carefully, they were also a stark depiction of the end lot of those without kin to attend and care for them in death. We finally reached our destination at 9.30 am, two and a half hours after our departure. The journey to Bagbag had taken us over three times as long as it would on an occasion other than All Saints Day and was in marked contrast with my pilgrimage to *Himlayang Pilipino* Memorial Park with Cora and her family members the previous evening.

Cora, in her early thirties, from Samar Province was a member of a Filipino community of religious sisters residing in subdivision I. On this pilgrimage I accompanied a group of eight others, six adults and two children. Those in our party included Cora’s maternal aunt, ‘Tiya’ Siling, and Cora’s niece and nephew from Cavite Province to the south of MM. Although not with us at the beginning, other members of Cora’s family joined us at the cemetery in the course of the evening. Prior to their arrival, we were accompanied in the first stage of our pilgrimage by three members of Cora’s religious community, and Cora’s co-

\(^{238}\)Inserted overpage together with *Plate 11*. 
Plate 10: Crowd passing through Bagbag Public Cemetery Entrance
Section of the huge crowd of people thronging in and out of the entrance of the Bagbag public cemetery from early in the morning until late in the evening on every All Saints Day. November 1, 1995.
Plate 11: Walking across Graves during All Saints Day Pilgrimage in Bagbag Public Cemetery

In Bagbag public cemetery, unlike in the private memorial parks (see Plates 5 and 13) there is no space between the graves which are wedged in one some below ground, others different heights above ground, space is at a premium and so there are no pathways and the only way to visit any particular grave is to negotiate one’s way over other graves until the desired destination is reached, (refer also to Plate 14). November 1, 1995.
worker, Fr. Rudy from the retreat centre which was jointly run by Cora’s religious community and the international male religious order to which Fr. Rudy belonged. Together we set out from the retreat centre around 5 pm on October 31 for the journey to nearby Himlayang Pilipino in Cora’s community’s air conditioned mini van and, although our travel time of forty five minutes was slow for the distance covered, it was akin to normal MM peak hour travel conditions and markedly less exhausting than the journey with Isabel and companions to Bagbag cemetery. The Himlayang Pilipino cemetery is set in a huge parkland of thirty-seven hectares, of which sixty percent is reserved for interments, and is interlaced with asphalted vehicular access paths and pedestrian ways. From where we parked our vehicle we made our way, relatively easily, along the pathways between blocks of grave sites to the graves of Cora’s mother and brothers, carrying with us wicker baskets containing fruit juice, sandwiches and sections of pithy stems used as a base to prepare flower arrangements using the gold and white chrysanthemums, forget-me-nots and greenery which we also carried with us. Other items we carried along included fluorescent battery lamps, a Mass kit, guitar and decorative votive candles specially acquired for the occasion which, despite their weight, Tiya Siling insisted on carrying to the grave sites herself, even though younger members of the party offered to carry them for her. The candles, fifteen inches high, in thick glass containers had three different decorative appliqués depicting images of the Sacred Heart, Jesus crowned with thorns and Mary. As soon as we arrived at the gravesites, Tiya Siling lit the candles and Cora fixed the flower arrangement.

There was a distinctly carnival atmosphere\textsuperscript{239} at the Memorial Park, (as was also the case at Loyola Memorial Park on November 1, 1994, shown in \textit{Plates 12-13}\textsuperscript{240}, and again at Manila Memorial Park on November 1, 1997 depicted in \textit{Plate 4\textsuperscript{241}}). As darkness had already fallen by the time we arrived, our way was lit at regular intervals by electric lamp posts. From everywhere in the park, the green fairy lights of the Chapel’s conical outline immediately caught the eye and a public address system boomed out lively music, interspersed with public announcements; calling for the drivers of vehicles with particular registration

\textsuperscript{239}As intimated in the introductory chapter to this thesis, see p. 11, the celebration of All Saints Day in MM’s Memorial Parks resembled the atmosphere of the Melbourne Cup, the pinnacle of Australia’s spring racing carnival, where the outlying car park and racecourse surrounds are filled with tents and a partying ambience.

\textsuperscript{240}Inserted overpage.

\textsuperscript{241}Inserted after p. 190.
Plate 12: Overview of Tents in Loyola Memorial Park on All Saints Day

View overlooking Loyola Memorial Park private cemetery showing part of the extensive parkland environs covered by the cemetery, with the cemetery chapel just visible in the background, while the foreground is dotted with the many tents which families have specially erected for the occasion. November 1, 1994.
Plate 13: Family groups Camping at Loyola Memorial Park over All Saints/All Souls Day Long Weekend

Close up of family camping arrangements at gravesites at Loyola Memorial Park private cemetery on All Saints Day November 1, 1994. On this particular year All Saints Day occurred on a Tuesday but both the Monday and the Tuesday were, by presidential decree, declared public holidays for the celebration of All Saints ‘Day’. Thus a number of families celebrated their long weekend by setting up camp in the cemetery bringing beds, chairs and portable stoves, fans etc.
numbers, and incorrectly parked, to move them; or requesting particular service personnel such as electricians or first aid attendants to report to the memorial park service centre; or lost and found notices for persons and objects; and announcements concerning the scheduled times for the celebration of Masses in the cemetery chapel. Dotted everywhere throughout the park were stalls operated by various hamburger and fast food chains like ‘Shakeys’, ‘Jollibee’, ‘Pizza Hut’ and ‘Kentuckey Fried Chicken’ etc. Wherever one looked, candles glittered beside and on top of grave markers in the lawn, on tombs and in mausoleums. Music of many kinds wafted into the evening air from numerous radios, cassettes and even televisions, mingled with children’s laughter, animated conversation and the murmur of groups, here and there, reciting the rosary or other prayers. Tents of assorted shapes and sizes were springing up in all directions. At other grave sites, individuals or groups were setting up their beds and camp ovens or were seated on canvas, blankets, cardboard, newspaper or plastic bags as the ground was damp and muddy in some places due to rain showers during the mid afternoon. Although we were intending to camp at the cemetery overnight, we had not brought a tent or ground sheet with us as Cora’s sister and brother-in-law and three children who were coming from Cavite Province were bringing these items, in addition to our main food supplies and a portable table to serve as an altar for the celebration of Mass at the gravesite. However, their arrival at the cemetery was several hours later than expected as their experience with MM’s traffic was less satisfactory than ours. Since Cora’s three community members and Fr. Rudy had only intended to stay primarily for Mass prior to proceeding to other commitments, a table was borrowed from those keeping vigil at a neighbouring grave and we proceeded with the Mass celebration without awaiting the arrival of other family members. This celebration was noticeably specific to our pilgrimage group, although those from whom we had borrowed the table did join in the Mass celebration from a little distance, but an open invitation was not extended to those from the nearby surrounding graves and no movement towards participation was forthcoming from them. Noticeably, within the open communal fiesta milieu, there was another more closed, private ritual level specific to particular kinship groups.\footnote{The Madagascan \textit{famadihana}, a very different cemetery pilgrimage ritual concerned with the consolidation of kinship groupings and identity, is also described by Graeber ([1995] 1998) as having a festive and informal character intertwined with the more formalized ceremonial moments.} Even though people freely walked around and exchanged a passing greeting from time to time it was noticeable that there appeared to be very little interaction between the different groups at neighbouring gravesites. At the conclusion of Mass there
followed a ritual blessing of the graves of Cora’s mother and brothers, then those who had lent us their table requested Fr. Rudy to ritually bless their relative’s grave site where they had again taken up their vigil while the members of our pilgrimage group, clustered on top of our graves, partook of sandwiches and fruit juice snacks. In the course of the evening other members of Cora’s family, from various parts of MM, arrived to join in the celebration: Cora’s eldest brother and three sons, and children of both of Cora’s brothers whose graves we were visiting. Still other family members were not able to be present, either due to sickness or living abroad, as in the case of Cora’s father, eldest married sister and eldest brother’s wife all living in the United States while other brothers live in Vienna and Australia. As family members arrived, there was a general exchange of news and, once all had gathered by around 9.30 pm., we shared together a meal of rice, spaghetti, chicken and coca-cola, which Cora’s sister had prepared. At the completion of the meal we had rosary, prayers and hymns organised by Cora but in which the children led sections while everyone else joined in. After this the children played hide and seek for a time and then, around 11.30 pm, we settled down for sleeping on the ground sheet under our canopy, wherever space permitted.

In our Bagbag cemetery pilgrimage, on arrival at her brothers’ gravesite, Isabel took two candles from her bag, placed them at the end of the grave, lit them, and while saying a silent prayer placed, between the candles, the simple bouquet of flowers, daisies and forget-me-nots, which we had purchased enroute. Later in the morning Isabel took from her bag a string of sampaguita flowers, the richly fragrant National flower of the Philippines and also placed this on the grave with a brief, silent prayer. Immediately upon our arrival the children were eager to partake of some of the boiled rice and pork adobo, which we had brought along together with two coolers of iced water for drinks. As the children began to eat Isabel commented that, for them, the whole occasion was like a picnic and so, for this reason, they were eager to come. It was a hot sunny morning and we had no protection other than our umbrellas as we sat ourselves down on top of the grave we were visiting. After about forty-five minutes Isabel’s younger brother Vincente arrived from Kalookan City, MM. After initial greetings, he noted how he had been a long time trying to locate their grave as the big acacia tree, which had previously served to orientate him, had been blown down by a storm since he

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243 A favourite Filipino meat dish cooked in vinegar, salt, garlic, pepper and soy sauce.
had last visited the graves. Everywhere I looked there were people on the surrounding graves, perched, crouched, squatting or negotiating a path to or from their destination carrying perhaps their bicycle, (see Plate 14)\textsuperscript{244}, or even their pets, and a day’s supply of food, candles and flowers or more, as some had set up small ‘sari-sari’ stores. People on the grave just across from us had erected a makeshift shelter from tree branches and a sheet of canvas with string lines from which to display snack food items and candles, (see Plate 15), while lively disco music played on the radio cassette and we were treated to a ‘floor show’ from a three year old girl. Some were fortunate enough that their grave sites benefited from the occasional tree dotting the cemetery landscape, (see Plate 16). Others displayed considerable ingenuity and somehow managed to find anchor points to secure some plastic, canvas or cloth to shade them, while still others found refuge as best they could from the heat of the mid morning sun under towels, hats, coats and umbrellas, (see Plate 17). Intermittently the children moved off from our grave site and played around the surrounding graves, where one of the boys found a shady resting place and stretched out for a little nap on the top of a large tomb shaded by the overhanging limbs of a nearby tree (see Plate 18). While we were at our gravesite, men passed by from time to time carrying a paintbrush and small pail of whitewash offering to repaint graves for a fee.\textsuperscript{245} In other localities in the week prior to All Saints Day youths were washing down tombstones for a small fee. Other families brought their own whitewash with them, as in the case of Delia’s family in my subsequent pilgrimage with her to Bagbag cemetery on All Saints Day 1998.

Practically all who come to visit the graves of their family members in public cemeteries on All Saints/All Souls Day ensure that the graves are whitewashed or cleaned, either by themselves or by others, as a partial form of insurance against the exhumation of the grave of their family member by indicating that the grave is being cared for and visited.\textsuperscript{246} From obviously unattended graves, remains are frequently exhumed and disposed of, at best, in an unmarked common grave to

\textsuperscript{244}Inserted overpage with Plates 15-18.

\textsuperscript{245}See appendix 5 for information about comparative costs for burial sites and grave maintenance in public and private cemeteries.

\textsuperscript{246}At another level the whitewashing of graves at this time serves also to emphasise a point of concentration of supernatural power in the meeting that takes place between the spirits of the dead and the living on All Saints/All Souls Day. The symbolic significance of white as a means of showing love and respect and indicating a point of concentration of spiritual power is discussed further in the following chapter, see p. 246 ff.
Plate 14: Traversing Graves and Keeping Vigil at Bagbag Public Cemetery

The difficulty of finding the way through to a specific grave is again shown here with the bicycle which was used as an initial mode of transport to the cemetery proving somewhat of a burden as its owner negotiates the different grave heights, which can be clearly seen here, as well as carefully avoiding lighted candles and those already keeping vigil on the top of the graves of their kin. Keeping vigil amounts to a simple being present and engaging in normal conversation etc. November 1, 1995.
Plate 15: Makeshift Sari-Sari Store over Gravesite in Bagbag Public Cemetery

Here some tree branches, perilously balanced on grave edges, have been used to form a frame over which some canvas has been stretched to make a small sheltered stall from which candles, a few soft drinks, candies and snack foods can be sold. The grave in the left hand foreground has been freshly whitewashed. November 1, 1995.
Plate 16: Relaxing on and by Relative’s Graves in Manila South Public Cemetery

Manila South Public cemetery in an older section of the metropolitan area, although more crowded than the private memorial parks (see Plates 5, 12, 13), it is not as overcrowded and congested as Bagbag Public cemetery (see Plates 11, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22). Here people relax on the graves on their kin and in a natural ‘hammock’ formation of a nearby tree. The grave on the right hand under the tree has been freshly painted with whitewash. November 1, 1997.
Plate 17: Sheltering from the Heat of the Sun in Bagbag Public Cemetery

On a sunny day the white tombs reflect the tropical heat and with few trees remaining in the crowded Bagbag cemetery locale people use whatever they can find to shelter from the heat, umbrellas, a piece of canvas here or there, jackets, caps, and towels. Keeping vigil under these conditions is not easy, especially for mothers with young children. November 1, 1995.
Plate 18: Children enjoying All Saints Day Pilgrimage to Bagbag Public Cemetery

The occasional tree remains in Bagbag Public cemetery affording shade to a few tombs, and for children it is a special bonus when there happens to be a shady large unattended tomb nearby where they can spend some time playing, rather than remaining at the confined site of their relatives’ single tomb.  November 1, 1995.
make way for new burials. But as can be seen in Plate 19 not all exhumed remains fare even this well. Bagbag cemetery is full to capacity and, in contrast to the spacious area of Himlayang Pilipino, covers a land area of approximately only five hectares even though it accommodates a similar number of interments. Consequently Bagbag only accepts new interments according to the rate at which grave sites become available due to the exhumation of bodies after a five year period of interment, at which time the remains are to be either relocated to another cemetery, or the bones are to be transferred to a bone vault (see Plate 20) if relatives are able to afford either course of action. Permanent tenure in this cemetery cannot be purchased unlike in the case of gravesites purchased in the Memorial Parks. However, many who have relatives interred in Bagbag and cannot afford the cost of either means of reinterment, try by various means to delay the exhumation of their loved ones and retain their present grave sites well beyond the initially approved five year term of interment. Isabel’s brother Jose had been interred below ground in Bagbag on his death in 1982 so that when Isabel’s younger brother Miguel, died in 1987 he had been interred above ground on the same site, thus enabling their family to avoid the threat of exhumation of Jose’s remains through until at least 1992 at which time Isabel’s mother made a further five year grave site rental payment to cemetery officials and, in addition, the family retained the services of a caretaker for their graves. Families of the deceased and caretakers enter into a two-way patronage relationship with one another. Caretakers in public cemeteries are other urban poor who reside in the cemetery confines, (see Plate 21), and rely in part for their livelihood on payments they solicit from the families of the deceased in return for rendering a service of minimal but crucial grave maintenance for their clients. This maintenance is performed primarily by maintaining a presence in the vicinity of their clients’ graves and periodically cleaning and/or whitewashing them, so as to forestall possible exhumation taking place, by evidencing that the graves are being frequented and attended. While the situation is not quite so desperate in all public cemeteries, most are very crowded as they have been established in confined areas in which there is no room for expansion with the growth of the cities around their original boundaries.

We set out from Bagbag cemetery for the journey to Libingan ng mga Bayani around midday, once Isabel and Vincente were able to make contact with the

\[247\text{Inserted overpage with Plate 20}
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\[248\text{Inserted overpage.}
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MOVING OUT
Men with weaker stomachs and sharper imaginations could have dreaded the task, but handling skeletons is routine stuff for this worker who gathered about 500 of them from old graves at the North Cemetery yesterday. The graves are to be used for new burials. The displaced skulls and bones will be turned over to claimants. Cemeteries are being spruced up for All Saints’ Day.

Plate 20: People visiting at Bone Vaults in Bagbag Public Cemetery on All Saints Day

People place candles and flowers at the niche where the bones of their kin are interred and locate themselves physically as close as possible to this spot. November 1, 1995.
Plate 21: Cemetery Caretakers Dwelling in Bagbag Public Cemetery

Members of the urban poor reside in all of the MM cemeteries, public and private, sometimes squatting in the mausoleums and vacating them over the period of the All Saints/All Souls Day celebrations, or in other cases constructing makeshift squats in the public cemeteries, as depicted here, and earning a partial income through performing services as caretakers. Prior to All Saints Day they try to put up a notice on their dwelling advertising their services, hoping to attract new clientele over this busy period. November 1, 1998.
caretaker of their brothers’ grave to pay him their annual fee. Although it was only a few hundred metres from the cemetery gate back to Quirino highway, it took us twenty-five minutes to negotiate our way through the crowds to the bus stop and almost a further two hours to finally reach Libingan ng mga Bayani after travelling on both a crowded bus and jeepney. On alighting from the jeepney, we took a five-minute walk, along the cemetery pathways and lawn surface, to reach Isabel’s father’s grave where we met up with other family members. These were Isabel’s sister, Fely, her husband, Henry, their four children and a cousin of Henry’s from Samar Province who, in return for her board, worked as a ‘yaya’ (babysitter) for Fely and Henry who were living in Paco, MM. Fely, Henry and family had already spread out a blanket and erected a small tent over Isabel’s father’s gravesite. By the grave marker was a candle and floral arrangement of orchids, which had been placed there by Fely and family. On our arrival, after greetings, both Isabel and Vincente lit candles, from those Isabel had brought along, and placed them by the white cement cross marking the grave site. Each then each made the sign of the cross on themselves and said a short, silent prayer. On completion of these rituals, we all settled into a shared meal from the food brought by both families and myself, while Isabel and her siblings exchanged stories about their father’s life. Much joy was expressed at being together and the cousin children paired up with one another and roamed off to explore the nearby surrounds while the adults had a general exchange of news with one another over the next couple of hours. Around 5 pm the women and children in our party moved off to participate in an open air Mass, being broadcast over the public address system, which was being celebrated near the cemetery memorial to an unknown soldier. Meanwhile, the men continued to keep vigil at the grave site. It was seen as women’s work to participate in the appropriate religious rituals on behalf of family members. At the conclusion of Mass, all the members of our party met up again, bid their farewells and we began the two and half hours journey homewards on crowded public transport. The Libingan ng mga Bayani bears the mark of a military establishment with rows and rows of graves forming blocks in battalion style in a lawn setting, each with a white cement cross marker. Isabel’s family indicated a certain pride in having their father buried there and expressed satisfaction in particular that the grave was well cared for at no expense to themselves and that always it was tended to in some way on All Saints Day. An example of this attention is that, just prior to nightfall, members of the Philippine Scouts set a long white candle in the ground by each grave and then, at 6 pm, the scouts light the candles throughout the cemetery. Thus, when we were departing at 6.15 pm, the cemetery was ablaze with flickering candle light.
When, in the course of the day, I asked Isabel about why she lit a candle and brought flowers to the grave site she responded that “lighting the candle is related to prayer, to church and novena because at these times when you pray you light candles, it is also a sign of remembering, whereas flowers express love and care”. There are symbolic overtones here of the sense that the luminous light of the candle serves as a focusing point in the concentration of spiritual power which takes place in the meeting of humans with those who have passed through life to the spiritual realm, to that state of being beyond the human. At some gravesites, relatives not only place candles and flowers, but also food. During our 1996 cemetery pilgrimage, Isabel’s neighbour and co-worker, Beth, left cake and a sachet of juice at the grave of her teenage daughter who had died in an accident five years earlier, (see Plate 22). Others specially prepared a favourite food of the deceased, either at home or at the gravesite itself and share this meal with each other, setting aside a portion for the spirit of their dead relative. Not all people purposely set aside food for the spirits. Some say that simply through being present together and sharing in a meal, their deceased’s spirit also benefits and participates without necessarily having to have a portion set aside for them. On the occasion of All Saints/All Souls Day, in cemeteries in the Philippines, the spirits of the dead are experienced as being particularly in communion with their kin. All of the women with whom I went on pilgrimage to cemeteries on All Saints Day expressed in one way or another their belief in the presence of the spirits of the dead at cemeteries during the time of All Saints/All Souls Day. In Isabel’s words:

we come to the cemetery in order to be with the dead again, to show them that they are not forgotten, in coming and remembering them, we are in contact, in communication with them, in our minds we already reach them.

On a subsequent pilgrimage to Bagbag cemetery with Delia on All Saints/All Souls Day in 1998, Delia made a point of saying that she did not believe in ghosts but she believed in the spirits of the dead, not that they were really the cause of sickness or harm but that they existed. Delia said:

Coming to the cemetery is a duty that has to be done for the sake of the dead person who is in a sense present and can see what is

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249 In a manner similar to that expressed by Ileto (1979:45), see p. 246, ff.
250 Inserted overpage.
Plate 22: Gravesite with Candles, Flowers and Food Offering

Here family members and friends gather near the grave of an adolescent girl who died in a vehicle accident some five years earlier. Candles have been lit, prayers prayed and flowers placed on the grave and drink and cake left for her spirit that she may dwell in peace in the spirit world. November 1, 1996.
happening. It would not be good if no one turned up to visit, this would cause the deceased to feel bad. The dead understand if we are living a long way away and it is not possible to visit, but if we are living nearby and no family members visited, that would not be good.

At the time I had accompanied Delia and her husband, Pedro, and their nephew in their pilgrimage to the grave of Pedro’s brother who had died several months earlier. On All Saints Day that year, Delia and Pedro had remained in MM especially to be able to make this pilgrimage, but the previous year they had made a sixteen hour trip by road for a four day stay in Cagayen in the north of the Philippines to visit Pedro’s parents’ graves.

All Saints Day Celebrations: Traces of the Past and Links to Ethnography beyond the Philippines

The practice of these two feastdays, of All Saints and All Souls Day, forming part of one ritual complex centred around a cult of the dead is not limited to the Philippines, but is common throughout many countries of Central and South America as well as in the rural areas of some Southern European countries, especially Italy and Spain, (Christian, 1972; Turner, [1973] 1992; Nutini, 1988). Although Catholicism’s formalised celebration of All Saints and All Souls Day in November may have only been fixed from around the fourteenth century onwards, as Nutini (1988:38) claims, there are indications in Brown’s (1981) earlier work, to which Nutini does not refer, that the cult of the saints had become a deeply entrenched element of the public ritual of Roman Catholicism throughout Mediterranean Europe by the fourth century and that it was not simply a slippage into pre-Christian beliefs but a deliberate “restructuring of old beliefs in such a way as to allow them to carry a far heavier ‘charge’ of public meaning”, (Brown, 1981:48). This restructuring of beliefs, or as discussed in chapter three, the two-way ‘mistranslation’ and reinterpreting of beliefs, continued throughout the cultures permeated by the spread of Christianity with colonial expansionism. Picking up on this point Nutini (1988:45) goes on to make a further observation of particular relevance to the Philippine context that:

By the beginning of the sixteenth century………the combined celebration of All Saints and All Souls Day in Spain was
commonly referred to as *Todos Santos*\(^{251}\) …… [This feast] had become increasingly important and ranked just below Christmas and Holy Week in the yearly ritual cycle of Spanish Catholicism, popularly if not theologically. It was in this form that *Todos Santos* was introduced in New Spain by the Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian friars in the first half of the sixteenth century, and All Souls Day has remained until the present the most ritually significant of the two days at most levels of Mexican and Guatemalan society. It is most likely that *Todos Santos* was similarly introduced in most other areas of the Catholic New World, but it evidently underwent a different evolution for in probably most Central and South American countries, *Todos Santos* is centred on All Saints Day, the officially recognized and theologically purer liturgical feast.

While there are clearly parallels in the Philippine context to those described and discussed by Nutini (1988) in his extensive study of this ritual complex in rural Mexico, the practice of the celebration of All Saints Day in the Philippines primarily took root and took on a life of its own because, as discussed earlier in chapters two and three, ‘Filipinos’ were able to identify, in the colonisers’ introduced celebration, threads of continuity with their pre-Hispanic beliefs and rituals. According to Scott (1994), in his description of sixteenth century Philippine culture and society at the advent of Spanish colonisation, although there was considerable variation in burial practices and grave sites throughout the archipelago, the retention of the remains of the deceased within the family domain with concomitant veneration was highly valued and frequently practiced, as is indicated in the following excerpts from Scott’s (1994:91, 239) accounts of Visayan and Tagalog practices:

[In documenting Visayan practices Scott writes:] For one year, the coffin was kept in the house suspended from the rafters, or in a small chamber extended to one side, or in a shed underneath, or in a field………A year or so later the bones were removed, given a ritual cleansing by a babaylan, and placed in a small chest: here they were permanently preserved, venerated and carried along if the family moved. [And in the case of Tagalogs:] Graves were dug alongside houses or fields……but the elite were entombed, together with gold and valuables, under their own dwelling in a coffin or boat with a shade above it, around which smoky fires were kept burning for days. Secondary burial was called Bangkay: the bones were exhumed, placed in a jar or other container, and either deposited at the foot of a balete tree or kept in the house.

\(^{251}\)Commonly similarly referred to in the Philippines as ‘*Todos los Santos*’.
The deceased remained part of the kinship group, they were departed but present, their remains became a focus in which spiritual power was concentrated as they were now incorporated into the spiritual world, because, as outlined in an earlier chapter, the deceased were believed to become ‘anitos’.

The religious rituals of veneration of these ‘anitos’ in pre-Hispanic times included practices utilising candles, lamps, incense, flowers, food offerings and money. Thus there are clearly threads of continuity from the past to present day practices.

Although today in the urban environment of MM the deceased’s remains are no longer usually retained in people’s homes, in the private memorial parks the remains of the rich rest in elaborate ‘houses’ of their own in garden settings, in the form of expensive mausoleums replete with kitchenette, comfort room, curtains, benches and tables, lighting, air-conditioning units and electrical outlets for other appliances. This is clearly indicated in Plate 23, and Figure 4 which shows, in simplified form, the architectural plans for some family estates and mausoleums available for purchase from Himlayang Pilipino. It is in these dwellings that the living commune with the dead, principally on All Saints Day but also on death anniversaries, on the deceased’s birthday and wedding anniversary and other significant family celebration days. In remarking on death practices in other contexts Foltyn (1996:77), in reviewing the work of Jaynes (1976) and Grainger (1988) on the customs of ancient peoples, notes that:

By making the grave a domicile, they provided the dead with creature comforts to aid them in their transition to another world; alternatively, they were attempting to make them stay put.

But for the poor, such ostentation and security exist neither in life nor death, as is evident in my account of Isabel’s All Saints Day pilgrimage. In the Philippines, death is no social leveller; in death, the social order of the living is replicated; the
Plate 23: Family Mausoleum

Members of Holy Mary Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity visiting the grave of the deceased husband of one of the confraternity’s members in family mausoleum in Memorial Park in Batangas City, after sharing a meal with immediate family members of the deceased living in the locality. The visit was part of a pilgrimage to Marian sites in Lipa City, Batangas Province (see Plate 66) arranged to co-incide with the birthday of the deceased, October 1996. (Note: although the family name was prominently displayed on the mausoleum it has been blocked out in this plate in respect for university ethics requirements.)
type of gravesites and tombs in the cemeteries are a reproduction of the social order in life. The reproduction in death of life’s social order is carefully managed and implemented by the moneyed and propertied strata of society. The prevailing social structure in the Philippines is that a small minority of the rich retain ownership of large tracts of land in both urban and rural areas with more and more of the mass population alienated from their land such that, in the urban centres, particularly in MM, there is an ever burgeoning squatter population clinging tenuously to their makeshift dwellings on any tiny piece of land on which they are able to squat. They live in a permanent state of impending eviction, sometimes with the promise of either relocation to an area outside the metropolis or to high-rise accommodation in the city precincts. In parallel fashion, more and more large tracts of land in the metropolis are being acquired and privately developed for spacious memorial park cemeteries catering to the upper socio-economic classes while the city’s long established, public cemeteries are becoming increasingly overcrowded and only accessible on a short term tenure basis. To belong to the lower socio-economic classes means that you face the constant threat of eviction not only in life but also in death, with your remains being relocated outside an identifiable, personalised gravesite to a common mass burial site or the ‘high rise’ bone vaults. Access to and tenure of land is a highly prized resource and essential to the establishment, maintenance and perpetuation of social identity and a marker of social status. To reside in a makeshift squatter dwelling is better than to be homeless on the streets. Those who live on their titled blocks in the fenced off private subdivisions in modest to grandiose homes dwell, in death, in spacious private memorial parks interred in simple lawn plots to elaborate mausoleums, while the poor who reside as squatters in life continue their precarious squatters’ existence in death. However, at least an individual grave site or bone vault in a public cemetery is better than a common mass grave in an unknown locality, or no remains of one’s kin with which to commune. As Bloch and Parry (eds.) (1982:35) have earlier argued, drawing on ethnographic research in other societies, “tombs are used to construct an idealised material map of the permanent social order”. To have the remains of one’s kin in a defined locality is in a sense to incorporate the deceased within one’s possession so that the living can be physically in relation with the spirits of the dead, a relationship vitally important to the well-being and ongoing existence of the living.257 mindfult that one important avenue of accessing spiritual power is to position oneself close

257In Rizal’s ([1887] 1978) Noli Me Tangere a common element of anguish in the lives of two of the central characters, Crisostomo Ibarra and Elias, is the desecration, destruction and consignment to oblivion of the remains of their loved ones by those who are intent upon extinguishing their social identities.
to those objects and those places conceived of as reservoirs of spiritual potency.\textsuperscript{258} Sharing ground, sharing the dwelling place of their deceased, even if only for a brief period of time such as on All Saints Day, unites the living with the dead and empowers both the living and the dead. Hence as Mercado (1992:21) notes, the MM urban poor squatting on garbage dumps refuse the government’s offer of free funerals, for their deceased, within twenty-four hours of death because:

\begin{quotation}
\begin{quote}
they prefer a longer wake – even if this will mean incurring much debt. The government offers free burial. But this means a common pauper’s grave. The people also refuse this offer. They prefer a personalized “\textit{panteon}” (tomb), even if they will sink into debt.
\end{quote}
\end{quotation}

It was particularly noticeable during pilgrimages to cemeteries on All Saints Day that people situate themselves on the actual grave sites of their deceased kin or as close to the grave as possible. I observed this to be the case, not only in Bagbag cemetery where any vacant land is a rare luxury, but also in the Memorial Parks where many of the graves still have adjacent vacant land; people do not occupy this in the first instance but only in so far as is necessitated by overflow from the grave site proper. Isabel and her family indicated that they did not particularly like the idea of the remains of their loved ones being transferred to a bone vault at Bagbag, even if they could afford it. This was because that in such a communal setting, it was more difficult to physically position themselves close to their deceased and their spirits on All Saints Day because they were positioned in a less personalised local space than in a grave. However, for the affluent who could include bone vaults within their own memorial family estates, their home locale, then the transfer to a bone vault of the remains of those who had died in earlier years, as necessitated by the interment of those more recently deceased, was not an issue.

Although, in the celebration of Masses and novenas, some of the external forms of mourning and dealing with the transition from life to death have changed from pre-Hispanic times until the present, there is also a core of continuity in the ritual practices associated with death in the pre-eminence of women’s role, and in the offering and sharing of food in the presence of the remains of deceased kin.\textsuperscript{259} In the present day celebration of the All Saints/All Souls Day complex in the

\textsuperscript{258}See p. 103.

\textsuperscript{259}Refer to the pre-Hispanic practices associated with death and mourning documented by Infante (1975) as described in chapter two, see p. 99.
Philippines there continues to be a strong emphasis on celebrating the deceased’s continued incorporation with the living. The annual combined celebration of All Saints and All Souls Day, as I experienced the occasion being celebrated in MM, was a time of more than remembering the dead; it was a time of being present to the dead in family reunion. Filipino anthropologist Tan, (1997) in social commentary in the popular press on the relations of the living with the dead in the Philippines, claims of Filipinos:

We never part with the dead…...we talk of them not as “them” or as multo (which we reserve for other ghosts) but as Tatay, or Nanay, or Lolo and Lola,\(^\text{260}\) or we call them by their first names or nicknames. We talk not just of them but with them, calling on them when we’re feeling depressed or are going through a crisis. We also share good news with them: a new birth in the clan, a marriage, a graduation…….We think of the dead remaining in communion with the living……We need to have them need us – thus the never-ending prayers and Masses that are offered……But in offering these prayers we too put ourselves in a position of communicating with the dead: we remember Lola hoping she’ll remember us.

Our views of the dead are mixed, perceiving them as part of the living community yet, because they are detached from the body, they acquire new power that is at once respected and feared.

The coming together of group members of families and local neighbourhoods, reasserts group identity as, conversely, absence or failure to attend potentially threatens group unity and harmony. Thus Filipinos, including those who are living at great distance abroad, will make a concerted effort to attend the funeral of family members, even to the point of incurring financial debt to do so. When Marietta’s elderly father died in Viga in Catanduanes Province in 1998, she and her nine surviving siblings, including a married brother residing in the States, a married sister living in Singapore and a single sister working in Kuwait, all journeyed to their home province for their father’s funeral. The Filipino practice of holding an extended wake over a seven to nine day period prior to actual burial of the body, followed by a forty day and twelve month death anniversary celebration enhances the opportunity for distant family members and extended kin to participate in mourning and funerary rites. Younoszai’s (1993:76) account of the mourning practices of Mexicans and Mexican Americans emphasises that there is a similar marked family reunion component:

\(^{260}\)Tagalog terms for Father, Mother, Grandfather and Grandmother respectively.
Mexicans and Mexican Americans give great importance to family and family life, especially when a death occurs. The extended family is united, often in a way that it may not have been united for years before the death happened.

On an annual basis All Saints Day is a celebration of what is enacted more intensely on the occasion of deaths and funerals, as Mercado (1975:227, 229) has noted “funerals are one of the most important occasions when the sakop-togetherness shows itself……The sakop in the Other World and in the present world form a communion of saints”. According to Younoszai (1993) the celebration of All Saints Day in Mexico is marked by a similar communal festivity, to that which occurs in the Philippines, in particular Younoszai (1993:75-76) notes that:

Often there is a big picnic in the cemetery with candles and flowers………thus, the family, which includes both the living and the dead, dines and communes together.

Women’s Mediation in Communing with the Spirits and Regenerating Social Identity

Death and grief in the Philippines are engendered spaces where women usually occupy the central foreground while men are more peripherally located in the background. It is not that men are unaffected by death, they are in attendance at wakes and funerals, but the primary responsibility for the leadership of religious ritual at this time is clearly in the hands of the women in the family and the community. As Barley ([1995] 1997:107) has noted in his review of the practices associated with death among different peoples worldwide throughout history there has commonly been a tendency for men to “mourn by proxy”, through women. In the Barangay All Holies context, when Isabel was recounting the experience of her father’s death some years earlier she made a point of saying that “it was my mother who made the funeral arrangements and notified my sister long distance”, not for instance Isabel’s elder brother, living a few doors away in the same squatter area. Similarly when I attended our neighbour Pacita’s mother’s funeral,

261Mercado defines the term sakop as referring to people’s reference group, primarily kin of which the departed are an integrated part. However sakop of a secondary nature also exists in terms of peers, workmates, alumni, religious confraternities etc. It is Mercado holds principally through relations within the primary sakop that social identity is established, for although individual differences are valued and acknowledged it is the sakop which always prevails over the individual.
it was Pacita and her sisters, not her brothers who were most visible in terms of
the funeral arrangements and the forty-day death anniversary novena of the same
woman was a totally female affair. The burial, forty-day and twelve-month death
anniversaries are all accompanied by the celebration of ritual novena prayers.
That is, nine successive days of devotional prayers for the deceased performed
predominantly by women and children of the family and neighbourhood gathered,
most usually, around a household altar. When Inday died, it was her sisters
and Isabel who took charge of the novena prayers, burial arrangements and
associated rituals. This same trend is observed, not only among the poor, but also
among the high socio-economic strata of society as Pañares (1994), an art
educator from MM’s upper class, clearly articulates in reflecting on her
experience of widowhood:

women have been the constant force sustaining me through all the
emotional breaking points of my life as a widow…..my sister,
Rau’s sister, his mother, and my group of women friends took over
the hundred and one details that had to be attended to: calling the
funeral parlor; filling up the hospital forms; notifying family
relatives, friends, officemates; writing the obituary and having it
published; scheduling prayers, services, songs and Masses;
bringing an endless supply of hot food, coffee, cookies, candies;
arranging flowers and keeping tabs of the Mass cards, gifts, and
money given to me……they were an efficient, tireless nucleus of
workers who knew no time, for even in the loneliest hours of dawn
I saw them there beside me. On the periphery, my male friends
also kept vigil, but death and grief were awkward landscapes for
them……feeling helpless and lost, unable to follow me into the
depths of my sorrow. But to my women friends, this was familiar
territory: they knew pain and death and grief from their
experience……

Pañares highlights the inner strength of her women friends in their ability to
journey through these experiences in a life-giving way. Women through their life
experiences become adept at harnessing inner spiritual strength and harmonising
social relations. In connecting the work of Beauvoir ([1953] 1974), Douglas
(1966) and Bloch (1982) Foltyn (1996:76) has observed that:

Distinct biological and existential conditions has caused people
cross-culturally to place women closer to birth, death and dirt.

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Although the initial novena prayers at time of death may be held in a mortuary or side altar alcove of a
church, chapel or funeral parlour in the presence of the body of the deceased, which is sometimes buried
prior to the completion of the nine day ‘novena’ period, the remaining days of ritual prayers are completed
around family household altars usually containing a picture of the deceased.
Yet in my observations, in the contemporary Philippine milieu, and possibly in times past, as suggested by Infante’s (1975) work, women’s association with death rites seems to be less concerned with images of impurity and pollution than with a role in the reproduction of the social order and in the act of mediating between the human condition and the spirit world.

**Conclusion**

In the main, all the arrangements for the All Saints Day cemetery visitations were done by women. Prior to the day, they contacted other family members, set up the times for meeting at respective graves, they prepared food and purchased candles and flowers, or nurtured flowers in their own gardens for this purpose. Several went to the graves of their kin some weeks or days earlier to clean the grave site or to assure themselves that the lawn area in memorial parks was being duly attended so as to be in peak condition for November 1. It was mostly women who brought money, on behalf of their families, to the parish office or treasurer of the local chapel in payment for masses to be offered for their deceased natal and affinal kin. It was also women who were in charge of leading or participating, on behalf of other family members in ritual prayers for the family’s deceased in local chapels and at cemeteries. There is a sense in which this prayer is more predominantly to the deceased already incorporated in the spiritual world than for the deceased during a period of transition to a future state, although prayers offered from both perspectives were a part of the religious ritual of this occasion.

In Filipinos’ celebration of All Saints Day there are also traces of those phenomena which Davies (1997) described in his comparative analysis of the rhetoric of death, ritual and belief in a cross section of societies, namely that “death rites do not simply have the capacity to patch tears in the social or psychological fabric of life but actually add a new energy to those who are left as they set about the rest of their life in society”. Davies built on Bloch’s (1992) earlier work on the structure of ritual processes in which Bloch extends Van Gennep’s ([1908] 1960) and Turner’s (1969) research. Bloch (1992:4-5) argues that religious rituals effect transformation through a “three-stage dialectical process” involving “rebounding violence”. According to Bloch’s theory of “rebounding violence”, an element of violence brings about rupture and transition from human material experience to transcendental spiritual experience and
through a further violent impetus the transcendental spiritual sphere penetrates and is incorporated in the human material realm in a way that energises and invigorates. In Bloch’s (1992:5) terms:

in the return the transcendental is not left behind but continues to be attached……vitality is regained, but it is not the……vitality which was discarded in the first part of the rituals that is regained, but, instead a conquered vitality [is] obtained from outside\textsuperscript{263} beings.

Paradoxically, in the ‘violence’ of depleting their personal energies, in the sacrifices involved in organising and leading the annual family celebration of All Saints Day, women concentrate spiritual power in a way which bridges the divide between the living and the dead to strengthen and enhance the present and future well-being of the living.

Women, through their organization and family leadership of the practice of All Saints Day cemetery pilgrimages, with their ascetic dimensions, access and concentrate spiritual power. They also harness the strength of kin groups by, at least briefly, bringing together some of those family members, living and dead, who are normally dispersed and only intermittently in contact with each other. Given the bilateral nature of Philippine kinship, family allegiances are always fragmented to some extent on such occasions with the pressure of competing obligations to duly honour both natal and affinal kin, who continue to be dispersed through locales in death, as in life. Here in the course of coming together, sharing food and their past and present lives there is a stocktake of family relations and the opportunity to realign and repair ruptures that threaten the continuity and unity of the kin group. It is, as expressed by Cora, “a time of reconciliation and resolution of developing tension points”, and as Tiya Siling expressed it, “they draw strength in being together with each other”. There is a commonality in these elements of the celebration, regardless of socio-economic status. For Barangay All Holies Filipinas and their families, what matters is that, on dying, the deceased enter the spirit world and there is a duty to honour and be especially present to them at this time of the year.

\textsuperscript{263}Original emphasis.
Figure 4: Layout of common Mausoleum Sites in Himlayang Pilipino Memorial Park

External view and architectural plans of two of the most elaborate mausoleums available for purchase in ‘Himlayang Pilipino’ Memorial Park as per standard information brochure for prospective investors.

RAJAH SULAYMAN SUITE

MEMORIAL TERRACE (MT-40)
Chapter 6:

Filipinas’ Influence in Local Spiritual Leadership and Religious Practice

Introduction

In this chapter I explore Filipinos’ appropriation of the practices and symbols of Catholicism in ways that allow for a continuation and strengthening of their basic indigenous beliefs. An integral element of these beliefs is that “almost all pre-Hispanic and contemporary non-Christian Filipinos agree in their preference for women religious practitioners” (Infante, 1975:167). I trace the lines of connection between women’s role as religious practitioners in pre-Hispanic times and the roles they exercise in contemporary Filipino religious practices, as observed and experienced in neighbourhood communities in Barangay All Holies. In support of my observations and documentation of women’s roles in religious leadership at local community level, a considerable body of pictorial material is presented and discussed in this chapter. The chapter is divided into five major sections. In the first part, I argue that in the contemporary milieu, the role of religious practitioners still tends to be read as a womanly role in the Philippines even though Filipinos have realigned in part, their forms of religious practice around rites presided over by male ritual practitioners as introduced by Spanish Catholic colonisers. In the second section of the chapter, I describe the ways in which women take on a religious identity through their membership in religious associations. I suggest that the presentation of themselves through their mode of dress is an important demarcator of identity for members of religious associations. In the third section, I illustrate that although the public ‘figurehead’ religious leaders are male priests, it is women who are the community’s arbiters of social values and it is they who are entrusted by the community with ultimate spiritual leadership. An integral part of this spiritual leadership is women’s management of local level social relations in such a way as to secure appropriate spiritual patronage for the well-being of their local communities. Against the backdrop of the importance to Filipinos of engaging in practices directed towards securing spiritual patronage, I illustrate in the fourth section of this chapter ways in which women exercise leadership in the common and popular religious practices of the local community. In so doing, I demonstrate that contemporary
women are not marginalised from leadership roles in local level religious practices. Even in the context where the formalised religious rituals of Catholicism are under the primary leadership of male priests, women make vitally important contributions through their auxiliary and informal roles without which formal ritual enactments could not satisfactorily proceed. Thus, I contend that in local level religious practice women continue to be perceived as highly effective mediators between humans and the spiritual realm in the constant interchange necessitated by life’s exigencies. In the fifth section of the chapter, I explore the symbolic significance in the Philippine context of the widespread use of white ritual attire in Catholicism’s formal ritual practices.

**Gendered Role of Religious Leadership in the Philippines - threads of continuity**

As I have already emphasised, religious praxis in the Philippines is intertwined in complex ways with an intensive Catholic missionary presence: a missionary presence that was predominantly male and clerical throughout the period of Spanish colonial rule. These foreign clerics set the terms of official Catholic religious ritual such that Filipinos have realigned, in part, their forms of religious practice to those of institutional Catholicism, centred on rites presided over by male ritual specialists. However, this realignment amounts more to a modification, than a surrender of their belief in feminine personages being primary conduits of access to spiritual agency. This is because, irrespective of whether the ritual practitioner is a man or a woman, there are indications that the role of spiritual medium in Filipino society has always been perceived to be associated with the exercise and possession of female gender attributes. Santiago (1995:154) makes the point that in traditional Filipino society,

> Men who aspired to be priests had to dress and act like their women counterparts. Hence they were called *asog* by the Visayans and the Bikols and *bayog* or *bayogin* by the Tagalogs and sometimes also by the Visayans, both words meaning ‘effeminate or womanish’.

[264] Although there were female religious in the Philippines from 1614 onwards, as documented by Santiago (1995), they did not constitute an active missionary presence in the same way that male religious did, as I have previously noted in chapter one, footnotes n. 39 p.16.
However to be womanly in this manner was not to denigrate oneself in any way, but rather because of their very rarity, the “bayogs” Santiago claims were “much revered and sought after”, (refer also to Geremia-Lachica, 1996). This suggests that the priesthood occupied a prestigious position in indigenous Filipino society, a contention further supported by Santiago’s (1995:190) findings that 17th century Spanish accounts of the priestesses and their activities, indicated that priestesses received considerable offerings in remuneration for their services. Cruz, ([1989] 1991:52) even argues that “Filipino women, particularly in the pre-Islamic and pre-Hispanic times, were more powerful and of a higher socio-cultural status than the men” claiming as evidence Salazar’s (1989) historical research detailing women’s role as ‘babaylans’ and ‘katalonans’.265 However it is questionable whether it is warranted to conclude from either Salazar’s (1989) or Santiago’s (1995) work, as Cruz ([1989] 1991:52) does, that women, in general, occupied a higher status than men. What Salazar’s (1989) work seems to suggest is that generally differential avenues to the access of power existed for men and women in pre-colonial society. For men the avenue to the access of power was more usually connected with the management of people in the establishment of strategic political and military alliances, while women’s avenue to access power was more connected with managing relations between humans and the spirit world through their capacity to read omens and portents in times of sickness, of war and at crucial points in the agricultural cycle and through their ability to present themselves beautifully to charm both influential men and spirits. Presenting oneself beautifully is not solely a matter of external appearance but is also conceived to be connected with a state of inner being, a point which I develop later on in this chapter and to a greater degree in the next chapter in relation to the beautification of Marian statues and activities associated with Marian fiesta celebrations. Indications are that in pre-colonial times some men and some women had access to, and managed these differential avenues of influence and such people had greater prestige, and usually more wealth, relative to other persons of either gender in their society. There existed a hierarchy of power but it was not premised primarily on gender differences.

Indications are that, in the initial phases of colonisation, Filipino men were slow to express an interest in taking up a priestly role. Such reticence on the part of Filipino males is not unusual, given that the role of communal religious leadership was more

265 Following the spelling here as used by Salazar.
usually a feminine one in Filipino society. Guerrero (1992:4) observes that there are indications that the friar’s ritual dress was seen as more feminine than masculine, noting that “a complaint was received at the Office of the Inquisition that some of the suspected witches were laughing at the priests for they looked like women in their habits”, (see also Quirino and Gracia 1958 ex Jocano 1975:207). It appears that only when the priestly role, as exercised by the Spanish missionaries, came to be perceived as a more overtly political as well as religious role, did some Filipino males from the ruling elite become interested in aspiring to the priesthood as a way of life. However, the situation in respect to Filipino women was very different. From the outset, women exhibited much interest in religious matters. In chapter three I outlined major ways in which women realigned themselves with respect to religious leadership in the local community in response to the changes in social relations and worldview, consequent on Spanish colonisation. The most direct links with the ‘babaylan/catalonan’ tradition of pre-Hispanic times appear to exist in the case of those women who are founders, leaders and members of indigenous religious movements located around Mt. Banahaw in which women are the principal religious practitioners (cf. Quibuyen 1991; Pesigan, 1992; Gorospe, 1992; Obusan, 1994b). However, there are also other hints of continuity with the past into the present. There are indications, for instance, that the principal ritual celebrants of institutional Catholicism in contemporary post-colonial Filipino society, celibate male priests, continue to be conceived in popular consciousness as being effeminate. Doherty (1964:70) claims that in a study conducted among Catholic, male, junior College students in MM the priest was imaged first and foremost as being unmanly by virtue of “being effeminate” where ‘effeminacy’, was most commonly perceived to be connected with ‘wasting one’s manhood’, ‘piety’ or ‘dealing only with women’. There was some indication of a similar attitude among some of the women with whom I worked in Barangay All Holies. For example, Dina, who resides in private subdivision K, spontaneously observed of one of the main priests from a MM seminary who helps out with weekend masses at the chapel in this subdivision, “He is the priest and he is so effeminate”. Dina’s comments are in keeping with the tenor of

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266 By no means are women the leading religious practitioners in all of the numerous indigenous religious movements based in the Mt. Banahaw locality. Covar (1975a) provides a listing of many of these and other indigenous religious movements existing in the mid-seventies in the Philippines, (refer also to Covar, 1977:see footnote 1) but since this time others have also been established, although I am not aware of any recent comprehensive national listing of all such movements, (Dr. Prospero Covar, personal communication 1995; Sr. Rosario Battung, personal communication 1997).

267 See p. 70 for Map 2 of Barangay All Holies and surrounding locality in which the location of this and other subdivisions and squatter areas referred to in this chapter are shown.
Doherty’s findings. The community in which Dina resides have recently constructed a permanent chapel but they do not have a resident priest and so Dina is largely responsible for making arrangements for priests to help out in the celebration of weekend Masses in the chapel in her subdivision neighbourhood. In later discussion with Dina, I enquired about whom she considered more religious, men or women, and the degree of involvement of men and women in religious activities. In response Dina replied that:

Men will always be men, I mean there are men who are religious and if they are religious they are really religious. But what I mean is that only a handful really go to church, other than Sundays, because they are men. I mean for them it is being anti-masculine. I think it is not really a man’s activity to indulge in Church activities, for them that is women’s work.

In keeping with Dina’s observation that “there are men who are religious and if they are religious they are really religious”, Clara from subdivision B, describes her husband as being more religiously inclined than herself. In reflecting on this, Clara ultimately attributes her husband’s religiosity to his mother’s influence in his life:

Before I got married my husband is more religious than I am........He would be the one to take me to the church........he was very strict in terms of that kind of thing, probably because of my mother-in-law who has led really a very prayerful life, ever since her childhood they were really brought up that way so probably he was like that because of my mother-in-law.

Dina’s remarks above are also reminiscent of Santiago’s description of ‘asogs’ cited earlier in this chapter, namely that being male and religious equates with effeminacy but does not necessarily lead to a diminishment of prestige. There are indications here of at least two differently gendered, but equally important, prestige systems operating. The respondents in Doherty’s study who imaged the priest as unmanly, at one and the same time appeared to hold the priest in considerable esteem. Connected with this are Castillo’s (1962) and Doherty’s (1964) findings that young men do not readily aspire to the priesthood even though it is regarded as a relatively prestigious occupation. This situation appeared to pertain in the case of Delia’s brother. Delia from squatter area 1 in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood grew up in Mindoro as the eldest in a family of four sons and three daughters. Delia describes her family as being poor but says her parents placed much value on them receiving an education and so she attended a public elementary school and private high school and
her eldest brother even attended a private elementary and private high school for the reason, Delia says, “because my mother dreamed of having a priest in our family and they enrolled my brother in Divine Word College, it is run by priests, and unfortunately that is not his vocation”. The priesthood was, for Delia’s mother, a prestigious occupation, which she was desirous of her son pursuing, but not an occupation to which her son was particularly attracted.

From her Southeast Asian research in Malayan and Thai societies in which worldview is closely intertwined with Islamic and Buddhist religious traditions respectively, Karim (1995b:14; 1995c:60) argues that where important “alternative paradigms of power and prestige” exist for men and women, neither gender is normally particularly interested in aspiring to operationalise the prestige system of the other gender because each gender usually has sufficient opportunity “to operate power to the advantage of [themselves]” within a complementary gendered alternative prestige system. In the normal course of events both men and women have access to sufficient avenues to exercise power and acquire prestige in their own gendered paths, but nonetheless, boundaries remain sufficiently fluid to allow those who wish to crossover between the prestige systems to do so with social acceptance. Different power paradigms for men and women do not necessarily result in gender hierarchies. This is not to deny the existence of power hierarchies in the Philippines but rather to assert that when women are differently positioned from each other in terms of wealth, education, age, occupation, kinship, ethnicity and religion, they may be separated more from each other in terms of power differentials than they are necessarily separated from men. Each positioning cuts across other positionings in complex ways, especially in the urban milieu where people are constantly being brought into relationship with one another in changing forms. This was particularly evident in Barangay All Holies, where as already noted in chapter one, neither the Barangay nor the Parish of All Holies were unitary, tightly bound ecclesiastical or civil polities but rather a complex mesh of communities within communities with some people cross-linked with others in the locality and beyond through kinship and ethnicity, employment connections and alumni of educational institutions, that at times cut across other economic and age stratifications. Map 2, which shows my research locality, depicts at least twenty four community clusters with local chapels, partially juxtaposed to one another and

268See discussion p. 42 ff.
269See end of chapter one, p. 70.
partially encompassed one within the other, which are either enclosed within or on the margins of the boundaries of All Holies Barangay and Parish. All Holies Parish and All Holies Barangay entities are composed of multiple discrete local communities, all of which have chapel buildings of varying sizes, but many of which do not possess clearly demarcated boundaries. The establishment of local neighbourhood chapels as a place to gather for formal religious rituals, such as Sunday Mass, and for other religious devotions, such as Mother of Perpetual Help novenas or Legion of Mary meetings, or as a rallying point from which to launch neighbourhood religious activities such as processions, has usually been primarily as a result of initiatives led by mature women. These initiatives may have involved various types of fund-raising activities, or comprised a personal donation of funds, land or building materials by women from an upper class background, or else entailed the organization and conduct of some form of meeting, with the result that the establishment of a local chapel becomes an item on the neighbourhood agenda. The very process of the establishment of these local chapels provides the people of the neighbourhood with a focal point around which to direct their activities in a way that leads to the crystallisation of a local community identity and women play a central role in this process.

**Women and forms of Religious Identity in Barangay All Holies**

The mature women of Barangay All Holies followed practices in continuity with those women who, during the period of Spanish colonial influence, joined third orders and religious associations and confraternities. Women from the Barangay All Holies neighbourhoods were members of various religious groups and organizations of predominantly female composition, such as Legion of Mary, Apostleship of Prayer, Ladies Church Group, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, Mother Butler’s Guild, Chapel Street Co-ordinators; and others of more mixed gender composition such as Charismatic Prayer Groups, Couples for Christ, Commentators and Lectors, Parish and Chapel Pastoral Councils, Parish and Chapel Choirs, Associations in honour of Patron Saints etc. The women who belonged to these religious groups usually wore distinctive modes of dress for ritual occasions that marked them out as having a particular religious standing in their local community and conferred on them a certain

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270For further reference to Mother of Perpetual Help devotions and Legion of Mary activities refer to chapter seven.
degree of prestige. The women, dressed in white skirt and jacket, who are carrying the Marian statue, in Plate 1, are members of the Legion of Mary confraternity. Their simple white attire marks them as members of this religious confraternity and although they come from the low socio-economic squatter neighbourhood area 1 of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel their confraternity attire is not markedly different from that worn by the women from the upper middle class private subdivision D neighbourhood of Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel who are also members of the Legion of Mary confraternity. In the top half of Plate 24 the women from Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel are depicted after one of the novena mass celebrations held as part of the cycle of religious activities celebrated in connection with the chapel fiesta, and are shown for the main part in simple white attire with the exception of two women. One woman who did not have available a white skirt on this occasion dressed in a white blouse and a brown skirt. The one other group member whose attire is a slight variation on the standard white, is the woman pictured on the far right (see top half of Plate 24) who wears a blue waist sash over her white attire, marking her as a member of a third order type association of devotees of Our Lady of Lourdes. In the following chapter I provide further information on the paths which have led some women to adopt the practice of dressing in the attire, or ‘habit’ of these Marian third order type associations. In the bottom half of Plate 24, Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel Legion of Mary confraternity members are pictured together in ordinary casual attire during an informal ‘religio-social’ group outing about which I make further comment in chapter seven. Similarly, in my discussion of the Legion of Mary confraternity’s activities in chapter seven, I comment further on events of the type shown in the bottom half of Plate 27 depicting the birthday celebration of one of the confraternity’s members.

Some religious confraternities use only a small article of dress rather than a full attire as a mark of membership. One such confraternity is the Apostleship of Prayer, which is a form of devotion centred on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and characterised by the

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271 Inserted after p. 104.
272 Inserted overpage.
273 Brown is the colour of the uniform of some other women’s religious groups as in the case of the Mother Butler’s Guild mentioned later in this chapter and those having an affiliation with Carmelite religious orders.
274 Inserted after p. 220.
Plate 24: Ritual and Casual Attire of Legion of Mary Confraternity Members

Top half: Legion of Mary Confraternity members dressed predominantly in simple white attire are pictured here after novena Mass in preparation for Our Lady of Remedies Fiesta celebration, November 1997.

Lower half: Members of the same confraternity pictured during an October 1996 pilgrimage in Batangas Province to Marian sites of devotion and to the grave (in background of photo) of the deceased husband of one of the confraternity’s members.
wearing of a red scapular. A scapular is a special piece of religious apparel which, when worn on liturgical occasions, is indicative of membership in a particular religious confraternity. A woman is pictured in the top half of Plate 49 and another in Plate 50 both of whom are wearing a red scapular over their white attire while another woman seated in the bottom left hand of Plate 45 can be seen wearing the same red scapular over her ordinary clothing. Scapulars are also worn or carried on one’s person in the manner of an amulet to ward off danger and as a way of obtaining spiritual power or, in institutional Catholicism’s parlance, grace in the form of indulgences. Members of Holy Mary’s Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity enclosed for me, as a gift in a birthday card, a blessed portion of such a scapular, sealed in a plastic envelope, with instruction that I should carry it in my wallet for my protection and spiritual well being. Those women who are chapel street coordinators from Santa Maria Birhen chapel community neighbourhood dress in white for the celebration of Marian Feasts such as on the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, known more popularly as ‘Mama Mary’s Birthday’ (see Plate 25) and Marian Fiesta celebrations as on the occasion of the Immaculate Conception fiesta celebrations at Santa Maria Birhen chapel (see Plate 26). Women who are chapel street co-ordinators act as bridge people in those activities that have a civic and religious dimension to them. These women are the leaders, organisers and instigators of local level religious activities of an informal nature, some of which take place regularly, others periodically throughout the year in the local neighbourhood environs and which are not confined simply to the physical chapel locality. Some other

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275 A scapular consists of two small squares of woollen cloth of varying colours corresponding to that of either the monastic habit of the religious order with which the confraternity is linked or of a colour symbolic of the devotion being honoured, such as red for the Sacred Heart or red or black in honour of Jesus’ passion. The small squares of cloth are connected to each other by two strings or ribbons in such a manner that when the scapular is placed over a person’s head on their shoulders the front segment rests on the breast while the other hangs down an equal distance at the back. Various emblems or decorations may be sewn, embroidered or drawn on the pieces of cloth (cf. Hilgers, [1912] 1999)

276 All Plates from Nos. 41 to 51 are inserted after p. 242 as these deal with facets of the involvement of Filipinas in Catholicism’s primary formal ritual, the Eucharistic celebration. Thus these plates are primarily discussed in the fourth section of this chapter which deals with the interweave of the ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ in local level religious practice, see p. 236 ff.

277 Indulgences are regarded as spiritual merits received for oneself or on behalf of another as a consequence of having performed particular religious exercises in the right manner with right intention. Such merits are deemed to result in a partial or total pardon of the punishment in the afterlife a person’s sinfulness is deemed to have incurred.

278 Inserted overpage.

279 Inserted together with Plates 25 and 27 after p. 220.
Section of the crowd gathered for Birthday celebration for “Mama Mary” at Santa Maria Birhen chapel, September 1997. On major Marian feastdays many women, not only those who are active members of various religious confraternities, dress in white to ‘show their love for Mary’ and as a way of ensuring the concentration of Mary’s spiritual power being channelled through them for their benefit and that of their families and local community.
Plate 26: Local Neighbourhood Chapel Street Co-ordinators

Santa Maria Birhen chapel street co-ordinators, dressed mainly in white ritual attire, with a couple of their children, on the occasion of the Immaculate Conception fiesta celebrations, December 1997.
Plate 27: Beautification and Female Self-presentation

**Top half:** Formally attired women community leaders hosting the coronation ceremonies of the fund-raising beauty contests held as part of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel’s annual fiesta celebrations, December 1998.

**Lower half:** Members of the Holy Mary Blessing’s Legion of Mary confraternity pictured during the birthday celebration of one of the confraternity’s members, May 1997.
women’s church groups of third order type, for example Mother Butler’s Guild,²⁸⁰
dress in brown uniforms in line with the colour of the habit of the religious order with
whom they are aligned (see Plate 38²⁸¹ and lower half of Plate 49).²⁸² Women quite
frequently belong to more than one religious association or confraternity as well as
being involved in a number of auxiliary formal and informal roles associated with
various ritual celebrations. For example, Marietta from the ‘Santa Maria Birhen’
chapel squatter neighbourhood area 1 is an executive officer in the chapel Legion of
Mary confraternity and through this position, she is also a member of the chapel
pastoral council in addition to being a member of the chapel’s lectors and
commentators association, and together with her husband, a leader in the local
Couples for Christ movement. Marietta is a member of the group of women who
regularly lead the Our Lady of Perpetual Help novena, which is prayed over the
public address system for the benefit of the entire neighbourhood every Wednesday
evening in the ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ chapel without any priest in attendance.
Marietta prepared one of the street-side home altars used in the Santa Maria Birhen
chapel community neighbourhood celebration of the ‘Way of the Cross’ during Holy
Week (see top half of Plate 36),²⁸³ and is also one of the core group of women who
take it in turns to chant the ‘Pasyon’ over the public address system in the Santa
Maria Birhen chapel over a twenty-four hour period during Holy Week (refer bottom
half of Plate 36). Marietta’s grandmother from Bicol was a leader in Novenas prayed
for the deceased and in preparation for the local fiesta, while Marietta’s married
dughter, who resides with her, is a regular commentator and lector in the ‘Santa
Maria Birhen’ chapel community and hostess during the coronation ceremonies of the
annual fiesta celebrations (refer top half of Plate 27).²⁸⁴

Not only in the religious sphere but in all facets of Philippine society the use of
uniforms is widespread, indicating employment in a particular firm or occupation, or
allegiance to a particular political association, or membership in a particular
entertainment or dance group etc. Uniforms are, from one perspective, boundary

²⁸⁰This is a lay association type organization established in the Philippines in the 1950s by a Filipina lay woman,
Clara Corpus. Though the organization is not strictly a third order it is loosely connected to the Congregation
of the Sacred Heart of Mary since the organization founded by Clara was both named and modelled after the
Mother Butler Mission Guild social service organisations established in Tarrytown, New York by one of the
sisters of this Congregation, Mother Joseph Butler, prior to her death in 1940.

²⁸¹Inserted after p. 239.

²⁸²Inserted after p. 242.

²⁸³See insert of pictorial plates after p. 239.

²⁸⁴Inserted with Plates 25 and 26 after p. 220.
markers that differentiate and mark out a certain group of people from the general populace but, on the other hand, from the perspective of the members of the designated group, uniforms serve to minimise status differentiations due to class or wealth that would otherwise be visible. Uniforms contribute towards the creation of a group identity, minimising individuality and are a way of manifesting harmony. The manner in which religious confraternities use them seems particularly related to this purpose and meaning. It is related to creating a small egalitarian space within a highly hierarchically structured society. Given the importance of beauty to Filipinas and the considerable attention which is paid to grooming and self presentation as one path to prestige, as is evident in *Plates 2, 3* \(^{285}\) and *27, 286* women’s use of simple, plain white \(^{287}\) ritual attire for religious celebrations conveys an unambiguous message about different systems of status and prestige operating in the religious sphere than in the more overtly political domain. Nevertheless the two fields are inextricably intertwined, the boundaries are fluid and one does not exist without the influence and interaction of the other, as I illustrate in my description and discussion of Marian feasts, particularly neighbourhood fiesta celebrations in the next chapter. As I contended in chapter three, the material and the spiritual are delineated but not separated and no level of power and authority is absolute each is gradated and fluid involving processes of mediation from the spiritual to the material and back again. Religious practice and leadership are both egalitarian and hierarchical. They are politicised and at the same time operate in a social arena in which alternative avenues to influence and prestige than those most commonly employed in the political sphere are highly valued. Life in the rapidly growing contemporary All Holies urban barangay is not neatly compartmentalised, rather it is complex and fluid, as I illustrate in the remaining sections of this chapter dealing with forms of religious practice and leadership at local community level.

\(^{285}\)See insert of pictorial plates after p. 104.

\(^{286}\)See insert of pictorial plates after p. 220.

\(^{287}\)I explore the symbolic significance of the widespread use of white ritual attire later in this chapter, see p. 245 ff.
Alternative paths of exercising Local Level Religious Leadership

None of the Filipinas in the neighbourhood environs in which I worked clearly articulated a desire to become women priests in the Catholic Church, presiding over the celebration of Mass. Perhaps their lack of ambition in this respect was simply due to pragmatically seeing no future in such aspirations because of the past intransigence of institutional Catholicism in this regard, or perhaps their lack of aspiration in this regard had its roots elsewhere. I suspect that the latter alternative is the case, although I cannot be sure, as I did not set out to specifically explore in depth contemporary Filipinas’ perspectives on the priesthood in the course of my research. Some women like Lily, were quite definitely opposed to movements for women’s ordination as advocated by some religious sisters, clearly indicating, “that there should be sisters who will be priests, I don’t subscribe to that idea.” While Lily is not enamoured by the idea of women aspiring to priesthood in Catholicism, she nonetheless sees women as having an important role in spiritual leadership. Lily, as previously noted in chapter four, grew up in her grandmother’s home where she lived together with her mother and her maternal aunts and their families. In her life story conversation, Lily emphasised that she experienced the women in her family as being very strong women, having a lasting influence in her life. Against the backdrop of this experience of Lily’s, it is instructive to consider her further reflections on the way in which she conceptualises women’s spiritual leadership role in the community:

women have a place to be the models of the community, the bearers of goodwill................giving the spirit of what the Christian is, emulating like the virgin mother in her generosity, in her patience, in other words, a good example, and................they actually motivate the people to behave like the real human beings that they are........the women has a big obligation and responsibility for the good formation of the people around them and in the Church they should be the exemplars of what is good...............primarily women feel that they have an obligation to help the Church and that’s one of their strongest points, like taking care of the Parish priest in the sense of helping him,.........he needs to be taken cared of..........I think we have an obligation to protect him.......And women are good in conscientizations, and I think it is one point, one very important aspect of helping the Church, making people aware of what is really right and what’s wrong, what you should not do and what should you do, your responsibilities as a good citizen. They

288See p. 181 ff.
have to play an important part. Because sometimes men take things for granted and they just say, ‘Oh you’re just splitting hairs, that’s not really important!’ But what is not important is relative, men tend to look at things differently, women tend to look at things differently also, so what could be remiss in the part of the men could be fulfilled by the women.

Here Lily advocates complementarity, there is a male priestly role in Catholicism but still women retain a major religious leadership role in the community through being, in a sense, the arbiters of social values, in that they ‘motivate people to behave like the real human beings that they are’. Further, women, Lily contends, ‘are good in conscientizations....making people aware of what is really right and what’s wrong, what you should not do and what should you do’. There are parallels here between these roles and that of the priestesses in pre-Hispanic times whom, according to written records, missionaries recognised to be “most astute” and to be acting as “counsellors” of their local communities even though their overall description of the priestesses was in very negative terms, describing them also as being “most cunning” and “the most deceitful individuals of the place” (refer to Infante 1975:170 citing Castaño 1895). Additionally, Lily contends, women are those able to exercise authority through their ability to harmonise social relations by being ‘bearers of goodwill’ and being sensitive to a lack of balance and attention to detail because, Lily argues, ‘men take things for granted.......so what could be remiss in the part of the men could be fulfilled by the women’. In tune with Lily’s perceptions, Karim (1995b:19-20) argues that:

deferment, patience, spirituality, invisibility, transference and other social intangibles are intrinsic features of a Southeast Asian social system, and become sources of resistance and strength. [Thus it is surely not valid to] argue that those who practice these social intangibles are powerless, dependent and weak...[Rather is it not the case, Karim contends,] that, given a social system which allows these social intangibles to become valuable human resources, and strategic bases for establishing core human relations, those who use them are in fact operationalising their culture in a constructive and productive form?

Lily also speaks of women ‘helping, taking care of and protecting the priest’ and while this can be read in various ways, it appears to me best understood as part of an overall patronage relationship of mature women with respect to the priest religious practitioner in the local community. It is, as is all patronage, double edged, being on one hand a source of tangible practical assistance which smooths the way and shores up support in the local community for the priest, who in the contemporary urban
Metro Manila environment is often a relatively short-term resident\textsuperscript{289} in the locality. However, on the other hand such patronage brings with it certain obligations of deference on the part of the priest to ensure his patronesses are respected and their social standing in the local community is preserved. Failure to be vigilant in this regard can prove to be socially debilitating for the priest as I illustrate below.

The majority of the women with whom I engaged in the neighbourhood environs of Barangay All Holies were mature, married women who exercised local level spiritual leadership in their local communities and in their families as their mothers, grandmothers and maternal aunts had done before them, but in ways distinctly different from the form of spiritual leadership most frequently modelled by the male priests of institutional Catholicism. Men who, in their training and in their lifestyle, have until very recent times been largely alienated from the majority of the populace (Schumacher, 1990; Bolasco, 1994c:76, 84 esp.). Rather than aspire to this form of spiritual leadership, Filipinas have stood aside from it, remaining spiritually influential at the local level through other initiatives and in certain ways managing the priests’ influence and relations with the local community. Many of the women from Barangay All Holies, just as in the past times described by Santiago (1995), exercise an influential role at the local community level in the provision of resources, both in kind and money, for securing, and maintaining the appointment of a priest to serve the local community. Additionally, these women also initiate processes to actively agitate for a change in the priest appointed to serve their local community if they deem this necessary to avoid offence to local, social sensibilities. This is because religious leaders are seen to have primary responsibility to promote harmony in social relations,\textsuperscript{290} and ultimate responsibility for religious leadership in the local community is today, as in times past, primarily vested in mature women. These are women who do not perceive themselves to be acting primarily as individuals, but rather to be

\textsuperscript{289}The appointment of priests to parishes in the Archdiocese of Manila is usually for a period of 4 to 5 years, sometimes shorter, according to information I obtained from the resident parish priest of All Holies at the time I arrived in the locality. During the period 1994 to 1998 during which time my fieldwork was conducted in All Holies Parish there were three different parish priests. In the period prior to this from the time of the foundation of the Parish in 1980 there had been three parish priests, the first serving for seven years, and the subsequent two serving the parish for a period of four years each. Further All Holies parish, possibly because it was in a locality of rapid population growth, had a different mode of supply of priests than in many other parishes, relying heavily on the services of guest priests.

\textsuperscript{290}Refer to discussion of Covar’s work, in chapter three (see p. 141 ff.), where he contends that legitimate authority in the Philippines, particularly of a religious nature, is exercised not primarily for the purposes of achieving domination but rather to achieve a certain level of harmony.
operating on behalf of the local community whose authority, in matters religious and spiritual, has been vested in them. Authority which the women in turn, through their patronage, delegate in part to priests so that they might harmoniously lead the community in particular forms of religious practice. In each of the three local neighbourhood communities clustered around All Holies Parish Church, Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel and ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ chapel, women articulated and exercised their influence in this sphere. Indicative of this are the comments of one of the executive officers of the Holy Mary’s Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity, Meny from subdivision D, in a letter to me shortly after the arrival of a new resident priest for their chapel. Meny writes:

It just happened that he did not treat the Legionaries alright when we first gave our courtesy call but now he is ........being nice to us. He should not ignore or treat the Legionaries that bad but be good to us for the reason that once he is for us, ‘the stick will fatten’ on account that the Legionaries are always at the table, with an abundance to eat!

In other words what was being clearly indicated here is that the new priest needs to realise that for his future welfare he will, in large measure, be dependent upon the influential, matronly group of women that comprise the membership of the local Legion of Mary confraternity. This is because the new priest will only prosper in their locality if he is favourably disposed towards them and enjoys their patronage.

Women’s influence and the importance of their patronage in terms of local level religious leadership is further exemplified in the role Mina and Babette291 played within their local community in effecting the transfer of one of the Parish priests of All Holies Parish during the time I was residing in the locality. These women, undeterred by apparent power differentials between themselves and the hierarchy of the institutional church, became foci of strength and resistance in their local community in ways, which, while not passive, were nonetheless directed towards the attainment of harmonious local community relations. Mina, Babette and their companion were all mature married women from private subdivision A in which the Parish Church was located and were influential members in several religious associations and confraternities, particularly the Ladies Church Group which was initially formed in the local subdivision in 1975 prior to the establishment of All

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291 Some details on the life circumstances of these and other Barangay All Holies women have been given in chapter four.
Holies Parish in May 1980. Some of the women of the initial fifty or so resident families in the new subdivision formed this neighbourhood group to take charge of co-ordinating the Sunday masses being celebrated by visiting priests in the multipurpose hall of the subdivision and they also took care of the other religious activities of the community. The group became a focal point for community mobilisation, initially through the steps they took in bringing people together on a weekly basis for Sunday worship, and later by gathering sectors of the community for other devotional activities like rosary, novenas and prayers for the dead. In addition it was the Ladies Church Group that spearheaded fund-raising activities, in the local community and beyond, to finance the construction of a church building, inclusive of a priest’s residence and a mortuary where the communitarian and religious rites for the locally deceased could be appropriately conducted. In view of this background information, Mina’s perceptions of the manner in which events transpired leading to the aforementioned Parish priest’s transfer are particularly revealing. This is especially so in light of my earlier discussion, in chapter two, of Brewer’s work illustrating how clerics steeped in a hierarchical and patriarchal religious worldview portrayed women who opposed their religious authority as being demonised. A somewhat abridged version of Mina’s account of events, in which I have emphasised particularly pertinent sections, runs as follows:

I was an officer of the Ladies Church Group...........we had difficulties with one of the Parish priests...........it originated from a very simple thing, we wanted a dialogue and he refused to do that.........we are very easy people to talk with but he closed his doors to us, I think that was what aggravated things and a group of our menfolk, here in phase one, were ready to take up placards already to go and there were just three of us, sort of peacemakers, Mrs. Tao [Babette] and myself and another lady who said, “Never mind let us try and come up with a dialogue “. We failed, because we approached the bishop and this bishop already told us O.K.............so we thought it was just us, a few of us, and then a few of them, the priest and other priests. What he did, he called all of those people from the squatters areas............and they were given a version that was very different from what the truth was, so we appeared to be like devils, you know, here in the Philippines if you go against a religious, or they thought we were going against him because we didn’t obey what he was saying,..............We did not exactly say that we did not want to obey him what we were after was just a dialogue. So it escalated, it escalated because he refused to dialogue so, at

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See p. 100 ff.
first we were just the only ones that were against him and then later on.........when more and more people got to realize oh what they are saying is true then that’s when, don’t get me wrong I am not anti priest but it just so happened that way and so he was transferred and it’s good

Of particular salience in terms of continuity with the Babaylan tradition and Filipino modes of social relations is that both Mina and Babette’s account of this incident took place in the context of their response to a query about what was their level of involvement with the institutional church and how they saw themselves positioned in this respect. Both identified various religious organizations and associations in which they were involved such as Ladies Church Group, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, Apostleship of Prayer, Lectors and Commentators, and Pastoral Council and indicated that their involvement with this particular incident was by virtue of the particular executive roles they were exercising at the time in these organizations, within the Ladies Church Group in Mina’s case and within the Pastoral Council in Babette’s case. These women were not acting in isolation but as representatives and with authority entrusted to them by the wider community. While to some extent this leadership role was a gendered role, it was interpreted as being performed in such a manner as to complement male roles in the community, through an indispensable behind-the-scenes mediating role, as complement to that of the highly visible, public male role of readiness to ‘take up placards’. Paz, from ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ chapel community, describes a scenario with a similar dynamic in the soliciting of funds for the transition from a makeshift chapel to the construction of a permanent chapel in their neighbourhood. Speaking of this event during our life story conversation together, Paz recalled:

we gathered funds by means of soliciting there in Bayan Ave, we go to business establishments with a letter signed by the Parish Priest, Bro. Tito was the one to drive the car and then the three of us Sis.

293 An abbreviation for Brother and a direct follow-on from the practice in Spanish times of the general term ‘hermano’, i.e. ‘brother’ being used to refer to the male members of third orders or other religious associations, (Santiago, 1995:164) as noted earlier in chapter three, refer p. 129. I observed this practice to be in widespread use in the various mandated organisations of the All Holies Parish and subchapels. Bro. Tito was at that particular time the local chapel pastoral council co-ordinator.

294 An abbreviation for Sister, and also a direct follow-on from the practice in Spanish times of using the general term ‘hermana’, i.e. ‘sister’ to refer to the female members of third orders or other religious associations. The very widespread practice among many members of religious confraternities of addressing each other as ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ appears directed towards establishing a sense of kinship identity, and familiarity among members in these organisations with concomitant obligations to be helpful and supportive to one another, not only in religious contexts but in wider spheres of their social relations which cuts across other criteria that stratify social relations. This point is developed further in the following chapter.
Netty, Sis. Leela\textsuperscript{295} and I will go out of the car and we will approach the business owner for donations for our chapel building.

Here the Parish priest and the pastoral council co-ordinator, Bro. Tito, take a very visible role in one respect, providing the signature to the appeal letter and the vehicle for transport to the various businesses but it is the women who are again engaged in vitally important negotiations in the background, in the back room or the front office, putting personally and persuasively the case for funds for their local chapel construction.

In the afore-mentioned incident, Mina indicates in her account that she clearly perceives herself to have a leadership role in the local Christian community to work towards the maintenance of harmony and therefore she placed emphasis on trying to establish a dialogue, thus keeping lines of communication open and in so doing, avoiding as far as possible direct confrontation. Repeatedly Mina speaks of the desire to establish a dialogue between the priest and the leaders of the local community. In her account of events, Mina emphasises, in increasing intensity, the negative effects of a failure in this regard on the priest’s part. Mina observes that in the beginning a disruption to the harmony of social relations began “from a very simple thing, we wanted a dialogue and he refused to do that’. Then according to Mina, the priest acted in a manner directed towards closing off dialogue; ‘he closed the doors....that was what aggravated things’, resulting, in Mina’s eyes, in an inevitable deterioration in relations, ‘it escalated, it escalated because he refused to dialogue’. The women wanted a meeting, more in the form of a mediation than a direct confrontation. They were seeking a mediated background encounter, bringing the parties into discussion in a rather non-public forum, but the priest chose not to meet them on their terms but to bring the meeting from a ‘behind-the-scenes’ gathering to a public forum. He invited to the meeting certain sectors of the parish community not directly affected by the matter under discussion, but indebted to him and on whose support he knew he could count. So on one level the meeting was a failure for Mina and her companions, and a triumph for the priest and his supporters, but this is only part of the picture because within a few months of this apparently failed meeting the priest in question was quietly transferred. It was ostensibly for other reasons, namely a routine rescheduling of parish appointments, but Mina and

\textsuperscript{295}Sis. Leela and Bro. Tito were married to each other and each in their own right and together were patrons of some importance in the ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ chapel. I will illustrate aspects of their patronage in my discussion of the chapel’s fiesta celebrations in the next chapter.
her companions were in no doubt that it was because the priest’s actions had caused a rupture in local social relations. The existence of such a rupture undermined the authority of his religious leadership in the Parish. This is because such authority is legitimated through the ability to harmonise social relations.

In Babette’s account of events she also lays emphasis on a lack of attentiveness on the part of the priest to social sensibilities, expressing her concerns thus: “now, that we have modern priests it seems to me that, you know, they are not really that aware anymore as they used to in expressing their feelings, in dealing with people”. Babette earlier indicated that what directly led to the priest’s demise in the local community was the priest’s failure to ensure that the social standing of one of his primary patrons, Babette, was preserved. Babette indicates that by virtue of her executive position in the parish council she was in a key intermediary role between the priest and the community, spending much time in interaction with both parties and prepared to mediate separately with each party over differing expectations at times. Babette indicates that it was when the priest failed to respect the due process necessitated by such an intermediary role that problems arose, “the parish priest got angry, and he, he humiliated me in front of other people”. The debt incurred through the patronage received had not been honoured.

The scenario recounted above involving Mina and Babette was not an isolated incident. A similar course of action was followed at ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ subchapel in 1997 when a guest priest temporarily resident at the subchapel offended local sensibilities by making what were considered unfavourable remarks about one of the local level ‘third order’ type organizations in which one of the major patrons, in this case a male, of ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ chapel occupied an executive position. It was women members of the local chapel pastoral council who raised their concerns with the executive members of the local pastoral council and then took the initiative to

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296 It was not simply a case of the people from the private affluent subdivision having their will prevail on this issue. This is demonstrated by the fact that some eighteen months or so later the replacement parish priest was the cause of a serious rupture in social relations among a sector of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel community. When the mature women from this subchapel community initiated moves to discreetly bring their concerns to the attention of the bishop, the priest attempted to rally to his public support people from private subdivision A, not directly involved in the issue, but to no avail. A relatively short time after the approach to the bishop was initiated by the women from Santa Maria Birhen chapel community a replacement Parish priest appointment was quietly made.

297 See Covar’s 1975b work referred to in chapter three, p. 141.
have communicated to the guest priest via an intermediary priest with whom they were on good terms that the community no longer required the guest priest’s services, careful to try to effect the break in a way that would minimise the detrimental effect on harmonious relations. These women from an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood, accompanied by some male members of the pastoral council, also requested a meeting with the bishop responsible for longer term guest priest assignments, and directly lobbied him not to have this priest considered for such an assignment in the future at ‘Santa Maria Birhen’ subchapel. The members of this local community, who did not have a resident priest to serve their local chapel preferred the difficult weekly task of trying to resource a guest priest to serve their community needs than accept the appointment of someone whom they deemed insensitive and disruptive of local social relations. The principal arbiters of this decision were the mature women of the community. These incidents relating to women’s religious leadership roles in the local community point to the exercise of power in the Philippines having a gendered face as is further illustrated in my discussion of local neighbourhood Marian Feast and Fiesta celebrations in the following chapter. The incidents I have briefly described here provide support from the Philippine context of Karim’s (1995b) work calling into question some of the common tenets of Western feminism, namely that women will predominantly find themselves in a position of subordination leading to a hierarchical pattern of social relations with men. Karim holds that where there is disagreement and criticism this will not be made explicit in a way that endangers the bonds of individual social relations. Rather, according to Karim, (1995b:18) disagreement and opposition are ‘voiced’ in anonymity and silence because she observes that “seldom are formal complaints made, and seldom is the target aware who are actually the people conducting the campaign. Anonymity and invisibility are carefully preserved”. In the gender relations of men and women, conflicts are not expressed through channels of direct confrontation and opposition but rather, Karim posits, the goal “is to discourage open confrontation and to develop instead a form of hostile harmony”. Naturally such forms of gender relations are readily open to misinterpretation as a form of passive submissiveness to oppression and domination from an unsensitised Western feminist perspective.

298 Original emphasis.
In each of the incidents, which I have outlined above, the issue at stake was a concern that affected, in some way, a local community cluster, not just a case of individual personal differences. Although the issue did not necessarily directly affect people in other sectors of the Parish, indirectly other sectors of the Parish were affected because the overall harmony of relations among a significant portion of the Parish community was affected. People were most tightly bound to their local level worship centre and yet there was also a sense in which they conceived of themselves as part of a larger whole of the Parish because, through their place of residence, they were located within its boundaries. This was particularly so for members of chapel pastoral councils, representatives of whom attended monthly Parish council meetings. The Parish was a hierarchically structured political entity in which the priest, as parish administrator exercised power through his management and ‘political’ type leadership role. This power was part of the hierarchical authority structure recognised as a legitimate component of Filipino social relations. To be truly effective however, as spiritual leaders, priests must also be able to effectively concentrate spiritual powers in ways that foster community unity and harmony. Of necessity this also involves avoiding the dissipation of power through the political factionalisation of the community. The complexity characterised in the communities within communities in Barangay All Holies, and in chapels and sub-parishes existing within the All Holies Parish entity is, in part, due to levels of authority and alternative avenues to prestige and power existing in fluidity. In the incidents I have cited, the priest lost the legitimacy of his religious authority which made his continued presence in the Parish untenable. I concur with Karim’s (1995b) approach and with Roces (1998) line of argument that both men and women in the Philippines exercise real power but that the mode of operationalising power tends to be clustered around different foci for each gender. These foci point to the different manner in which men and women most commonly exercise power. However, because there are a cluster of modes of operationalising power around each foci, the foci also shade into each other and are further complicated by differing economic positionings and patronage relations, with the resultant effect that there are a range of ways in which both men and women exercise power.

The main foci of men’s and women’s modes of exercising power are, Roces argues, that men who exert power and influence in the public, political field are imaged as “malakas”. In common usage “malakas” is literally an adjective denoting ‘strong’ or ‘powerful’. Men are thus regarded as being in possession of strength or power, through having the ability to influence and win the loyalty of others by virtue of
kinship links, wealth, demonstrable aggressiveness, military prowess or sexual virility. Whereas Roces contends that women possess and exert power through their “beauty and religiosity”, in their ability to ‘curry favour’ with those holding political, economic, and ultimately divine power through their virtuosity, charm, poise, moral integrity, mediation, and presentation of themselves as “maganda”, regardless of the details of their particular physical traits. In common usage “maganda” is literally an adjective denoting ‘beautiful’ but it can also mean good. In this vein Mercado (1994:85-90), to whom Roces (1998:17) refers, argues that in Filipino consciousness beauty is interchangeable with truth and goodness. Roces (1998) demonstrates that under certain circumstances women can exercise power in a presentation of themselves approaching masculine forms and I have observed that the modes of operationalising power of some ‘officially religious men’ approaches feminine forms. For example, Roces (1998:172-177) illustrates how when Miriam Defensor Santiago sought to establish herself as an anti-corruption, graft-busting, immigration commissioner she was photographed for the cover page of a leading magazine in a shooting range firing off target shots with a handgun; but when she was running for the Philippine Presidential candidacy in 1992 she was photographed in a bathing suit in a modelling pose. On the other hand, male clerics most influencing the course of political events in the Philippines are not those who run for political candidacy but those, like Cardinal Sin, who operationalise power according to more feminine modes with behind-the-scenes meetings, appeals to moral integrity and being visually depicted in the media in full soutane. This is illustrated in Plate 28 which is a reproduction of a picture accompanying an article by a female journalist reporting on accusations made by Cardinal Sin that President Ramos was “seeking to perpetuate himself in power beyond 1998”, (Jumilla, 1994). The visual, as much as the printed article, is used to convey Cardinal Sin’s prestige and influence in this context. Interestingly, as I suggest in my title to the plate, this media report ‘in toto’, that is photo and article together, communicate that the commonly gendered lines of operationalising power in the Philippines become blurred in the meeting of religious and political spheres of influence. The photo suggests the predominantly masculine nature of political power and the effeminate traits of religious power, but the text of the article, paradoxically, attributes to the religious leader a militant attitude in reporting on “the Cardinal’s tirades”, and to the political leader an enduring, long-
Plate 28: Blurring the Gendered lines of Operationalising Power in Religio-Political Leadership

In this picture, which accompanies an article reporting on Cardinal Sin’s strident opposition to President Ramos’ alleged secretive plans to seek an extended Presidential term, journalists juxtapose President Ramos and Cardinal Sin, who commonly represent the public faces of political and religious leadership in the predominantly Catholic Philippines. The President is in obvious masculine attire, while the Cardinal is in the quasi-feminine attire of his soutane.

(Photo from Philippine Daily Inquirer, Wednesday November 2, 1994, p. 3)
suffering, non-hostile, harmonious attitude in highlighting Ramos’ readiness to “turn the other cheek”, (refer to title of Jumilla’s, 1994 article).

Roces distinguishes gendered expressions of power in the Philippines as being “official” in the case of men in the political arena, and “unofficial” in terms of the power exercised by female kin, or pseudo kin (mistresses etc.), of male politicians. I contend that the influence exerted by Filipino women in their local communities is based in large measure on qualities demonstrating moral integrity through which inner spiritual power is concentrated. But I argue that this source of power has frequently been overlooked in feminist analysis by undue emphasis on the exercise of power as it is most commonly conceived in Western discourse, namely overt political power based primarily on the command of human and economic resources, prestige and external force, particularly of a legal and military nature. While the exercise of such power is of considerable importance in contemporary Filipino society, I hold, as proposed in the second chapter of this thesis, that Filipinos have retained, albeit in modified form, their conception of ultimate power residing in spiritual potency, through which the course of human life is directed. As a consequence Filipinos engage in a variety of practices directed toward the maintenance and cultivation of avenues of spiritual patronage to ensure their well-being and success in their material endeavours. For example, public transport jeepneys are adorned with “God Bless our Trip” or “Hail Mary Pray for Us” in signwriting or on embroidered tasselled banners, varied representations of the ubiquitous Santo Niño statuette are prominently displayed in jeeps and buses, banks, shops, offices and police stations, as illustrated in Plate 29. This plate is a reproduction of an article in a leading Philippine daily newspaper. It is obvious from the content of the brief article and accompanying photo that religious icons are prominently displayed in public places. This public display of religious icons frequently takes the form of small altar settings that are decorated with flowers and beside which candles or vigil lamps burn. This action indicates that the veneration of religious images continues to be, for today’s Filipinos, an important means of obtaining spiritual protection in their lives with obvious

See discussion on p. 102 ff.

Inserted overpage.
While other police stations have their own religious icons, the two-feet tall Sto. Niño statue at the complaint’s desk at the entrance of the Tagig police headquarters is an “orig”. It’s dressed in a police officer’s light brown uniform, complete with a metal belt buckle, black synthetic leather shoes, and a name plate on the left breast that reads, “Sto. Niño police.” It was brought there in 1992 by Lt. Danilo Santarina. SPO4 Charlie Aviso, who takes care of placing fresh Sampaguita on the statue’s hand every morning, said the statue serves as a constant reminder to the policemen to think twice before committing any monkey business. Tagig police chief Col. Francisco Buentipo, however, said that the statue serves more as a “protector” so that no harm will fall on the officers while on duty.
The article also indicates the polysemous nature of religious icons, like the Santo Niño, which are clearly not simply interpreted in only one way, their meaning and purpose are explained in different ways by different people. Other articles can be commonly found in daily newspapers referring to various practices undertaken for spiritual patronage purposes, for example a report in a newspaper’s home and garden section on the formal opening of a new commercial nursery (Sarian, 1996), or an article in a newspaper’s business section on the opening of a new sales office of an insurance company (Anonymous, 1997), or a report in a newspaper’s real estate section on a new tourist resort development project (Mangawang, 1997) all of which are accompanied by photos showing religious blessing rites being conducted. At another time, an article in a newspaper’s sports section on the beginnings of the practice of playing basketball in the Philippines features a photo of a religious grotto in Manila, and suggests that the ‘birth’ of basketball in the Philippines has in a sense a ‘religious genealogy’ (Joaquin, 1996). All of which points to both an intertwining and differentiation of the spiritual and the material in Filipino society.

Similarly it can be argued that there is an intertwining of official and unofficial power in the religious sphere in terms of male priests, deacons and Eucharistic ministers exercising official power and women exerting unofficial power. However, I prefer Karim’s (1995b) schema of differentiating on the basis of formality and informality. Karim (1995b:17) argues for the adoption of “an anthropology of informality in Southeast Asia” in which it is recognised that the practical management of social relations frequently takes place in “flexible and fluid” (Karim, 1995b:26) ways even though from an external, formal viewpoint such relations may appear hierarchical. Karim (1995b:16) has argued that because bilateral social relations are common in Southeast Asia efforts are directed towards maintaining “social relationships through rules of complementarity and similarity rather than hierarchy and opposition”. The objective is to lessen “imbalance in power through mutual responsibility and cooperation rather than oppression and force”. Thus Karim (1995b:19) contends that Southeast Asian women’s

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302 Refer to my reference in chapter three to the reputedly widespread practice in pre-Hispanic times of erecting home altars for the veneration of specially fashioned ‘anito’ images, see p. 121. See also the findings from Beltran’s (1987) research, and Ma. Carmen Gaerlan’s (1991) survey as discussed in chapter two, see p. 94 ff. in addition to my discussion of the use of images from home altars during neighbourhood processions and fiesta celebrations, see p. 241 ff.
inputs into politics and religion exist in the informal sphere; but this informal sphere is so visible and important that it is hard for social scientists to come up with one general statement to the effect that women are less important in politics and religion. Indeed most political and religious activities are enacted within this informal sphere.

It was my observation in Barangay All Holies that a continuous blending and interweaving of the formal and informal faces of religious activities of contemporary urban Filipino Catholics existed. The two spheres were not separate domains but intricately interlinked, primarily through women’s contributions and involvements as I will illustrate by discussing women’s roles in the celebration of local level informal and formal religious rites. My discussion is supported and supplemented by a body of pictorial material.

The interweave of the ‘Informal’ and ‘Formal’ in Local level Religious Practice

In official Catholic religious teaching and discourse, the Eucharistic celebration is regarded as the central, pre-eminent, formal religious ritual\footnote{According to the Constitution on the Liturgy from the Documents of Vatican II, “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed.............From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a fountain, grace is channelled into us; and the sanctification of men [sic] in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their goal, are most powerfully achieved” (Abbott, 1966:142 article 10).} and it evidently occupies a place of some centrality in the lives of contemporary Filipinos, especially urban Filipino women who are in attendance in larger numbers than men on Sundays, usually in the ratio of at least 3:2, and also constitute the greater bulk of those in attendance on ordinary weekdays. Although the women of Barangay All Holies in both the squatter areas and the private subdivisions did not aspire to be priests, many women did take on a range of subsidiary, yet complementary ritual leadership roles to those occupied by males, particularly those of the clergy, in Catholicism’s formal Eucharistic ritual celebrations in their different community level chapels. \textit{Plates 41-51} \footnote{Inserted after p. 242} which I discuss later in this chapter depict women in varying ritual leadership roles as Mass commentators, lectors, offerors, choir members, and ceremony directees in the context of the formal Catholic religious activity of Eucharistic celebrations. In connection with these religious celebrations there is a whole other dimension of...
women’s involvement which is of a more informal auxiliary nature, but which is nonetheless indispensable to the ceremony’s conduct. This involvement includes activities such as the setting up and preparation of the chapel venue prior to celebrations, contacting and securing the support of patrons and arranging a schedule of visiting and/or guest priest celebrants. It also entails collecting Mass stipend payments and issuing receipts to those who request Masses to be offered for deceased relatives, those who are sick, and for a myriad of other particular intentions; and preparing a list of these intentions for official mention within the formal ceremony’s official prayers and announcements. Other activities involve counting, recording and banking the money contributed to financial collections during the ceremony, and preparing a payment for the priest celebrant from these proceeds as well as preparing and serving refreshments to ritual practitioners, etc. In the meeting room/reception area of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel, (depicted in Plate 30)\textsuperscript{305} indications of some of these informal contributions exist. The greenery on the table edge in the left hand corner of the picture is left over from the floral decoration of the Marian statue that has been carried in the evening procession in the neighbourhood Marian devotions held on October 31st, (see Plate 31).\textsuperscript{306} The púto (native rice cakes) on the plate on the table and cup in the hand of the woman in the centre rear of the picture, and other cups on the table, indicate that refreshments have been provided and served to participants at the conclusion of this ritual activity. The three women dressed in white and belonging to the Legion of Mary and Apostleship of Prayer confraternities have rendered this service. In addition preparations are in hand for the celebration of All Saints Day Mass to be held the following morning with the woman seated behind the desk having been collecting, recording and receipting the Mass stipends offered for prayers for deceased relatives and friends which will be a central feature of the following morning’s celebration. This woman is also in discussion with the chapel pastoral council chairperson\textsuperscript{307} regarding who will carry out the various ritual practitioner roles at the morning celebration and checking that all is in readiness in this respect. A special urn is used in the rites associated with the commemoration of the dead in this chapel community on All Saints Day and before leaving the chapel building that evening, the two women in the background on the right hand side of the picture will see that this urn is set up ready for the morning’s religious activities.

\textsuperscript{305}Inserted overpage.

\textsuperscript{306}Inserted together with Plate 30 after p. 237.

\textsuperscript{307}Although in this case the pastoral council chairperson position is held by a male, it may be held by a person from either gender.
Plate 30: The interweave of Women’s Formal and Informal contributions to Religious Leadership

In the small office-cum-meeting room attached to the Santa Maria Birhen chapel, October 1997, various behind the scenes preparations and planning take place for formal and informal religious activities in the chapel and surrounding neighbourhood. Significantly more women than men perform these activities. These women are usually all members or executive officers in various religious organizations and confraternities.
Plate 31: Women Leaders of Neighbourhood Marian Devotions

On this occasion of a neighbourhood Marian procession to mark the end of Rosary Month, October 1997, the three mature women in this photo (one who is carrying the public address system is partly obscured behind the priest) are using a public address system to lead the community in the recitation of rosary prayers and hymns. The chapel guest priest accompanies them, participating in the procession but not in any leadership capacity.
Rites in which male priests officiate as principal celebrants are only a part of the religious practices of Filipinos. Many other religious practices, involving various forms of Marian devotions; Apostleship of Prayer devotions; Couples for Christ gatherings; charismatic prayer meetings; prayers for the dead; Cursillio meetings; pilgrimages; neighbourhood processions; ‘pabasas’ and Holy Week rites commemorating the ‘Way of the Cross’ etc., (see Plates 1-3, 31-38), are frequently enacted in the local neighbourhood without any priest officiating, or only having a partial leadership role, as I illustrate in my discussion of these plates. Alternatively the priest may be in attendance simply as one of the community but not specifically in a leadership role, which is the responsibility of the mature women of the local community. This is evident in a celebration such as the October 31st neighbourhood Marian procession (see Plate 31) which is led by three of the married women from the neighbourhood. The woman furthest to the right in the picture and partly obscured by the priest, has the battery for the public address system slung on her shoulder as she walks in accompaniment to the two women to the left of her in the picture who are alternately leading and answering the rosary prayers over the microphone as they move along at the head of the procession. The guest priest, who regularly celebrates mass in the Santa Maria Birhen neighbourhood chapel, simply joins in the procession as one of the participants but not in a leading role. These and other religious practices of an informal nature and women’s leadership of them are more common among the poor and middle class sectors of society but certainly not absent in the lives of the elite. For example Babette, from subdivision A in which All Holies Parish church is located, has taken on the obligation to organise a weekly neighbourhood Marian procession as a form of recompense for having at one period in her life doubted Mary’s importance as a spiritual mediator. In Babette’s words:

I almost lost my devotion really I stopped praying to her, I started talking directly to the Lord.......I just felt that I wanted to cry and ask my forgiveness from the blessed mother...............then I felt that I have some obligation to promote also the devotion to the blessed mother so here every Saturday we do our own Fatima procession, I am the one fixing the schedule where the image should go.

I return, in the next chapter, to this point of Mary’s importance as a spiritual medium and the power which she embodies in her person.

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308 Plates 1-3 are inserted after p. 104, while Plate 31 is inserted after p. 237 and Plates 32-38 are inserted after p. 239.
Informal religious activities connected with Marian devotions (see Plates 31-34)\(^{309}\) and during Holy Week (see Plates 35-37) were very frequently conducted under the leadership of women in the low socio-economic neighbourhood environs of Santa Maria Birhen chapel. Local level religious practices engaged in during Holy Week, especially in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood, are of an ascetic nature directed towards the inner concentration of spiritual power for the community’s well-being by seeking to align one’s ‘loob’ (inner being) with the ‘Pasyon’ experience of Jesus through imitative actions such as the neighbourhood ‘Way of the Cross’ (see Plate 35). This practice takes several hours. On the occasion pictured here it took three and a half hours in the heat of the tropical sun, processing along kilometres of the rough, stony, dusty and pot-holey roadways of the neighbourhood, linked together as one body by all holding on to one rope. As we processed we carried lighted candles, and the street co-ordinators or members of religious confraternities led in the recitation of the rosary and hymn singing over a public address system in between stopping at fourteen temporary altars of the type depicted here (see top half Plate 36). These had been prepared by designated householders using a white cloth, candles, religious icons and flowers or pot plants. At each station point in addition to the set prayer texts which were recited, always involving one member of the household where the station point was located, there were spontaneous prayers prayed over the public address system, led by various leaders within the chapel community, most commonly mature women. These prayers were for the family of the household sponsoring the station and also for intentions concerning a whole range of community issues, for the sick, the deceased, those graduating school and seeking employment, those away from the community working abroad, local chapel and barangay councillors, those with financial difficulties, young people, old people, pregnant women, newly married couples, those having birthdays etc. This ‘Way of the Cross’ procession was followed by a ‘Pabasa’ which is the twenty four hour chanting of the ‘Pasyon’ text, again using a public address system (see bottom half Plate 36 and Plate 37). Those involved in the chanting were not exclusively women, some men, just as Delia’s father does in her home province, and some youth of both gender also participated. However, the organization and conduct of local ‘pabasas’ were predominantly in the hands of the mature women in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood. Several of these could be heard in various stages of progression on

\(^{309}\) I do not give any further explanation of these plates in this present chapter, however I do return to them in the following chapter in my discussion of forms of Marian devotion in Barangay All Holies, see p. 264 ff
Plate 32: Neighbourhood Women Leaders of Religious Confraternities organising Marian Procession

Women neighbourhood street co-ordinators, a Legion of Mary confraternity executive member, members of chapel council with one of the few male members, of the predominantly female Apostleship of Prayer religious confraternity, discuss last minute organization details for the neighbourhood Marian procession celebrating “Mama Mary’s” birthday, September 1997.
Plate 33: Marian Fiesta Neighbourhood Candle-light Procession

Women surround the Marian statue while processing through the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood as part of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta celebrations, December 1996.
Plate 34: Santacruzan Celebration

Neighbourhood children participate in a pageant, enacting the legend of the finding of the true cross of Jesus, embodying many elements of Marian devotion woven together with strains of Nationalism; a devotional practice observed in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood, May 1997. There are similarities in this devotion to a number of the indigenous religious practices of the nationalistic, quasi-millennial religious movements in the Mt. Banahaw locality.
Some of the women participating in the ‘Way of the Cross’ devotional practice in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood, March 1997. As Holy Week usually falls during the hottest season of the year this procession, which may take up to three hours in the heat of the day, is a very ascetic practice as can be seen in the tired face of the women in the centre of this picture.
Plate 36: Women’s Leadership during Holy Week Neighbourhood Devotions

Top half: Mature age woman from Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood leading prayer during the ‘Way of the Cross’ devotion at a street side altar she has prepared outside her home, March 1997.

Lower half: Married women from Santa Maria Birhen chapel community leading the Pabasa, which is broadcast to the surrounding neighbourhood via a public address system, March 1997.
Mature women singing with and training younger women in the skill of leading the *Pabasa* singing in a subchapel of *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel neighbourhood, April 1996.
Plate 38: Assembling for Santo Niño Neighbourhood Procession

Members of the Mother Butler’s Association in brown uniform, a ladies church group who are responsible for the organization and preparation of local level religious activities in their neighbourhood such as the annual Santo Niño Fiesta procession to celebrate their subchapel fiesta. The women pictured here formed the core group who, together with a few others, began the procession which then gathered many other followers as it passed through the various streets and laneways of their locality, January 1997.

(Note: This plate is correctly orientated, although it may appear that it has been presented back to front due to the banner in the background which is so positioned to welcome people approaching along the street from the rear).
most days during Holy Week but very especially on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, so effectively during this time the ‘Pasyon’ formed a background refrain in the neighbourhood. This recitation of the ‘Pasyon’ resembles the practice of reciting epics in pre-Hispanic times which, as I recounted earlier,\(^3\) Infante (1975) indicated was used as a means of teaching young people ‘principles of government, custom and religious belief’, and re-enforcing belief in and adherence to the same within the wider community. Some ‘pabasas’ were held in the neighbourhood chapels but many were held in people’s homes and backyards, one was also held every year at the local government Barangay offices. Several other local level religious activities also involved neighbourhood processions (see Plates 31-35, and 38) in the low income neighbourhoods which were organised through the chapel street co-ordinators who are mainly women, together with members of the Legion of Mary confraternity and/or Mother Butler’s Guild members who are all women, the Apostleship of Prayer confraternity who are all women except for one male member and the chapel pastoral council members who are male and female. Neighbourhood processions were also held in the private subdivisions near the Parish church and in the subdivision in which Holy Mary Blessings chapel was located during Holy Week and on some Marian feastdays, the Parish feastday and on some other solemn feastdays of the Lord. However their occurrence was less frequent and of a more formalised format with the Parish, or resident priest taking a significant lead ritual role.

Through my involvement at the Santo Jesus chapel I was adopted into the family and local neighbourhood activities of the squatter area neighbourhood No. 9 where one of the regular Visayan patrons of the Santo Jesus chapel resided, and was an executive member of the local Legion of Mary and Mother Butler’s Guild confraternities. The members of these confraternities led the neighbourhood religious celebrations associated with the celebration of their local chapel fiesta in honour of the Santo Niño (see Plate 38), particularly a procession through their neighbourhood with their patron saint mounted on a platform covered with a white cloth and decorated with flowers. The main patronal image of the chapel has been especially beautified by being dressed in a newly prepared regal costume, with shampooed wig and carefully applied make-up as one would prepare a renowned artist for a major public appearance and

\(^3\)See chapter three, p. 119.
performance (see Plate 39).³¹¹ The Santo Niño had been feted and blessed in the community fiesta Mass celebrated in a packed chapel earlier in the day. The women of the Mother Butler’s Guild, several of whom are also members of their local chapel Legion of Mary confraternity together with a couple of other women, a few youth and children comprise the small core group with whom the procession begins from their local chapel on the Sunday afternoon of the Santo Niño’s feastday, (as depicted in Plate 38). As the procession progresses, the number of participants ebbs and flows from as low as twenty to thirty to over a hundred in this locality, in other places more, as people join in from their homes along the way for part of the procession. Others do not join the procession but burn candles and watch it from the front of their homes. Many bring with them Santo Niño statuettes from their home altars and occasionally other religious icons like Marian statues or pictures and crucifixes. These objects adorn their home altars as localised sources of sacred power. People carry them in the procession during fiesta time alongside the larger image of the chapel patron saint, in a sense, recharge the spiritual power in the small images so that they are better able to protect and provide spiritually for household members during the year ahead. Fiesta time is one of several times during which people perceive that spiritual powers are especially concentrated and so bring with them, in procession, or to the neighbourhood chapel, the icons from their household altars. Other such times include Holy Week, particularly Palm Sunday processions and Mass, and certain Marian celebrations, as in the case of the neighbourhood procession and Mass on the Feast of ‘Mama Mary’s’ birthday when many of the Marian icons from their home altars are brought to the celebration (see Plate 40³¹² showing some of the icons brought along, other people arrived with additional icons at a later point in time). There are obvious parallels here with the religious practices involving those objects referred to as ‘tao- tao, bata-bata, larawan, or licha in pre-Hispanic times, and to which I referred in chapter three.³¹³ The Spanish belief that in instituting Catholicism they were introducing a new and superior religious worldview, is subverted in part by Filipinos widespread self identification with Catholicism, simultaneously with their persistent engagement in ritual practices outside of hierarchical Catholicism’s centrally instituted rites. Filipinos have interpreted the practices of Catholicism as being in harmony with their traditional rites precisely because of the potential in the rich symbolic capital of religious ritual for polysemic

³¹¹ Inserted overpage.
³¹² Inserted together with Plate 39.
³¹³ See p. 121 ff.
Plate 39: Beautification of Santo Niño Statue

Prior to the beginning of the nine day novena celebrations the statue was attired in a newly tailored set of garments, and its wig of real hair was freshly shampooed. On the actual day of procession, the Santo Niño statue was beautified, (as shown here), through the application of eye shadow, lipstick, and rouge, by members of the Mother Butler’s religious confraternity, January 1997.
Plate 40: Blessing of the Religious Icons from Home Altars

Priest on the left hand side of picture blessing the various religious icons, predominantly related to Marian devotions, which people have brought along from their home altars to be blessed on the occasion of the feastday celebrating Mary’s Nativity, September 1997.
readings through which both the Spanish and indigenous Filipino people could identify threads of continuity. What emerges is that in the religious sphere today there are continued indications of Filipinas having, as Rafael (1988:213) contended, “give[n] in to colonial authority, but.....not give[n] up”. That is to say that Filipinas ‘have given in to’ institutional, hierarchical Catholicism’s dictates that male ritual practitioners are to preside over those rites which it deems of central importance, but Filipinas have not totally relinquished their influence, rather they have retained an active, complementary leadership presence. Thus Filipinas ‘have not truly given up’ the primacy of women’s leadership role in the religious sphere at the local community level, nor have they given up their celebration of rites centred around feting, placating, and invoking mediators and patrons to ensure the community’s spiritual welfare. Furthermore, Filipinas have also taken up important and indispensable auxiliary roles in Catholicism’s formalised, ritualised practices, in which male priests are the principal ritual practitioners.

In the celebration of Catholicism’s formalised ritual practices, particularly Eucharistic celebrations in Barangay All Holies Parish church and subchapels certain ritual leadership roles were clearly demarcated along gender lines while other ritual roles were commonly performed by persons of either gender. The principal priestly ritual practitioner role was filled exclusively by male clerics (see Plates 41, 48, 52 and top half of Plates 47 and 49). Males, also almost always filled the auxiliary ritual roles of acolyte and Eucharistic minister. The acolyte is an official ritual attendant to the presiding priest. The acolyte performs a wide array of auxiliary tasks which include lighting the altar candles, leading the priest into and from the celebration and on occasions being a ritual cross bearer leading in and out all the other ritual participants. When necessary the acolyte may hold the Missal, the main ceremonial book from which the priest reads, and accompany various ritual practitioners as a candle bearer at particular points in the ceremony. The acolyte also serves the priest during the preparation of the ritual bread and wine offering, rings bells at appropriate times in the course of the celebration, and at times is an attendant server during the distribution of communion. On those occasions when there is a celebrating bishop, the acolyte attends to holding his ceremonial mitre and staff at appropriate times. Acolytes could variously be either young boys, youths, binata (young unmarried men) or mature

\[^314\] Plates 41-51 are inserted immediately after this current page, while Plate 52 is inserted after p. 248.
Plate 41: Women’s Leadership in the Planning and Preparation of Formal Religious Celebrations

Prior to the Immaculate Conception Marian Fiesta Mass, Santa Maria Birhen chapel, female lector and female commentator seated with officiating bishop and male choir leader of mixed gender choir, together going over the planned order of ceremony prior to commencement of ritual activities, December 1997. Women in white dresses and bishop in white soutane, choir leader is in white shirt and black trousers in line with attire of other male choir members on this occasion, (see Plate 46, top half, in which choir is pictured).
Plate 42: Women’s Leadership and Preparation in lower level Formal Religious Celebrations

Prior to Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Marian Fiesta Mass celebration in a subchapel of Santa Maria Birhen low income neighbourhood community, female ceremony commentator, dressed in white for ritual role, readying the bells and taper for candle lighting to be used by her son in his ritual role as acolyte—he will dress in white alb for this occasion. Standing to right of centre is female choir leader of predominantly female choir, (see Plate 46, lower half, in which choir is pictured at ceremony’s conclusion), November 1996.
Female commentator welcoming the assembled members of the community to the ritual celebrations for main Immaculate Conception Marian Fiesta Mass in Santa Maria Birhen Chapel neighbourhood community, December, 1997. To the left of the commentator but on the front right hand side of the altar area is located the Marian statue of focus in this particular fiesta celebration, in front of which is a central floral arrangement, flanked on either side by lighted candles and two large empty vases which will be filled at ceremony’s end with flowers brought up singly in a floral offering procession made by members of the congregation. Mounted on the wall behind is an Our Lady of Perpetual Help picture.
Plate 44: Female Lectors and Male Eucharistic Ministers in Formal Religious Celebrations

Female lectors who are both married women with children are dressed in white for their ritual role. They lead in the other male ritual celebrants who are on this occasion four ministers of the Eucharist, a priest and a Bishop at the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass, Santa Maria Birhen Chapel, December 1998. The ministers of the Eucharist are mature married men with families and for their ritual role are attired in white or cream barongs (Filipino shirt, male formal wear) over dark trousers with a yoke type stole in the appropriate colour of the liturgical season.
Plate 45: Female Lector in Lower Level Formal Religious Celebrations

_Santa Maria Birhen_ community subchapel celebration of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Marian Fiesta Mass, November 1997, in which female lector proclaims the first reading. Lector is again dressed in white but in less expensive attire as she is from a low-income ‘squatter’ neighbourhood. Also the lector is younger than many who perform this role and a _dalaga_ (unmarried woman). The lector’s role is performed by both gender, who may be single or married. In Barangay All Holies women, more frequently than men, performed the role in all socio-economic neighbourhoods.
Plate 46: Shared and differentiated Gender Ritual Roles (a)

**Top half:** Mixed gender choir, although women slightly in majority. Members of choir group endeavoured to dress in uniform manner for this special occasion although this group did not have a regular uniform. *Santa Maria Birhen* Chapel Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass, December 1997.

**Lower half:** Community choir composed predominantly of females celebrating Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Fiesta Mass in subchapel *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel neighbourhood, November 1996. In this lower level, formal celebration, choir members are not attired in any distinctive uniform.
Plate 47: Shared and differentiated Gender Ritual Roles (b)

**Top half:** During the offertory procession of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass in *Santa Maria Birhen* Chapel, women bring candles to the altar for use in the ceremony, December 1998.

**Lower half:** During the offertory procession of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass in *Santa Maria Birhen* Chapel, women bring flowers to the altar for use in the ceremony, December 1997. No special attire is necessary for those performing these roles but sometimes members of particular confraternities will perform these roles and then be attired in form of dress indicating their membership in such associations. Men, women or children may carry the candles but only usually women or children carry these flowers.

*Note also:* Visible on left hand side of top photo is young male acolyte in attendance to priest, principal male ritual celebrant in centre of picture, while in the lower photo young male acolyte holding ceremonial candle is visible to right of photo with mixed gender choir in background.
Plate 48: Shared and differentiated Gender Ritual Roles (c)

**Top half:** During the offertory procession of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass in *Santa Maria Birhen* Chapel, women bring food offerings to the altar for principal presiding celebrant(s), December 1998.

**Lower half:** During the offertory procession of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass in *Santa Maria Birhen* Chapel, women bring to the altar a ritual offering of water and wine for use in the ceremony, December 1997.

Again no special attire is necessary for those performing these roles, which may be fulfilled by either gender, and sometimes by men and women together.
Plate 49: Shared and differentiated Gender Ritual Roles (d)

Top half: During the offertory procession of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass in Santa Maria Birhen Chapel, a woman presents, to the male principal celebrant, who is assisted by a male Eucharistic minister, a sacred vessel containing a ritual offering of bread for use in the ceremony, December 1998. This offertory procession role may be performed by either gender.

Lower half: During offertory time women collectors, members of Mother Butler’s Guild religious confraternity, bring to the altar financial contributions collected from the assembled participating community at a novena Mass in preparation for the Santo Niño Fiesta celebration, Santo Jesus subchapel January 1997. This role was most usually performed by women, rather than by men, in the Barangay All Holies neighbourhood communities.

(Note: Members of the Mother’s Butler’s Guild religious confraternity wear a distinctive brown suit uniform with a small cross on their lapel as pictured here.)
Plate 50: Marks of Religious Confraternity Membership

Woman conducting first financial collection, from assembled participating community. Most of this collection is given to the Bishop and priest celebrants on this occasion of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass, Santa Maria Birhen Chapel, December 1997. As in the lower half of the previous plate the woman’s manner of dressing denotes her membership in two religious confraternities in this chapel community; the red ribboned scapular worn around her neck, over a white blouse and skirt indicates this woman’s membership in the Apostleship of Prayer and Legion of Mary confraternities respectively. Frequently women from these groups are responsible for taking up the financial collections during Mass.
Plate 51: Women Ceremony Directees

The women, in the foreground of the picture, are organising and directing the conduct of the offertory procession during Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Fiesta Mass in Santa Maria Birhen subchapel, November 1998. Flowers, food items and money are being brought up as well as the ritual bread and wine. A leading local level male politician, in the centre background, is one of those being organised and directed by the women.
married men (see Plates 42, 47 and 52) while Eucharistic ministers were usually mature married men, (see Plates 44 and top half Plate 49). The only exception I saw to this practice being that of religious sisters regularly filling the ritual role of Eucharistic minister, distributing communion in All Holies parish church. This points to the positioning of religious sisters as bridge persons whose sexuality is ambiguously conceptualised by Catholicism’s clerical, male hierarchy in the Philippines, in some respects liminal, marginal people, partially befitting the clerics’ perception of a priestly role but the very process of clerics extending to them this degree of participation partially re-genders them from female towards neuter. Only very occasionally did I see the acolyte role partially fulfilled by a woman when there was no acolyte in attendance and a female lector assisted the priest by performing a few of the tasks which would normally be done by an acolyte. However, in some other countries females hold both the ritual roles of acolyte and Eucharistic minister, although there has been some resistance to female acolytes in edicts from some circles of Catholicism’s Roman clergy.

Females in the Philippines predominantly hold other ritual roles in the formal religious sphere of Eucharistic celebrations; most notably these are the roles of commentator (see Plates 41-43) and of offertory collector (see Plates 49 bottom half and Plate 50). The commentator to the Eucharistic celebration in the Philippine milieu is essentially the celebration’s hostess par excellence. Prior to the entrance of the celebrant priest and other ritual practitioners, the commentator is the first to greet and welcome all those assembled for the celebration. She then officially introduces by name all of the participating ritual leaders for the celebration and announces the names of the ceremony’s main financial sponsors. Throughout the celebration, the commentator leads the assembled community into their corporate responses; she also articulates prayers in the name of the community reading out the particular intentions specific to each celebration. The commentator also reads the names of those for whom financial offerings have been contributed through the ‘purchase’ of Mass stipends for prayers to be offered: most frequently these were for specific deceased relatives but also for those with certain ailments, those sitting examinations or undertaking particular courses of study, those travelling, those seeking employment, or political office, those pregnant, those celebrating birthdays, wedding anniversaries, graduations, promotions etc. or in thanksgiving for prayers answered and favours granted. There are very obvious links and parallels here with the types of intentions for which maganitos were performed by the babaylans/catalonans of pre-Hispanic times as documented by (Scott, 1994:84, 239-240) and Jocano (1975:41, 120) citing
Plascencia ([1589b] 1903:191) and to which I referred in chapter three. In the Santa Maria Birhen chapel the commentator’s role was almost always performed by a female, most usually mothers of young families (see Plate 42) but sometimes more senior women and occasionally dalaga (young unmarried women). In the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood it was extremely rare for males to be commentators; this took place less than half a dozen times in hundreds of masses I attended at this chapel. I generally observed the commentators role to almost always be the exclusive responsibility of women in low socio-economic neighbourhoods, although I was less frequently in attendance at other low socio-economic neighbourhood chapels than at Santa Maria Birhen chapel. In All Holies Parish church and Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel where I attended hundreds of weekday masses but less frequently attended Sunday masses, perhaps thirty to fifty times at each locality, there were occasionally male commentators, but on the great majority of occasions the commentator’s role was filled by females. However at the Santo Jesus chapel the commentator’s role was regularly performed by both men and women. The Santo Jesus chapel was not essentially a local neighbourhood chapel having a very different genesis to the other subchapels of the parish. It was a regional ethnic, ritual, patronal devotional centre managed by a number of regional Visayan associations, with mixed gender membership, which were partially business enterprises and partially religious organizations. Although it was a chapel within the All Holies parish boundaries, it served a community of very different identity to the other subchapels of the parish. Most of those who regularly participated in the ritual celebrations at this venue did not reside in the All Holies parish locality but were people from all over MM and the adjoining provinces who shared a common ethnicity. The chapel’s establishment was not centred on local level neighbourhood religious practice and it was only marginally a subchapel of the Parish under the influence of the Parish priest. It served in a secondary capacity, but not by primary design, as a local worship centre for some of the population in its immediate locality. The ethnic links and bonds served to unite the members of this chapel community across other common social stratifications, including that of gender.

The offertory collectors were responsible for conducting the financial collections during formal ritual celebrations using ritual baskets specially designated for this purpose (see lower half of Plate 49 and Plate 50). In each of the chapels and the Parish church this role was most usually performed by mature women from the neighbourhood belonging to one or other religious confraternity or association and
wearing the distinctive attire of these organizations. At the conclusion of official ritual ceremony in the chapel, the collection proceeds were counted by some women from these same religious organizations, although not necessarily always the same women who were responsible for carrying out the collection inside the chapel. Frequently one or other of the women from these same organizations held the position of treasurer on the chapel pastoral council and was thus responsible for payment of expenses incurred in the conduct of the celebration and carrying out any necessary banking transactions. Connected with the offertory collection is the offertory procession ritual involving the presentation to the celebrant of candles, flowers, and ritual bread and wine for use on the altar during the celebration. Gifts of food and money are also commonly presented to the principal celebrant in the offertory procession.  

Most commonly these processions are organised and directed by the mature local women of the neighbourhood (see Plate 51). For the main part, participation in the offertory procession is a non gender specific role and thus performed by both females and males (see Plates 47-48, 51 and upper half Plate 49). Men, women and children may be involved carrying candles, food and monetary offerings, or the ritual bread and wine, but usually only women or children carry the flowers. The ritual roles of lectors and choir members are also non gender specific and performed by females and males (see Plates 44-46, and lower half Plate 47) although in general more females perform the role of lector than males.

**Ritual Dress, Concentrating Power and Femininity**

In formal religious activities it is noticeable that ritual practitioners, both male and female, are most commonly dressed in white attire, (see Plates 41-45, 47-48, 50, 52 and upper half of Plates 46 and 49). The symbolism of this attire, in the spirit of Turner’s (1967) analytical approach is open to multilevel interpretation. In the most obvious and immediate way its exegetical meaning can be linked to the symbolism of purity, understood on one level as cleanliness, a lack of spot or stain and to the adage “cleanliness is next to Godliness”. The progressive association of whiteness with the image of ‘cleanliness’ then ‘Godliness’ is in a sense part of the positional meaning of this symbolism. Because those that are thus attired in white ritual dress need to be so

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315 As noted in the previous chapter, (see p. 203), in pre-Hispanic religious rituals the use of candles, lamps, incense, flowers and food offerings, particularly wine as well as money was commonplace.
in order to avoid the dissipation of spiritual energy, because when thus attired they are exercising ritual roles that bring them in close proximity to the altar, to the centre of ritual activity. Not only are people clothed in white but objects approaching this centre point are also ‘clothed’ in white; the altar (as depicted in Plate 45) and the table (as depicted in Plate 41) around which the principal ritual practitioners will be united in fellowship following the celebration of the ritual activities conducted around the altar in the chapel proper, are both covered in white cloths. To be able to be positioned close to this sacred point of concentration of supernatural power necessitates being attired in white because this very act communicates purity and helps to focus and concentrate spiritual power in ways that connect with the Javanese concept of power described by Anderson (1972:9) which I cited in chapter two, namely that “concentration” of power is “correlated closely with the idea of purity [and thus] conversely the idea of impurity is intimately related to diffusion and disintegration” Both Ileto (1979) and Mulder (1992) contend that this conception of power is part of a wider Southeast Asian cultural paradigm connected with indigenous Filipino spiritual beliefs. As I noted in chapter three, Mulder (1992:6-9) in his comparative studies of the religious beliefs that characterise peoples’ perspectives on life in Thailand, Java and the Philippines argues that in Southeast Asia there exists a thread of continuity in symbolic representation and interpretation. This enduring and pervasive understanding and orientation acts as a kind of underlying deep stratum which is drawn upon but also modified and transformed as religious belief is given expression after passing through an overlaying filter of Buddhism, Islam and Catholicism in the respective national societies. Mulder (1992:7) claims that

the focus of Southeast Asian religion........is a relationship with power.
That power is located in the nature/supernature in which human life is embedded.............implicit in this view of life is the belief that power is near, tangible, accessible.......it can be supplicated and manipulated, which is to say that humans know the attributes of the various manifestations of power and how to deal with them.

According to Ileto (1979) where power is fully concentrated it manifests itself as liwanag, literally as “radiance, brightness, refulgence” (English, 1977:835), but liwanag is more than this, it is pure being, or as Ileto (1979:148) expresses it “liwanag is said to emanate from the very fullness of being”. Liwanag is concentrated energy in which there is fullness of clarity, knowledge and unity; liwanag is radiated by the union of men [sic], by heavenly beings, and by extraordinary human beings who possess powerful anting-anting........[and that] a leader has liwanag to the extent that he has a
‘genuinely transformed loób’ [lit. interior, inner being]; his ‘charisma’ rests not necessarily upon wealth, status or education but upon a ‘beautiful’ loób that attracts others (Ileto, 1979:45)

Although Ileto follows the convention when writing in English of using the generic male pronoun and translates non gender specific Tagalog terms like ‘anak’, ‘kapatid’, ‘tao’, ‘kababayán’ to the masculine forms ‘son’, ‘brother’, ‘men’, ‘countrymen’ respectively in addition to using various non gender specific collective terms such as ‘peasants’, ‘workers’, ‘masses’, ‘people’, ‘followers’ etc. which gloss over women’s presence, there are sufficient other pointers in his accounts of the indigenous religio-political movements he is describing to indicate that these associations operated along largely egalitarian principles and were comprised of both men and women. The movements frequently began as religious confraternities, ‘cofradia’, having male and female membership referred to in Tagalog as ‘kapatiran’ meaning at one and the same time brotherhood/sisterhood but most frequently translated into English simply as ‘brotherhood’ as in the case of Ileto’s (1979:29-73) chapter on the Pulahan movement led by Apolinario de la Cruz which is entitled “Light and Brotherhood” even though Ileto clearly indicates that the movement was made up of men and women and emphasises its egalitarian character:

the Cofradia sought to inculcate a deep sense of egalitarianism and fraternal love among its members. Common submission to the Holy Family was the condition that bound them together as brothers and sisters. During their monthly reunions.......the cofrades would sit together at a cena fraternal, a fraternal supper, without distinction as to age or sex.......They considered themselves siblings (kapatid) and for this reason served each other, (Ileto, 1979:36; based in part on Dolendo, 1911:222)

Ileto (1979:40) further connects the manifestation of liwanag to a person being enveloped in a radiant, intensely pure and bright aura of the kind that purportedly enveloped Jesus on Mt. Tabor so that he is described in the ‘Pasyon’ as being immaculately attired in white, “ang damit sa katawan parang busilak na tunay puting hindi ano lamang [the clothing on the body seeming truly immaculate, extraordinarily white]” (Pilapil, [1884] 1949:55). In Santa Maria Birhen chapel the crucifix immediately behind the altar is bordered by a light tube which is switched on for formal ritual celebrations so that the crucifix becomes highly illuminated a symbolic
brilliant, glowing, radiantly white focal point, a manifestation of ‘liwanag’ (see Plate 52).\(^{317}\)

From the perspective of ‘traditional’ Catholic morality, the wearing of white attire may be interpreted as a symbol of purity where purity is understood as being synonymous with chastity, virginity or abstinence from engagement in sexual activities. However when I asked the women concerned why they dressed in white, only a few responded along the lines of purity and not specifically in terms of virginity, chastity or abstinence from sexual activity, which was hardly surprising given that most were married women with families. Some women indicated that their reason for being attired in white was simply because “this is just what is required”, “it is tradition”, “it is just what I was taught to do with this work, this service”, “it is our uniform”, but several others replied when asked specifically why they dressed in white for Marian feastday celebrations (see Plates 26 and 27) at Santa Maria Birhen chapel that they did so “to show their love for Mama Mary”.

According to Pigafetta’s ([1521] 1905 see Jocano, 1975:62) account of the datu of Cebu’s baptism, Magellan similarly told the datu that “he was clad all in white to demonstrate his sincere love toward them”. Ileto (1979:40) in his reflections on the attributes and manifestation of liwanag also interconnects ‘resplendence’, ‘unity’ and ‘love’. In his discussion of aesthetics in Filipino philosophy, Mercado ([1977] 1988:) points up the non-dualistic character of Filipinos appreciation of beauty and how many nuances of meaning blend one into the other in a way that unites and harmonises. In particular Mercado ([1977] 1988:7) suggests that in three of the major languages of the Philippines, Visayan, Tagalog and Ilocano there are shades of meaning of the words splendour, charm, lustrous beauty, and brilliance through which the words can all be synonymous with beautiful - maganda. Further, through reference to Jocano’s (1970) research among the Sulod people in Panay, Mercado ([1977] 1988:6) notes how feminine beauty is also associated with lightness of appearance, “fairness of skin” which is suggestive that there may be a symbolic connection in some ways to ‘whiteness’ and the supernatural, goodness, extraordinary reserves of power and femininity that predate any emphasis on ‘whiteness’ in the sense that was imposed during the colonial era. I further explore conceptions of interconnections between femininity, inner strength, beauty and goodness in my discussion of the beautification of Marian images in the following chapter.

\(^{317}\)Inserted overpage.
Plate 52: White Ritual Attire and Light, Concentrating Power and becoming a focus of ‘Liwanag’

During the celebration of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta Mass, white ritual attire and lighting effects are used to symbolically communicate a concentration of spiritual power, that is, ‘liwanag’, (concentrated energy in which there is fullness of clarity, knowledge and unity), Santa Maria Birhen chapel, December 1998.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that although the widespread Catholic evangelisation which accompanied colonisation privileged male religious leadership, Filipinos have retained their belief that females are the primary persons providing avenues through which spiritual power is accessed. At root the reason for this is that power is not conceived of as a unitary, undifferentiated entity. There are gendered avenues to prestige and power in the Philippines, one of which directly concerns religious leadership and authority. In continuity with pre-Hispanic practices religious activities continue to be conceived in popular consciousness as predominantly women’s sphere of work in the Philippines. Women’s membership in religious associations and their involvement in local level religious practices confer on them a prestige and identity in their local communities. Modes of dress which both differentiate and unite women in times of religious activity are an important element in the establishment of these women’s religious identity. I argue that because the legitimacy of religious leadership in the Philippines is heavily dependent on the ability to foster and maintain harmonious social relations, priests, who are interim members of the local community in contemporary MM, are reliant on the patronage of mature women who are arbiters of social values in the community.

I also provide support in this chapter for my earlier contention that Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices are not dichotomous, as has sometimes been argued. Rather I hold that the religious beliefs and practices of Filipinos exist on a continuum from, at one end, those closely attuned to and in continuity with pre-Hispanic expressions of religious belief and practice to, at the other end, those articulations of belief and forms of ritual expression most closely harmonised with norms formulated by institutional Catholicism’s centralised, elite male, clerical hierarchy. I also suggested that the majority of the population do not operate at either extremity of the spectrum, but rather, at different times and under differing circumstances of life, their forms of religious belief and practice approach more closely one end of the spectrum than the other. Thus Filipinos engage in a blend of formal and informal religious practices and in the rituals associated with both of these forms of religious practice, women exercise important and influential roles. In my experience in Barangay All Holies, women’s influence and local level religious leadership is more visible in those
neighbourhoods which do not have a priest in residence at their local chapel or are not part of the neighbourhood in which the Parish Church is located and to which the parish priest’s residence is usually attached. In particular this applied to people from lower socio-economic, heavily populated squatter neighbourhoods such as those clustered around the Santa Maria Birhen chapel who lacked permanency and security in any facet of their lives. In the upper socio-economic classes women were also influential in local religious leadership in auxiliary ritual roles in formal ceremonies but very particularly in more political forms of patronage management of the religious affairs of the neighbourhood. Finally my exploration of the symbolism of the use of white ritual attire in formal religious rites suggests that conceptions of inner power, light, purity, harmony and femininity are interconnected. In the following chapter I further explore dimensions of this interconnectedness suggesting that the importance of Marian devotion in Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices is connected with Filipinos’ belief in feminine personages being the primary conduit to spiritual power which is reflected in women’s influence in local level religious practice.
Chapter 7:

Aba Ginoong Maria!
Hail Mary!

Introduction

In the preceding chapters of this thesis I have argued that Filipinos have appropriated symbols of Catholicism in ways that facilitate a continuation and strengthening of their basic indigenous beliefs. Thus Filipinos have retained their conception, from pre-Hispanic to present times, of ultimate power residing in spiritual potency, through which the course of human life is directed. Further, they have retained their belief in feminine personages being primary conduits of access to spiritual agency, thus females continue to be perceived as highly effective mediators between humans and the spiritual realm in the constant interchange necessitated by life’s exigencies. In this chapter I argue that this predominantly feminine role of mediating between the human and supernatural spheres is connected with the immense popular appeal of Marian devotions, which have been widely and enthusiastically embraced by Filipinos from the very beginnings of colonisation until the present. Hence, at both a personal and communal level, Filipinos, especially women, are constantly cultivating and tending to their relationship with Mary in a continuous round of religious practices honouring, interceding, and thanking her. Mary is a source of spiritual power, accessed through prayers and hymns of praise, intercession and thanksgiving, alone or with others, at home, at work, in the jeepney, or in the Parish church or local neighbourhood chapel. There is a clear connection between the contemporary veneration of Marian images and the place occupied by the ‘anito’ images of ancestors and influential ‘babaylans’ which were especially honoured in pre-Hispanic Filipino religious practice. The specially revered, ubiquitous, Marian images in the Philippines, (see Plates 40, 55, 64, 74-80), are conceived to be reservoirs of spiritual power. Thus regular physical proximity to and contact with these images is important, (see Plates 3, 57-61, 76

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318 In December 1998 I attended the ‘Aba Ginoong Maria’ exhibit in Parañaque Parish, MM, displaying over 80 different Marian images loaned by the local parishioners, (see also Aviado’s 1975 publication).

319 These plates, which I briefly refer to here, depict some of the Marian images venerated in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood. These and other pictorial plates briefly mentioned in this introduction are further discussed in the body of the thesis close to the point where they are positioned, in particular Plate 40 after p. 241, Plate 55 after p. 267, Plate 64 after p. 275, Plates 74-80 after p. 288.
Visits to local shrines dedicated to Marian images and pilgrimages to more distant ones, (see Plates 65-66), or taking her venerated image on pilgrimage around the neighbourhood, (see Plates 1, 32, 33 and 64) are important elements of Filipino religious practice. Through these forms of devotion, women, in particular, ensure that the source of divine power channelled through Mary, is mediated through them for the benefit of their personal lives, as well as that of their families and the wider community. Marian images are considered objects of beauty and much time, energy and money are expended to maintain them as such, (see Plates 73-83). Further Marian devotion is enmeshed in the exercise of patronage relationships in Filipino society, connected in turn with the ways in which female beauty is conceived, in Filipino consciousness, to be inextricably linked to seats of power as Roces (1998) Cannell (1995b) and Johnson (1997) have argued in different contexts. Women accrue prestige and respect through demonstrating the capacity to manage their resources, and those of the local community, in such a way as to be able to present both themselves and their spiritual patron ‘beautifully’, in the context of being gracious and generous hosts of the local communal fiesta celebrations.

To enhance understanding of contemporary forms of Marian devotion in Barangay All Holies, I begin this chapter by looking to the past for pointers that can throw light on the reasons why Marian devotion has been so widely embraced in the Philippines. In so doing I argue that the popular appeal of Mary connects not only to the imaging of mother child relationships but also to beliefs, held by Filipinos, which attribute to Mary the possession, and exercise, of very extraordinary spiritual ‘power’. I illustrate elements of these beliefs, to which Filipinos subscribe, through reference to excerpts from the ‘Pasyon’ text, and through discussion of literature used for spiritual inspiration by members of a local Marian Legion of Mary confraternity. There are indications, both past and present, that it is women in particular, but not exclusively, who see access to and acquisition of a share in the spiritual power embodied in Mary as especially desirable and available to them through the cultivation of those practices directed

320 Plate 3 is inserted after p. 104 and Plates 57-61 are inserted after p. 271 and Plates 76 and 79 are inserted after p. 288 where these pictures are further discussed.

321 Inserted after p. 275.

322 Plate 73 inserted with set of plates after p. 283 and Plates 74-83 inserted after p. 288 where these plates are further discussed.
at the establishment and maintenance of a close relationship of association with Mary. Further, the imperative to access Mary’s spiritual potency becomes more acute in those circumstances of life where one is faced with situations of external force and material deprivation in personal, family and collective life, because Mary is conceived to be an inexhaustible reservoir of spiritual power and a very effective mediator, able to harmonise relations between the human and spiritual spheres. From this brief exploration of the distant and recent past, I move to a discussion of women’s involvement in present forms of Marian devotion. Beginning at the personal level, I discuss those forms of personal Marian devotion common among Barangay All Holies women and their beliefs about Mary. Following this, I discuss the place of local level communal devotions and celebrations in the social relations of the wider neighbourhood community, briefly noting how a continuous cycle of Marian devotions is being practised in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood. I discuss facets of Marian confraternity activities in Holy Mary Blessings and Santa Maria Birhen chapel communities, and describe and explain in more depth the different components of a Marian neighbourhood fiesta celebration in a low-income neighbourhood. This discussion is primarily in reference to the annual Immaculate Conception Marian fiesta complex as celebrated in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel community. However, I also use a number of pictorial plates to illustrate the manner in which other Marian images are beautified and honoured in other Marian fiestas and devotions held throughout the year in the Barangay All Holies neighbourhood. Plus, I briefly refer to the neighbourhood Marian celebration held on September 8th to commemorate Mary’s Birthday in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel and the October 31 Marian procession, in this same neighbourhood, to the extent that these events are interconnected with the fiesta celebrations of this community. Finally, I conclude the chapter by briefly discussing pertinent interconnections between my research on Marian devotion in Barangay All Holies and other research on indigenous Filipino religious beliefs.
Marian Devotion and Threads of Continuity from the Past

Volumes 324 have been written on Mary in Catholicism from a theological, devotional, historical and cultural perspective, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into a detailed discussion of this body of literature. Hamington’s (1995) work provides a succinct, but scholarly, introductory overview to some of the more important literature in this field. In exploring the polyvocality of Mary’s symbolism in Catholicism, Hamington (1995:3) highlights how three major strands of interpretation, namely that of “the hierarchical Catholic Church, the theological Catholic Church, and the popular Catholic Church”, feed into multiple understandings of Mary within Catholicism. This is particularly so, because each strand of interpretation is itself constituted of multiple and variant threads. Hamington (1995:3-4) emphasises that consequently “Church documents, theological writings, and popular piety have [historically] yielded differing perspectives on Mary [which have] varied from subtlety to polar opposition”. It is not my purpose here to pass judgement on the ‘rightness’ or ‘validity’ of such perspectives, but rather to contend that in the Philippines, these three strands of interpretation are very obviously present and can be read as particular subcultural ‘voices’ among Catholics and Filipinos. In this chapter I have been primarily interested in listening to how contemporary urban Filipinas articulate their belief in who Mary is, through the ‘voices’ of their religious practices, rather than the manner in which Mary is presented in church documents or theological writings. I am, like Christian (1981:3-8, 147-148) in his study of Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain, less concerned about clerical notions of religion than I am about ordinary peoples, especially Filipino women’s, religious practice. From an anthropological standpoint, Victor and Edith Turner (1978) connected the greater and lesser appeal of Marian devotion in differing contexts to cultural receptivity to symbolic representations of the divine. I propose that, in relation to Marian devotion in the Philippines, there are some echoes of similarity with the Turners’ theory and with Rafael’s (1988) work, as I discussed it in chapter three. Elements of differing traditions have been blended and incorporated in ways that have given rise to a revised interpretation of Mary’s life and symbolism from the perspective of each tradition, but in ways that could

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be accommodated by many of the followers of the respective traditions. In the case of the spread of Marian devotion in the Philippines, I contend that a merging and blending of independent, pre-existing traditions has occurred. This blending process has taken place in ways that have been interpreted as being in harmony with the values and worldviews of both the colonised and the colonisers, not necessarily in a manner in which it can be assumed that Mary has the same meaning and implications for those whose route towards engagement with her has its beginnings in different worldviews.

Earlier in this thesis, I proposed that Filipino women identified, in the religious rites introduced by the Spanish colonisers, numerous points of similarity with their indigenous beliefs and rituals. In support of this proposition, particularly in terms of the sustained appeal and spread of Marian devotion in the Philippines, it is necessary to traverse briefly from the present to the past and back again. Such a foray is for the purpose of exploring the ways in which indigenous ‘Filipino’ beliefs and rituals predisposed the indigenous population to be particularly receptive to interpreting the symbolism of the Marian elements of the colonisers’ religious practices, in harmony and continuity with their own traditions. This is an interpretation, which in some ways subverted the Spanish belief that, in instituting Catholicism, they were introducing a new and superior religious worldview, but which, at the same time, accounts for Filipinos widespread self identification with Catholicism, simultaneously with their persistence in the exercise of ritual practices outside of hierarchical Catholicism’s centrally instituted rites. Such interpretation was possible precisely because of the rich potential in the symbolic capital of religious ritual for polysemic readings, through which both the Spanish and indigenous Filipino people could identify threads of continuity. In 1575-1580 Philip II, King of Spain commissioned a study of religious belief and practice. Christian (1981) has researched the findings of this study and indicates that among all sectors of the local population in sixteenth century Spain, Marian images were widely venerated as localised patrons and held to be powerful generalist advocates in the spiritual realm, even though such

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325See p. 134.
326Christian (1981:147) claims that “the careful maintenance of a local religious order interested the people of Toledo [a large city of that period] as much as the smallest village, merchant as well as farmer, the king as much as his subjects. It was ‘popular’ only in the sense that it was predominantly lay [i.e. under lay control]. But much of the clergy fully participated in it as well.”
practices were officially frowned upon by Catholicism’s clerical hierarchy.\footnote{Christian (1981:166–7) notes how the Council of Trent 1561 characterised a ‘renewal’ of “the Church’s struggle against lay authority in religious matters’ and observes that ‘the priest’s authority in his church in the sixteenth century was by no means absolute’ because there existed ‘a stubborn, combative laity that defended its own culture and religious customs against clerical intrusions.”}
The prestigious, spiritual mediating role of priestesses in pre-Hispanic ‘Filipino’ society, and the practice of specially reverencing those images, fashioned from especially valuable materials, representing their ancestresses, (see Santiago 1995:156), may have predisposed ‘Filipinos’ to be particularly receptive to sixteenth century Spanish Marian rituals, similar to that documented by Pigafetta. According to Pigafetta’s ([1521] 1905 see Jocano, 1975:64) account of Magellán’s expedition, after Magellán had extracted an oath of allegiance to the Spanish King from the local datu in Cebu, he:

\begin{quote}

\textit{drew his sword before the image of our Lady, and told the king [the datu] that \textbf{when anyone so swore, he should prefer to die rather than to break such an oath, if he swore by that image}}\footnote{This image is believed to date to the very early days of Spanish colonisation even though there is some debate as to whether the image in question here actually warrants the distinction of being referred to as “the oldest Marian image in the Philippines”. This is because other traditions also lay claim to this distinction for other Marian images, particularly that honoured in Cebu under the title of ‘Our Lady of Remedies’, (Refer to Aviado, 1975; see also Anonymous, n.d.).}\\

\end{quote}

It can be expected that this action had the effect of symbolically communicating to the local populace that Marian images occupied a position of supreme importance in the hierarchy of Spanish religious imagery, somewhat akin to the place of the images made in honour of the ‘anitos’ of Filipinos’ own deceased priestesses. This is further evidenced in the ways in which the symbols of Catholicism were appropriated, particularly in respect of Marian devotion. Santiago, (1995:156) reports that:

\begin{quote}

\textit{the oldest Marian image in the Philippines\footnote{There are indications of the place Marian devotion occupies in Pigafetta’s own belief system as he attributes his survival from near drowning to a miraculous Marian intervention, Pigafetta ([1521] 1905 ex Jocano 1975:47).}......was apparently venerated as the \textit{anito} of a priestess by ancient Manileños....[as] in 1571 a soldier....chanced upon the black statue enshrined on a pandan bush surrounded by ardent devotees near the shores of Manila Bay.}

\end{quote}

In similar manner, tradition around the veneration of the ‘\textit{Nuestra Señora de Los Remedios}’ (Our Lady of Remedies) statue in Cebu cathedral has associated this Marian image with an image given by Pigafetta\footnote{Emphasis mine.} to the ‘Queen of Cebu’ on the
occasion of her baptism, (Aviado, 1975) or at least with an icon, bequeathed to the local Cebu population during the Magellan expedition, (Anonymous, n.d.) and discovered in 1570 to be the centre of local cultic veneration at a well with waters attributed with healing properties. In citing Anderson’s (1977) review of Filipino responses to the first century of Spanish colonialism Andaya (1994:103) points to the prevalence of similar practices by highlighting that:

missionaries complained that Filipinos regarded the Virgin Mary as a more potent ‘spirit’ than Christ, and in some cases the rebels who fought against Spanish forces not only followed women ‘priests’ but carried images of the Virgin.

Although such practices were, on one hand, condemned by some Spanish friars they also appear to have been fuelled and propagated by others precisely in their efforts to counter the babaylans’ influence. Santiago (1995:156) reports that, soon after their arrival, the Spaniards declared the early Marian image being venerated in Manila as “Nuestra Señora de Guia (Our Lady of Guidance)......‘Protectress of the Galleons’ and ‘Patroness of the August and Ever Loyal City’”. There is a very noticeable trend of interpreting and reliving events in the course of Philippine history from the early colonial period to the present day, as having been miraculous moments of salvific Marian intervention and enshrined in popular consciousness through annual commemoration in religious festivals in various localities throughout the Philippines. For example, in October every year, there is in Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City, a massive celebration, involving millions of the faithful in honouring Our Lady of the Rosary, (see Plate 53). This celebration is in commemoration of Marian intervention in La Naval de Manila, a 1646 naval battle in which, it is reputed, that an aging Spanish fleet was able to successfully repel an attack by a much better equipped Dutch fleet, due to the Spanish crew’s daily recourse to recitation of the rosary and litanies to Mary before a Marian image on board their ships, (Herrera, 1996; Urlanda, 1997; Fernandez, 1979:216). There are indications that the La Naval de Manila celebration is a form of appropriation to the local colonial context of an earlier feast of Our Lady of Victory, which had been instituted in 1573 by Pius V to commemorate the defeat of the Turks at the battle of Lepanto in 1571 by Don John of Austria, brother of Philip II of Spain. This interpretation of political and military events against a backdrop of Marian intercession and deliverance in the
A number of women from Barangay All Holies are among those who participate in the annual celebration of Our Lady of La Naval de Manila, Quezon City, MM.

The miraculous image of the Our Lady of La Naval de Manila leads the annual long procession from the Sto. Domingo Church on Quezon City, Quezon City.

(Photo from Philippine Panorama, Sunday Magazine of the Manila Bulletin, October 12, 1997, p. 5)
Plate 54: Marian intervention at EDSA

Portion of the mural inside the Marian shrine at the intersection of EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) and Ortigas Avenue, on the border of Mandaluyong and Pasig cities, MM, depicting the massed crowd of the 1986 people’s power uprising, threatened by military tanks and advancing helicopters, with a Marian statue in their midst, and over which Mary hovers, (in the top righthand corner), with outstretched hand holding back the advancing helicopters.
face of inconceivable odds continues right up into the present day, especially in the reliving and commemoration of the 1986 EDSA revolution that overthrew the Marcos regime. Again the same scenario is played out: the helpless, defenceless populace is threatened with what appears to be certain defeat in the face of the huge amassed strength of the attacking forces of the Marcos loyalists’ column of tanks. Again the commanders of the undermanned rebel forces, who were both Catholic and Protestant, rallied behind and under a Marian image, (see Johnson1987). The primary weapon of the masses is their recourse to prayer, especially the rosary, with religious women in particular stationed in the first line of attack and miraculously, it is held, the tide turns in their favour through their Marian intercession. This tone of interpretation and understanding of the event was very visible and constantly evoked in one form or another during the reporting of the 1986 event and of the 10th anniversary commemorative celebrations of EDSA in 1996, which were centred, in the main, at the Marian EDSA shrine erected at the intersection where the tanks were turned back, (Jimenez-Magsanoc, 1996a; 1996b; Jimenez-David, 1996; Santiago, 1995:151-152; Santiago, 1996; Johnson, 1987; Beltran, 1987:10-15). The reading of the EDSA event as a moment of Marian intervention is communicated vividly in a mural on the walls of the EDSA Marian shrine depicting events from the EDSA uprising, (see Plate 54). Here Mary is depicted hovering over the assembled multitude, in whose midst there is a Marian statue. Mary is seen, with outstretched hand, in a motion of holding back the approaching helicopters sent to strafe the crowd and to attack the nearby base of the rebels. In the actual EDSA event, the helicopter pilots defected at the last moment to the rebel side, landing their machines in the rebel base camp without an exchange of gunfire, (see

332 Central events concerned with the Filipino people’s mass resistance during the period February 22nd-25th, 1986 occurred at the corner of EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, a main thoroughfare through Metro Manila) and Ortigas Avenue. The locality and the event are now commonly referred to, in the Philippines, simply as EDSA, or as the EDSA Revolution, or as the People’s Power Revolution.

333 According to Johnson’s (1987:76-7) account of the 1986 overthrow of the Marcos government:
Mrs. Cristina Ponce Enrile…..[claimed that her husband, Juan Ponce Enrile] might seem an ambitious politician, a career Marcos man, but he was actually a devout Catholic who did nothing without first consulting Our Lady of Fatima. “What many people can’t believe is Johnny’s total devotion to Our Lady,” said Cristina. “Every night before he goes to bed, he prays to her. He tells me: ‘She has never let me down.’”

Johnson (1987:77) continues:
more surprising…..General Ramos, a Protestant…..informed the Catholic churchman [Cardinal Sin] that he had embraced the image of Our Lady of Fatima and said “Dear Lady, I know that you are miraculous.” Ramos, too, pleaded with the Cardinal to call on the people, and stressed that the battle was one of Good vs. Marcosian Evil.

And finally Johnson (1987:109) recounts that in the crossover of Enrile and his men from Camp Aguinaldo to Camp Crame on Sunday February 23 1986, “Somehow, two civilians hoisted a four-foot statue of the Blessed Virgin above Enrile’s head and kept it teetering there throughout the crossing”.

334 Inserted together with Plate 53 after p. 257.
Johnson1987:158-168; see also Santiago1996), an action read as being due to Mary’s miraculous intervention as portrayed in the mural.

There are also accounts of Marian type intervention, although in a somewhat different vein, in the story of the Katipunans 1896-1898 struggle for independence from the Spanish. The cover of Illeto’s (1979) *Pasyon and Revolution* depicts the “The Virgin of Balintawak” who, it is reported, was part of a dream which Bonifacio and his companions interpreted as a warning of impending danger in Manila and thus delayed travelling there that day and avoided suffering the fate of other revolutionaries who were arrested in a Spanish government raid at that time and later executed. The woman of their dream was described by a companion of Bonifacio as being a “beautiful woman” who “looked exactly like the Virgin Mary in church statues, except that she wore a native costume, the balintawak”, (Ileto, 1979:105-106). This beautiful woman was leading “a child dressed in peasant garb, armed with a glittering bolo, and shouting ‘kalayaan!’”. Illeto’s (1979:105) discussion of this incident is in relation to the folk religious origins of the maternal imaging of the Philippines as Inang Bayan, (Mother Country), which he claims “rode on popular images of the Virgin Mary, who appears in the ‘Pasyon’ as the ideal Filipino mother, behaving in the traditional fashion as the son persists in his untraditional mission.” Illeto (1979:14) holds that the extra inclusion and elaboration of Marian scenes throughout the text is a consequence, a “preoccupation [in the popular consciousness] with the bonds between mother and child”. Filipinos’ preoccupation with Mary in the ‘Pasyon’ text is because of the importance attributed to maternal-child relations in the Philippines. In fact, the whole ‘Pasyon’ seems to be framed by a Marian discourse that starts in the very early stanzas and is continued until the very closing stages of a text that spans two hundred and eleven pages in the version currently in use (Pilapil, [1884] 1949:3-213). While I certainly found support for Illeto’s argument in the Marian devotions of the Barangay All Holies women, in terms of the women’s frequent reference to “Mama Mary”, nonetheless, the popularity of Marian devotions does

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335 The term Balintawak here refers to a geographical location of historical significance in the Katipunan revolution, and at that time outside the city’s boundaries but now a part of actual Metro Manila in present day Quezon City

336 The Tagalog term balintawak here, as defined by Ramos (1989:32) refers to a “woman’s native costume with butterfly sleeves, informal”.

337 Colloquial Tagalog for machete.

338 Tagalog term for freedom
not appear to revolve solely around the maternal qualities attributed to Mary. It also appears to be connected with other spiritual characteristics, which Mary is regarded as possessing. In particular, Mary is revered because she is perceived to contain a fount of spiritual power within herself and to be an especially efficacious source of spiritual empowerment. There is evidence to suggest this within the ‘Pasyon’ text itself, as is illustrated in the following brief excerpts from the many passages in the ‘Pasyon’ which relate to Mary. The translation\(^{339}\) of these two passages, which I use here, are those of women who engage in the ritual recitation of the ‘Pasyon’ text:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Our Dear Immaculate Mother} & \quad \text{Inang kalinis-linisan} \\
\text{Who possesses no sins} & \quad \text{di nagkamit kasalanan} \\
\text{She is our Perpetual Succour} & \quad \text{siya ang ating daingan,} \\
\text{Night and day, we call her name} & \quad \text{ang tawagin gabi’t araw} \\
\text{To obtain her mercy.} & \quad \text{nang tayo’y kaawaan} \\
\text{She is merciful and helpful} & \quad \text{Maawai’t masaklolo} \\
\text{To everyone whoever regardless} & \quad \text{sa sino ma’t aling tao} \\
\textbf{She is truly the fountain of power} & \quad \text{siya’y batis na totoo,} \\
\text{All the wicked in the entire hell} & \quad \text{nanginginig yumuyuko} \\
\text{are trembling and bending their knees.} & \quad \text{ang tanag sang-impierno.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Pilapil, [1884] 1949:200 vs. 8-9)

And again in the passages relating to Mary’s death and assumption:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{She fondly said to them} & \quad \text{Aniya’y ako’y patay man} \\
\text{“Although I die} & \quad \text{totoo rin akong buhay} \\
\text{Yet I am truly alive} & \quad \text{kayo’y di malilimutan} \\
\text{I shall never fail to pray and succour you} & \quad \text{iaadya’t tutulungan} \\
\text{In all your adversities.} & \quad \text{sa pangambang ano pa man} \\
\textbf{I give you all my blessings} & \quad \text{Ako ang magkakalara} \\
\text{My dearly beloved children} & \quad \text{at magtatanggol tuwi na} \\
\text{May all my good counsels} & \quad \text{sa inyo irog ko’t sinta,} \\
\text{Be obeyed and followed”.} & \quad \text{na sumunod tumalima} \\
\text{She then gave them her benediction} & \quad \text{sa aking tanang anyaya.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Pilapil, [1884] 1949:195 vs.4-6a).

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\(^{339}\) I emphasise that this is in some respects a free translation of the actual Tagalog text, as some phrases are not present in the literal Tagalog, but the presence of such is obviously suggested to those who engage in the present day recitation of the passages. Further the translation is not a line by line correspondence as sometimes to retain the sense of the verse in the English translation the order of the lines has been slightly adjusted from the sequence in the original Tagalog. My purpose in using this translation is to illustrate the meaning derived from the passages by those involved in its recitation, however the emphases in bold in the translated extracts is mine.
The ‘Pasyon’ text contains many legendary embellishments about Mary’s life describing extraordinary events around her birth, death and assumption in parallel terms to aspects of Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection as reported in the scriptures. Possibly, because of the widespread appeal of the ‘pasyon’ among Filipinos and their familiarity with it, other mythical accounts of Mary’s life containing similar claims to her mystical qualities and unique powers are also especially valued. This appeared to be the case in the Holy Mary’s Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity. This Marian confraternity consists of a core group of fifteen to twenty women predominantly from subdivision D but with a few intermittent members originating from the surrounding subdivisions E and F and squatter areas 2 and 3. When I first began regularly attending this confraternity’s meetings in October 1996, Myrna, the president, an Ilocano widow in her late sixties, was selecting a short passage each week for the confraternity’s spiritual reading from a book of homilies and prayers by Monsignor Villegas (1994), the rector of the Our Lady of EDSA shrine. The excerpts chosen were usually in the form of everyday parables, on a range of subjects, each containing a moral in line with traditional, institutional Catholic teaching, or else the extracts were in the form of Marian prayers. However, starting with the first meeting of 1997, and for the next six months, Myrna used selected passages from her copy of Brown’s (1951) *The Life of Mary as seen by the Mystic*, for the spiritual reading component of their meetings. The format of this confraternity’s meetings means that the spiritual reading component is thrice reinforced. All of us attending the meeting heard the material during an initial reading of the selected sections which Myrna had prepared, then, after the business section of the meeting was concluded, the material from the reading was re-iterated in précised form, again usually by Myrna but sometimes she delegated this duty to other members who made use of her notes. Finally, this précised account, referred to as the ‘allocutio’, was then included verbatim in the minutes of the meeting which were

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340Brown’s (1951) work is reputedly based on the private revelations of four women mystics of the twelfth, fourteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, [St. Elizabeth of Schoenau (?1127-1164), St. Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373), Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda (1602-1665), and Sister Anna Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824)]. However, although there is no acknowledgement to that effect, there appear to be many similarities between the content of Brown’s work and that literature which Warner ([1976] 1978:25-33) describes as comprising portions of the apocryphal writings of the ‘Gospel of Thomas’ and the ‘Book of James’. According to Warner ([1976] 1978), although the original Syriac versions date from approximately 100-200 C.E. they were translated into Latin sometime in the period 600-800 C.E. and widely circulated during the sixteenth century. This literature presumably influenced the spirituality of the missionaries who came to the Philippines and in due course became an integral part of the mythical tradition surrounding Mary’s life, much of which has been incorporated in the ‘Pasyon’ text. Brown (1951:25) acknowledges that of the four visionaries, his work is based most heavily on that of the seventeenth century visionary Mother Mary of Agreda and then that of eighteenth/nineteenth century visionary Sister Anna Catherine Emmerich.
read in full at the beginning of the following meeting by Auring, the secretary, or, in her absence, by another member. When the readings were taken from Villegas’ book, Myrna usually paraphrased the passage in her own words for the ‘allocutio’ but, in the case of the reading from Brown’s work, which assumed more the status of a gospel, the ‘allocutio’, although shorter than the original reading, closely followed the wording of Brown’s work. According to Brown’s (1951) account Mary’s life was filled with miraculous happenings beginning with those events in the lives of her parents preceding and leading to her conception right through to her death, assumption and heavenly coronation. For Holy Mary’s Blessings Legion of Mary meetings, Myrna did not use Brown’s text in its entirety, rather she selected, in a sequential manner, various portions of the text for use each week, so that those of us attending the meetings heard a serialised, abridged reading of Brown’s work. Notably omitted from use was the forward and twenty-six page introduction, in which attention was drawn to the mythological nature of the account and the fact that, because it was based on the content of ‘private revelations’ it has no official Catholic doctrinal standing. In the sections chosen there was frequent mention of miraculous happenings and Mary being in the company of spirit beings (angels), and Mary also being credited with healings; for example, according to the account of the flight to Egypt, “Elizabeth sent one of her servants with generous gifts of money, food, and clothing to the Holy Family……Mary shared these gifts with the poor and healed several sick and crippled women”, (Brown, 1951:151). Myrna’s selection of passages for this spiritual reading was both reflective of the manner in which Mary is conceived by Filipinas and formative of Filipinas’ future understandings of Mary. Passages were chosen to harmonise with and reinforce received beliefs about Mary, and the repeated articulation of these understandings led these women to pass on afresh these beliefs about Mary to their children but, very particularly, to their grandchildren and other children in the neighbourhood, as most Legion of Mary members are senior, mature aged women from the local community, with some also being leaders and mentors in two local junior Legion of Mary groups, one in subdivision D and the other in squatter area 2. Legion of Mary confraternity members regarded Mary as being herself a source of power

341Where I am using the term gospel here in the general sense of the word, to refer to an account of happenings, which is regarded as being absolutely true. There are indications that accounts of Mary’s life based on the same or similar sources to those used by Brown, (1951) are in widespread circulation in the Philippines among people from both lower and upper classes, as is illustrated not only in those sections of the ‘Pasyon’ relating to Mary’s life and death as indicated above, but also in the form of contemporary devotional articles, like those of Zulueta’s (1997) in the English daily newspapers, written as a chronicle of sections of Mary’s early life, containing verbatim extracts included in Brown’s work.
and able to dispense blessings upon her devotees, rather than simply being an intermediary with special or preferential access to God’s power. Although Mary is certainly honoured as mother and bearer of Jesus, there are indications that in local level religious practices in Barangay All Holies, in both the poorer squatter neighbourhoods and the more affluent private subdivisions, Mary is seen to be honoured in her own right. This is because she is believed to contain, within her being, remarkable reservoirs of strength, and is in possession of powers uniquely hers, not acquired or externally bestowed upon her as a consequence of her being the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, even though there is perceived to be a very close nexus between the two. This is illustrated in Marietta’s reflections on Mary in her life story conversation with me. As I noted in the previous chapter, Marietta is an executive officer in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel Legion of Mary confraternity which I also occasionally attended. From Marietta’s viewpoint:

Mary is our Mediator. Where there is Mary there is Jesus, where there is Jesus, there is Mary, that is why we call them twin hearts. Without Mary there is no redemption because she gave birth to Jesus……so without Mary there is no Jesus because God has planned already that Mary will be the mother of our saviour – that is why without Mary there is no redemption…….Mary has an important role in our redemption……Many miracles were worked in our family through Mary.

On one level Marietta’s comments on Mary can be read as an interpretation in basic harmony with orthodox Catholic teaching on Mary, namely, that her importance derives from her co-operative participation in Jesus’ redemptive work, that she is not a focus of adoration in her own right, but rather that she is honoured for being a ready and willing instrument in the hands of God. Thus, from the perspective of Marietta’s reflections, Mary’s role as mother of Jesus is clearly important. But on another level, Marietta’s reflections on Mary can be ‘read’ very differently, namely, that Mary has an importance of equivalent value to that of Jesus in the spiritual sphere, that she is not simply an instrument, a subsidiary in the spiritual realm, but that she holds and exercises real power in her own right, “without Mary there is no redemption”, “without Mary there is no Jesus” and further, she has the power to bring about miraculous happenings. In the 1998 Santa Maria Birhen chapel fiesta Mass, the women decorating the chapel sanctuary for this event communicated a similar sentiment by choosing to feature the phrase, “Maria, bukod kang pinagpala sa babaing lahat” (Mary, blessed are you among all women) rather than the phrase “Santa Maria, Ina ng Diyos” (Holy

See my later discussion of Marian devotion in Barangay All Holies.
Mary, Mother of God) from the Marian ‘Hail Mary’ prayer on the wall of the chapel either side of the focal point of the brilliantly illuminated crucifix, (see Plate 52). A further indicator of Mary being perceived in this manner is that in Barangay All Holies, the Marian images venerated in the communal Marian celebrations of Fiestas and neighbourhood processions, are depicted crowned, symbolically representing one who wields power and influence, (see Plates 55, 58-61, 64, 73-83). Further, Marian images, not necessarily reflecting Mary’s maternal qualities, were frequently seen to be the focus of veneration, (see Plates 64, 74-79), alongside of, and in addition to, maternal images such as those of Mother of Perpetual Help, (see Plate 55), and the Our Lady of the Rosary image, (see Plate 80), which was venerated in All Holies Parish church during the month of October with daily rosary recitation and floral offerings.

Marian Devotion in Barangay All Holies

Marian devotions range from the intensely individual and personal to the highly public and thoroughly communitarian and are primarily concerned with feting Mary, in terms of thanking and honouring her for help received, and acknowledging the potency of her spiritual powers; or are of an invocatory nature, interceding for assistance, protection, healing etc. but I did not observe them to be placatory. Christian (1981:98) also noticed, in his study of local level religion in sixteenth century Spain, that devotion to Mary was not placatory in nature observing that: “Mary’s role was.....one of intercession, but she was never seen as angry..........Mary’s only actions were benevolent.......Mary could warn people of impending punishment, but she did not punish.” By contrast, Rey (1999) claims that, while Marian devotees in Haiti appeared to conceive of Mary in more benevolent terms than the Iwas (spirits) of Vodou belief, particularly Ezili, the feminine Vodou spirit of love and sensuality, they did speak of “Mary as becoming jealous if they ever prayed to other saints”, or even it seems if Haitian devotees shared their devotion among a number of Marian images, (1999:248-9). In my experience this did not appear to pertain among Marian devotees in the

343 Inserted after p. 248.
344 Plate 55 inserted after p. 267, Plates 58-61 inserted after p. 271, Plate 64 inserted after p. 275, Plate 73 inserted after p. 283, Plates 74-83 inserted after p. 288.
345 Inserted after p. 267.
346 Inserted after p. 288 together with Plates 74-80.
Philippines. Frequently the main image in a local chapel was venerated and celebrated on different Marian feastdays; for example, the statue which the women from Holy Mary Blessings honoured under the title of Our Lady of Remedies on the third Sunday of November (see Plates 57-58, 78, 83-84) was the same statue, differently attired, to which they paid tribute with floral offerings on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, or the Nativity of Mary, September 8, or the Immaculate Conception of Mary, December 8, or throughout the months of May and October. Further, during the Our Lady of Remedies Fiesta celebrations the Marian Fatima statues circulating in the subdivision for neighbourhood rosary devotions were brought to the chapel and specially honoured as part of the Our Lady of Remedies fiesta celebration, (see Plate 64). As part of this same fiesta celebration, an alternative Marian image to that which is usually venerated under the title of Our Lady of Remedies was used for the neighbourhood procession, (see Plate 77). In addition, while individual women frequently tended to be more devoted to one Marian image than another, they, very commonly, concurrently maintained a number of different Marian devotions without appearing to fear that any ‘particular’ Mary would resent them honouring ‘other’ Mary’s. In fact, Barangay All Holies Marian devotees appeared to believe that they were honouring the one Mary, even though she was seen to be differentiated in her various images and was experienced as manifesting her power in different ways in different circumstances. Barangay All Holies women, as I discuss later in this chapter, celebrated a cycle of Marian devotions throughout the year, beautifying Mary’s image and honouring the various facets of Mary’s power and influence as a means towards securing holistic well-being for themselves, their families and their community. Mary is always perceived to be benevolently disposed towards her devotees, warning them of impending dangers or disasters but never being punitive towards her devotees. However, as a consequence of her empowering, and standing with her devotees, their enemies may suffer defeat or destruction, but such action is read more as a consequence of the hard headedness of those who will not change from the path of destruction or violence they have set out on, than any punitive destructive action on Mary’s part.

It is arguable that the spiritual power and influence which is attributed to Mary by today’s Catholic Filipinas is at least equal to, if not greater than, that attributed to

347 Plates 57-58 inserted after p. 271, while Plates 78, 83-84 are inserted after p. 288.
348 Inserted after p. 275.
349 Inserted with set of plates after p. 288.
the influence of Jesus, God the Father or the Holy Spirit. Babette certainly indicated that this has been the case in her experience, noting that “there is so much attention that we give to the Blessed Mother, to the extent of asking if God is the Blessed Mother”. Mary remains for Babette the most direct route by which she accesses spiritual power, even though at one point, after taking a course in Christology, Babette tried for a time, in accord with what she had been taught in this course, to direct her prayer through Jesus rather than Mary, as noted in the previous chapter. However, when a lay Mariologist brought the image of Our Lady of Fatima on pilgrimage to All Holies Parish, Babette reports that she had a sense of “I am committing a mistake in putting aside the Blessed Mother” and being overcome with tears and feeling the need to ask forgiveness from Mary, which Babette describes as being “the start of going back again to the Blessed Mother asking for her intercession”. Ritual practices, honouring Mary and through which intercessions are directed to Mary, are accorded equivalent, if not greater, importance to the Eucharist in Filipinas’ lives. It is difficult, though, to ascertain clearly and definitively the relative importance accorded to Marian devotions by comparison to that accorded to Eucharistic celebrations, which, as I noted in the previous chapter, are attended in large numbers by Filipinas, as many Marian devotions take place in association with the celebration of the Eucharist. For example, when Paz spoke of what sustained her in her struggles in trying to complete her studies in the face of her family’s social location and their economic hardships, she did not emphasize regular participation in Eucharistic celebrations so much as the importance to her of participation in Marian devotion:

it was really hard for me.......so I made this prayer, I used to go to perpetual help, you know, in Baclaran, I used to go there to have my novena every Wednesday asking for the help of Mama Mary, “Please Mama Mary help me pass”. So I have this novena every Wednesday

Paz is referring here to the national Marian shrine under the title of Mother (or Our Lady) of Perpetual Help in Baclaran district in Parañaque municipality (see Map 1, p. Error! Bookmark not defined.), which is attended weekly by 80,000 to 120,000 devotees from all over Metro Manila and neighbouring provinces participating in the Wednesday Mother of Perpetual Help Novena. Although the Baclaran church is the main Filipino shrine for this devotion, thousands, possibly millions, more celebrate the novena every Wednesday in Parish churches and subchapels throughout the archipelago, (refer to Dee, 1991; Vinteres, 1991; Anonymous, 1999a;
Anonymous, 1999b) while others pray the novena from their own homes when not able to attend a church or a chapel to participate in the communal celebration of the novena, as a number of the women in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood indicated. The Mother of Perpetual Help icon, which is the centre of this Marian devotion, is depicted in Plate 55.351

In the local *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel neighbourhood Paz occupied an executive position on the local chapel pastoral council and frequently represented the neighbourhood chapel at the All Holies Parish council meetings in addition to taking a leading role in the organization and preparation of the Marian activities associated with the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Miraculous Medal fiesta celebrations. Paz’s involvement in these activities was part of a worldview centred on deeply held beliefs about Mary’s potency as a spiritual mediator as indicated in this extract from her life story conversation:

> I went to church, not every day but every Wednesday I went to church to have my Novena to Mother of Perpetual Help, before when I was still a single I have this Novena already, I am doing this for almost twenty-five years because I owed from Blessed Mother many things, especially I passed the CPA [Certified Public Accountant] Board exam, through her I got married, I had these children, one boy and one girl, through Novena, I have never stopped my Novena to Mother of Perpetual Help, ........I have my promise to her, trying my very best to attend the Mass every Wednesday in honour of Blessed Mother, Mother of Perpetual Help, since I have started this going to Novena it helped me a lot, God did not allow me to be lost

Again Paz’s reflections here can be ‘read’ in different ways, in a traditional manner as Mary being a path or channel to God who is the omnipotent one. Alternatively there is also a sense in which Paz is implying that Mary and God are part of one entity representing the power, which resides in that sphere beyond the material, wherein the path of all life is ultimately directed. Similarly Clara, from subdivision B, also indicates that an integral part of her worldview is her belief in the efficacy of prayer directed to Mary asking that she provide for her in critical areas of her life:

> I have always said those novenas to the Blessed mother that she gave me this husband so I will be nearer to her, she gave me this husband who was not a womanizer, who has no vices whatsoever,

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351 Inserted overpage.
Plate 55: Mother of Perpetual Help

Icon most commonly referred to as Mother (or Our Lady) of Perpetual Help which is widely venerated throughout the Philippines.

(Photo from Ave Maria, Official Publication of the Marian Organizations of the Philippines Vol. VII, No. 2, n.d., Front Cover of Issue focusing especially on Mother of Perpetual Help in the Philippines)
his only vice is me. And his only vice is going to the church\textsuperscript{352} so probably that is the reason that’s the offshoot because when I was saying my novena to the mother, Blessed mother I would say don’t give me a husband who would beat me up……I don’t want to be hurt because when I was growing up I always see my mother and my father always fighting over money, about the money……so I said when we get married we will not fight over money matters, you know, as much as possible I will not, we are not going to have that kind of fight so, you know, so when I was also praying to the Blessed mother I wanted a husband who can provide so we will not fight over money so during our married life, he minds all the budget, he knows so I don’t mind about it.

Although Marietta and Paz from squatter area 1 and Babette and Clara from private subdivisions A and B, respectively, occupy positions in two different economic strata of contemporary Filipino society, there is a common thread running through the manner in which all four women interact with Mary in their lives. Mary is for each of them a primary, if not the primary, avenue of accessing the spiritual assistance and blessings which they hold to be so crucial to well being in all facets of daily life. She is both a mediator and a patron par excellence, if not the holder of ultimate spiritual power, the one on whom the more distant, remote God is, in a sense, dependent because she is the one with the ear of the masses, straddling the human, spiritual divide. God, however conceived, may well be the ultimate omnipotent one, but, in a society in which interpersonal relations are highly valued, and having the right connections is what matters, it is impossible to be powerful in isolation. A parallel can be drawn between the operation of social relations in the spiritual sphere and those in other facets of Filipino social life. A person may well have great personal wealth and be the title holder of a position of high political office but, if the person in possession of these, such as an elite ruler, becomes isolated from others, without an in-between person, a mediator and conduit to the masses, who can keep faith with both those who would exercise power and those in need of the benevolence and favour of those in power, then the elite ruler cannot exercise power, and is ultimately rendered powerless as happened to both Presidents Marcos and Estrada in the people’s power I and II movements. Significantly, in both instances, in an interim transition period, power is transferred and vested in females, Cory Aquino and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, influential women and mothers charged with the keeping of moral integrity.

\textsuperscript{352}Clara having earlier made the qualification with respect to her husband’s church going practices: “anyway I don’t find it offensive \textit{naman} (rather) it is O.K., just maybe I wasn’t just used to that habit before, but it is O.K. I don’t mind”.
Personal forms of Marian Devotion

The involvement of many women in Marian devotions is commonly in fulfilment of a personal vow or promise, as in the case of Paz, described above, or Meny from Pangasinan Province, who resides in subdivision D, and fulfils her promise to Mary by traversing, one Wednesday every month, from Barangay All Holies, Quezon City to participate in the Our Lady of Perpetual Help novena in Baclaran Church, almost thirty kilometres away on the other side of Metro Manila taking almost two hours of travel each way in Manila’s traffic. On the other Wednesdays she always attends the same Novena devotions in Holy Mary’s Blessings chapel in her subdivision. In other cases some women like Angelina fulfil a Marian vow by wearing to religious ceremonies, a third order habit type of attire; in this instance a simple navy blue dress fastened at the waist by a maroon cord. Angelina, aged sixty-five, a retired pharmacist who is married to Pablo a leading, recently retired surgeon, has followed this practice for over twenty years now in fulfilment of a vow she made to Our Lady of Perpetual Help when their eighth and youngest child was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Angelina interceded with Mary, under this title, for tangible help in the tragedy she was experiencing in her family life and vowed, in return, to wear this third order Marian habit for the rest of her life to the weekly celebration of Our Lady of Perpetual Help novena and to other religious ceremonies. Although what Angelina most earnestly desired for her daughter was a miraculous and complete healing, which did not occur, she believes that her prayers at this critical stage of her life did not go unanswered, but rather that she is indebted to Mary for the help she received to be able to cope with years of caring for her terminally ill daughter and for the ways in which this crisis sensitised her family to greater care, concern and support for each other than was previously the case and which has continued in their relations with each other until the present day, many years after her daughter’s death. Angelina had her daughter dressed in the third order Marian habit during her time of illness and for her burial. Angelina herself continues wearing this very distinctive, simple form of dress to daily Mass, Our Lady of Perpetual Help novena devotions, and even to the chapel’s Marian Fiesta Mass celebration, though she lives in an affluent subdivision and the annual Fiesta Mass

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I refer to the form of attire being discussed as ‘third order habit type’ attire because many of the women who take on this distinctive form of dress do so because of a personal vow or promise they have made to Mary, rather than as a consequence of formal membership or affiliation with a particular canonically recognised religious order of the Catholic church.
is normally regarded as a time to wear and display expensive formal attire for those who can afford to do so. Other women take on another distinctive form of dress characterised by a white dress with a blue sash, (see Plate 24, top half and Plate 56), indicative of allegiance to the Marian devotion, which spread throughout the Catholic world in the decades following the apparitions of Mary which are reputed to have occurred in Lourdes in southern France in 1858. In these apparitions, Mary is described as having appeared dressed in a white gown, with a blue ribbon around her waist with the ends hanging down, and thus this form of dress is commonly referred to as “the Lourdes habito”, (Joaquin, 1996) although this was not necessarily the only genesis of such attire. For some Marian devotees, this form of religious attire is worn, not only on the occasion of Marian feastdays and celebrations, but for participation in all public forms of religious practice, as it aligns these women with Mary and confers on them prestige in the spiritual arena.

A cue to other Marian devotions of a personal nature, in which many of the women of Barangay All Holies are engaged, can be seen in the small Marian altar Meny has over the doorway in the living room of her home in subdivision D, in Holy Mary Blessings neighbourhood. Meny’s Marian devotion is not only to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, as described above, but also to Our Lady of the Rosary, to Our Lady of Remedies, and to Our Lady of Lourdes, with small representations of each of these Marian images displayed on her home altar. I went to Meny’s house on several occasions, most commonly in connection with the round of social engagements that were an integral part of the Holy Mary Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity’s activities. On these occasions, discussed later in this chapter, when we celebrated special milestones in the lives of the confraternity’s members such as birthdays or the death anniversaries, most commonly of their husbands, but occasionally of their parents or children, three or four of us would usually meet at Meny’s house, as she was one of the Legionaries who regularly provided transport to the various celebration venues. Prior to her going out of her home at any time, Meny takes her leave of the Marian images on her altar by standing before the altar and touching each of the Marian images in turn, as she

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354 Plate 24 is inserted after p. 219, while Plate 56 is inserted overpage.

355 Del-Pilar García (1995b:6) citing Guerra (1887:63-4) reports that, prior to the time when devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes was widespread in the ‘Filipino’ archipelago, a form of dress with some similarities was used as the religious attire of a women’s Marian confraternity in the 19th century called “Guardia de Honor de María” whose members engaged in “perpetual veneration of the Virgin….. praying in shifts, [of three] day and night”.
Women devotees of Our Lady of Lourdes may, as a result of a personal vow or promise, dress on the occasion of formal religious celebrations in the distinctive manner shown here of a white dress with a broad blue sash around their waist with the ends hanging down, referred to as the ‘Lourdes habito’. The men in the background with purple sashes over their shoulder are Ministers of the Eucharist sometimes referred to as Knights of the Altar who play a leading role in the Holy Thursday religious ceremonies pictured here, Holy Mary Blessings chapel, March 1997.
asks for protection and blessing on whatever undertaking she is about to embark upon and likewise, on her return, Meny again extends her hand to each of the Marian images on her home altar to give thanks for the safe return of herself and her companions. Although Marian images are not the only focus of devotion in home altars, as many household altars are also places of veneration of crucifixes, Santo Niño, the Sacred Heart and, more recently, the ‘Jesus Lord of Divine Mercy’ images, and, less frequently, those of other Catholic saints. However, almost always some Marian images are an integral and central part of these home altars, (as depicted in Plate 40 showing images from household altars). In addition, garden shrines in the form of grottos are primarily dedicated to the veneration of Marian images. Filipinos’ veneration of religious images on home altars, in garden grottos and in chapels and churches is frequently marked by touching, (see Plates 57-58), and, in a variation on this, many women, young and adolescent girls, those minority of men who are engaged in frequent church activities and bakla, or effeminate men, are desirous of being seen to be in the company of Mary by being photographed alongside Marian statues, (see Plates 3, 59-61, 67, and 79). Filipinos are a tactile people, especially in relation to others of the same gender, who are commonly seen together holding hands, or with their arms around each other’s shoulders, or in other ways literally in touch with one another, especially when they wish to communicate their care, concern or friendship. The common practice of devotees touching religious images appears to be a gesture designed to facilitate a two-way flow, in one direction, through the bodily contact, to communicate more tangibly to the religious patron the devotees’ needs, and in the other direction, for devotees to absorb, into themselves, spiritual power from the venerated religious image/icon. Power, which effects an internal transformation that helps devotees to manage their needs by providing them with inner strength, and, also at times, it, is believed, with additional needed external resources. Further, the common practice of devotees touching the hands of Marian statues on arriving and leaving a chapel or church, (see Plates 57-58), can be read as a variation on the traditional Filipino practice of

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356 This image can be seen in Plate 45, (inserted after p. Error! Bookmark not defined.) on the wall of a subchapel in Santa Maria Birhen neighbourhood. Also visible on the lefthand side in the background are small Marian statues used in the recitation of the rosary in small groups throughout the neighbourhood.

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360 Inserted together with Plates 57-58.

361 Inserted together with Plates 74-83 after p. 288.
During the Our Lady of Remedies fiesta celebrations in Holy Mary Blessings chapel, November 1997, Marian devotee touches the hand of the Marian statue as she greets the image in silent prayer. Through touch the devotee communicates her needs to Mary and receives also the transfer of spiritual power from the revered image, a reservoir of spiritual potency. (See also notes on following plate.)
Plate 58: Marian Devotee reverencing Marian Image – b)

The gesture, shown here, of touching the Marian image’s hand is part of an action closely resembling the traditional Filipino mode of paying respect to elders or distinguished persons. In this action the person paying their respects takes the elder’s hand in theirs and raises it to their bowed forehead. The touching of the image, shown here, is immediately followed by the devotee blessing herself by moving her right hand to her forehead, breast and shoulders etc. Many devotees reverenced Marian statues in this way, not just at fiesta time, as shown here, but whenever they arrived and departed their chapels. Our Lady of Remedies fiesta celebrations, November 1998.
Plate 59: Devotee with Marian Image – a)

Young girl, grandchild of one of the Santa Maria Birhen Legion of Mary confraternity members, is dressed in white dress with blue trim for ‘Mama Mary’s’ birthday celebrations and poses with the decorated Marian chapel statue prior to it being taken on procession throughout the neighbourhood, September 1997.
Some of the key Marian devotees involved in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel fiesta celebrations posing with ‘their’ Marian statue at the time of attending to the final arrangements for the afternoon motorcade on fiesta day, December 1998. They include: three Legion of Mary confraternity members, male sacristan – one of the few men of the neighbourhood very actively engaged in local religious activities, and chapel patron, female principal of one of the neighbourhood schools who provided Mary’s dress and sash for fiesta day.
Plate 61: Devotee with Marian Image – c)

One of several bakla, (effeminate males) from the neighbourhood who is active in the religious activities of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel, posing with the chapel Marian image prior to ‘Mama Mary’s’ neighbourhood birthday procession, September 1997. The smaller Our Lady of Miraculous Medal statue, from the neighbouring subchapel, also carried in procession on this occasion, can be seen on the right of the picture.
‘magmano’, reverencing or paying respect to elders and religious officials through seeking a blessing by taking the hand of the elder or religious dignitary and touching it to one’s bowed forehead while uttering the request ‘Mano po’, (Respectfully, your blessing please). In response, the person being so reverenced usually responds, “Kaawaan ka ng Diyos”, (God bless you). Whereas being photographed in the company of locally revered Marian images is a way of symbolically incorporating the person of Mary within the devotees’ kin, or close circle of friends. It is a way of the devotees communicating that she/he, or they, are on intimate terms with Mary and, as such, have a share in her power by being especially privileged clients under her patronage. Alternatively, Marian devotees are photographed with Mary as a way of indicating that Mary is at least partly under their patronage because they have substantially contributed to fiesta celebrations through monetary donations, or in the work and time given in fiesta organization and preparation, or in the provision of other resources for the celebration; for example, the garments or jewellery in which the Marian statue is adorned for the occasion, or in beautifying the statue for the celebration, (see Plates 74-83). I further discuss the significance of this beautification process in relation to fiesta celebrations later in this chapter. Very commonly, when I was attempting to photograph the various Marian images honoured in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood prior to or after celebrations, devotees would spontaneously position themselves close to the religious images to be included in the photo I was taking and were always most eager and appreciative to receive a copy of the finished shot, which subsequently was often displayed conspicuously in their homes. Each of the plates, which I have displayed here, and many others taken during the course of my ‘fieldwork’ which depict devotees, either singly or with others, posing in the company of Mary, were taken in response to devotees’ requests for photos of themselves with Mary or other venerated images such as the Santo Niño, (see previously depicted Plate 38). In a somewhat similar vein, Cannell (1999:22) found that photographs taken at celebrations, in which the poor shared in a transitory manner in the ‘spoils’ of the more affluent, were highly valued and a frequent source of reminiscence. Cannell observes that:

Photographs which demonstrate the successful carrying-off of a celebration are important and much enjoyed……partly [due to] the joyous success of having acquired, used and shared in some of the good things in life which are usually out of reach……Photographs are themselves prized consumer objects……a photograph is also a kind of fetish of

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362 Inserted with set of plates after p. 239.
transformation.....it places you in a position where, in your best
clothes or with the most delicious food you have temporarily
become the possessor of these things, and so escaped the threat of
‘being shamed’.

Marian Confraternity Activities

In both Holy Mary Blessings and Santa Maria Birhen chapels a core group\textsuperscript{363} of
fifteen to twenty women, who belong to the Legion of Mary confraternity, gather
every week in the chapel for their meeting, while in Santo Jesus subchapel\textsuperscript{364} and
All Holies Parish church, a smaller group of six to eight women meet on a weekly
basis. However, in All Holies Parish church, there is another Marian
confraternity, called the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, having a considerably
larger membership of fifty to sixty women. In my discussion of Marian
confraternities in this chapter I will, however, focus on the Legion of Mary, as this
is the Marian confraternity which existed in most of the chapels in the All Holies
Barangay and with which many of the women had some connection, either
through their mothers having been members, or having during their earlier years,
been members of junior Legion of Mary groups. Each of these aforementioned
Legion of Mary confraternities was dedicated to particular Marian images such as
that of Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of the Assumption, Our Lady of the
Miraculous Medal, and Our Lady of Lourdes, with the confraternity members
specially celebrating the respective feastdays of their Marian patron. The
localised Legion of Mary confraternities, called ‘praesidia’, hold weekly meetings
consisting of the recitation of the rosary and other Marian prayers, a spiritual
reading from the confraternity’s handbook, or from literature usually connected
with Marian devotion, as in the case of Brown’s work discussed earlier in this
chapter, followed by a report on the religious activities which the confraternity’s
members have been engaged in during the preceding week such as neighbourhood
and hospital visitations, leadership of junior Legion of Mary groups in the
neighbourhood, participation in recitation of the rosary among a small group of

\textsuperscript{363}This refers to those members who very regularly attend the confraternity meetings, other women known as
auxiliary members, up to sixty in the case of the Santa Maria Birhen Legion of Mary group, pray the
confraternity’s prayers in their own homes and attend on a more occasional basis due to other
commitments, or their bilocality whereby they are living in the neighbourhood for a time and then absent
for a time residing in another part of MM, or in one of the Provinces or overseas due to family or work
commitments.

\textsuperscript{364}The Santo Jesus subchapel Legion of Mary confraternity is smaller, because the neighbourhood served by
the Santo Jesus subchapel is a much smaller area than that served by Santa Maria Birhen and Holy Mary
Blessings chapels. However although the number of regular members of this Legion of Mary
confraternity is relatively small it also has a further twenty to thirty auxiliary members.
officemates or in homes around Fatima statues circulating in the neighbourhood, or distribution of various prayer leaflets, holy cards or novena prayers. The localised ‘praesidia’ are linked together loosely with other groups in the neighbouring geographical area, forming a ‘comitium’ which holds a monthly meeting attended by the executive members of each local ‘praesidium’ group. So although the core group membership of each confraternity is relatively small they are in interaction with a much wider circle of people in spiritual leadership activities in their neighbourhood, (see Plates 25-26, 31-32) and are engaged in a wide range of other Marian devotions. Further, these same women frequently belonged to other religious associations, or were members of their local chapel pastoral committee, (see Plates 41-44, 50 and 51), so that their overall influence was considerable, and this pattern was replicated in the numerous chapels in Barangay All Holies. Barangay All Holies women, especially those belonging to Marian subchapel communities, and Marian confraternities engage in a cycle of communal Marian celebrations and social events extending throughout the year. For example, members of the Legion of Mary from the Santa Maria Birhen chapel particularly honour Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in their confraternity and thus are actively involved in the organization and conduct of the fiesta celebrations held in honour of this Marian image in a subchapel of their neighbourhood on the last Sunday of November, (see Plates 42, 45, 51 and 75). Women from this same confraternity, together with others, are those who lead the weekly Wednesday Mother of Perpetual Help novena devotion in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel, which other women, children and a few men attend in person but which is ‘participated’ in at a distance by very many others. This being due to the fact that those who lead the novena do so over a public address system that echoes throughout the neighbourhood. Those who hear the novena in this way also regard themselves as having participated in it. Beltran (1987:114) observed a similar trend in his research in respect of Mass attendance, noting that:

in the garbage dump, people would listen to the Mass being said in the chapel while remaining in their ‘barong-barongs’ (makeshift dwellings), often doing their household chores. They consider themselves as having attended the celebration even while doing
something else, as long as they could hear what comes through the public address system.

**Santa Maria Birhen** Legion of Mary members hold lead roles in the organization and celebration of the Immaculate Conception Fiesta complex celebrated from the last week of November to December 8, (see *Plates 1, 26, 27* upper half, *33, 41, 43-44, 49* upper half, *50, 67-68*) and participate in other neighbourhood Marian celebrations throughout the year, as do women in the other subchapel and Parish church neighbourhoods. For these women, the whole of life is lived against a backdrop of Marian interaction and intervention. For example, their Marian activities throughout the year include: the annual combined consecration of Legion of Mary confraternity members from neighbouring chapels and subchapels of All Holies and the adjoining Parishes on the Sunday nearest March 25; predawn *Salubong* neighbourhood processions on Easter Sunday morning held each year in the *Santa Maria Birhen* and All Holies Parish church neighbourhoods, (see *Plate 79*)\(^369\); *Flores de Mayo* devotions throughout the month of May in each neighbourhood, (see *Plate 62*)\(^370\) culminating in the *Santacruzan* neighbourhood procession on the last Saturday of May in the *Santa Maria Birhen* community, (see *Plate 34*)\(^371\); Feast of Mother of Perpetual Help, June 27; Feast of Mary’s Assumption, August 15, (see *Plate 76*)\(^372\); Feast of

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\(^{368}\) *Plate 1* is inserted after p. 104, *Plates 26-27* are inserted after p. 23. *Plate 33* is inserted after p. 239 while *Plates 41-51* are inserted after p. 242, and *Plates 67-68* are inserted after p. 283.

\(^{369}\) Inserted with set of plates after p. 288.

\(^{370}\) Inserted overpage.

\(^{371}\) Inserted after p. 239. Originally the *Santacruzan* procession was a celebration held in commemoration of the finding of the true cross of Christ which according to legend was found by Queen Elena, the mother of the emperor Constantine, in the fourth century C.E. The procession took place in May because formerly, at the time of the Spanish colonisation of the Philippines, the church feast of the Finding of the Cross was held on May 3. Later however as the month of May became more and more a focus of Marian devotion, especially from the late 17\(^{th}\) century, according to Raas (1992:119), the cross devotion from the 12\(^{th}\) century became conflated with the May Marian devotions and even more so today as the church calendar no longer officially celebrates the feast of the finding of the Holy Cross on May 3\(^{rd}\). In the Barangay All Holies *Santacruzan* celebration the main remnant of the earlier form of the procession is that it is lead by a girl carrying a Filipino flag, variously described as *Reyna Abanderada* (Queen of the Flag) or as *Reyna Elena* (Queen Elena), accompanied by a boy dressed in leaves said to represent either all children of creation or Prince Constantine as a child. The juxtaposition of the two figures and the national flag symbolising that reputedly glorious period of harmony during Constantine’s reign when the rule of church and state became amalgamated as one in a way believed to benefit future humanity, all the subsequent children of creation and foreshadowing a believed future time of similar harmony in the Philippine milieu. However other figures in the procession were presented in a way celebrating various venerated attributes of Mary as the Divine Shepherdess, (*Divina Pastora*) or Queen of Faith, Hope and Charity (*Reyna Fe, Esperanza, Caridad*), or Queen of Justice (*Reyna Justica*) etc. all preceding the chapel Marian statue carried in procession throughout the neighbourhood. The celebration held at the end of May towards the conclusion of the summer school holidays is predominantly a children’s Marian celebration in Barangay All Holies.

\(^{372}\) Inserted with set of plates after p. 288.
Plate 62: Flores de Mayo Devotion

Each day during the month of May Marian images in local chapels are specially venerated by a procession of devotees presenting a floral offering to the Marian image while singing a Marian hymn, very frequently Regina Coeli, after which the statue is solemnly blessed with incensing, if a priest is present. Similar floral offerings are also made in Marian chapels on fiesta day and during the preceding novena, throughout October, and on the feasts of the Assumption in August, Mary’s Nativity in September, Our Lady of the Rosary in October and the Immaculate Conception in December, regardless of the particular Marian image being displayed in the chapel.
Plate 63: Marian Neighbourhood Procession marking conclusion of the month of the Rosary

In this Marian candle-light procession, again under women’s leadership, (as already noted in Plate 31), the familiar small Marian statue from the Legion of Mary confraternity, (shown here), and other Marian images used in neighbourhood rosary recitation groups are honoured. It is a less formal occasion than the Marian processions of September and December, thus people are less formally attired, mainly in their everyday clothes but with quite a few women still dressed in white, October 1998.
Plate 64: Local Neighbourhood Rosary Statues

Small groups gather for daily rosary recitation around each of these small Marian images, mainly of Our Lady of Fatima, that continuously circulate from home to home. These images formed part of the Our Lady of Remedies fiesta day neighbourhood procession in November 1997, being carried by members of the households in which they were currently residing. At procession’s end the images took a place of honour at the front of the chapel where they shared in the fiesta day blessing and veneration accorded the main Marian patron, which enhanced their efficacy as sources of spiritual blessing as they continued circulating in local homes.
Plate 65: Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto, San Jose, Bulacan Province

In February 1996 I accompanied women, and a few men, from Santa Maria Birhen neighbourhood to this shrine on a pilgrimage, organised by their Legion of Mary confraternity. This shrine has been substantially financed by the largesse of a wealthy female Marian devotee, built as a replica of Lourdes in France, it is believed by many to share in the spiritual potency of this revered Marian pilgrimage site, with accounts of numerous miraculous healings having taken place at the grotto.

Note: The devotee shown here is dressed in the ‘Lourdes habito’, as were many others in attendance on the day of our pilgrimage.

(Photo from Philippine Daily Inquirer, Thursday April 4, 1996, p. 1)
Plate 66: Mary Mediatrix of All Graces

Women from Holy Mary Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity praying before the image of Mary Mediatrix of All Graces in Lipa City, Batangas Province in October 1996, during a pilgrimage to this site in a Carmelite convent, where a Marian apparition is reputed to have occurred in 1948.
Mary’s Nativity, September 8, (see Plates 25, 32 and 74)\textsuperscript{373}; rosary devotions throughout the month of October around specially venerated Marian statues, (see Plate 64)\textsuperscript{374} culminating in a neighbourhood Marian procession on the evening of October 31, (see Plates 31 and 63).\textsuperscript{375} Women from both Santa Maria Birhen and Holy Mary Blessings chapel communities also went on pilgrimages to other Marian shrines; for example, Santa Maria Birhen Legion of Mary members, joined by other women of the area, make an annual pilgrimage in February to the Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto, Bulacan Province (see Plate 65)\textsuperscript{376}, whereas women from Holy Mary Blessings Legion of Mary made a pilgrimage in October 1996 to Mary Mediatrix of All Graces in Lipa City, Batangas Province, (see Plate 66)\textsuperscript{375} and both these Legion of Mary confraternities made pilgrimages on different occasions to the Marian shrine of Our Lady of Manaoag, Pangasinan Province. According to these women, this shrine is built on the site where a Marian apparition is reputed to have occurred at the beginning of the seventeenth century, (see also Anonymous, 2000b). It is in an area in which the Spanish missionaries are reported to have met much resistance from local priestesses, (Brewer, 1996:106; Guerrero, 1992:7; see also Anonymous, 2000a). Some women from the Barangay also journey to other parishes in MM or adjacent provinces to participate in the celebration of various other Marian feasts throughout the year. For example, women from Holy Mary Blessings chapel Legion of Mary confraternity, which was dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, annually attend the Marian procession and novena celebrations held each year in Sto. Domingo Parish, Quezon City commemorating the La Naval de Manila feastday held on the Sunday nearest October 7, the feast of the Our Lady of the Rosary, (see Plate 53).\textsuperscript{377} Some of the other popular Marian Feastdays held in other localities in MM and nearby surrounds, in which Barangay All Holies women participate, are the Feast of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, the first Sunday of May, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, July 16, Our Lady of Peñafrancia on the second Sunday of September,\textsuperscript{378} Our Lady of Good Events, November 29, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12.

\textsuperscript{373} Plate 25 is inserted after p. 220, Plate 32 is inserted after p. 239 and Plate 74 is inserted after p. 288.

\textsuperscript{374} Inserted after p. 275 in set of Plates 62-66.

\textsuperscript{375} Plate 31 is inserted after p. 237 and Plate 63 is inserted in set of Plates 62-66.

\textsuperscript{376} Plates 65-66 are inserted together with Plates 62-64 after p. 275.

\textsuperscript{377} Inserted after p. 257.

\textsuperscript{378} Celebrations are held in Binondo, Manila one week ahead of the main traditional fiesta celebrations in Naga City, Camarines Sur Province.
The women in Marian confraternities are not bound together only by their common religious devotions, but their confraternity membership has ramifications in their social and economic lives. The confraternity members engage in a round of semi-religious, social outings, celebrating together the death anniversaries of the husbands of those members who are widowed by attending a Mass, in which prayers are offered for this intention, and then sharing together a meal at the home of the widowed member with other kin and, occasionally, combining this with a visit to the grave of the deceased, (see Plate 23 and lower half Plate 24). Legion of Mary confraternity members also celebrate their birthday in one another’s homes, or in one of the nearby fast food eateries or a restaurant, and on, special occasions such as a member’s fiftieth, sixtieth or seventieth birthday, they join a wider circle of friends and relatives in celebrating the event, (see Plate 27 bottom half). In the Philippines, the person, whose birthday it is, hosts the celebration of the occasion for relatives, his/her circle of friends or co-workers. This sometimes means that, in the urban environment, as a consequence of the social milieu, of groups within groups, a person may celebrate his/her birthday in several different contexts; with family, at work, or with different kasamahán, that is, with peer, neighbourhood, alumni, or confraternity group members. Within confraternities, the idiom of kinship is used and, with this, comes certain kinship-like obligations, not only in the celebration of birthdays and death anniversaries, but also in terms of financial and political support. For example, Meny, who was one of the executive members of the Holy Mary Blessings Legion of Mary confraternity, had a son engaged in a marketing firm, and so she quite often brought along sample products, which she distributed among confraternity members but, on other occasions, she would bring along literature about new release products, canvassing interest among members to purchase such items. Another member of the confraternity, Armin, originally from Cebu, married to a retired business corporation manager, was a member of the extended kin of one of the candidates in the 1998 Philippine Presidential election, and so, a number of times, she brought along advertising material in support of her relative’s political campaign to be disseminated by confraternity members, among their relatives, friends, neighbours, co-workers, etc. In some of the confraternities, members operated a type of monthly credit loan system, whereby those members, who wished, participated regularly in a scheme in which they contributed on a monthly

379 Plate 23 is inserted after p. 203 while Plate 24 is inserted after p. 219

380 Inserted after p. 220.
basis a fixed sum to a common fund, of the order P20-P30 in the low income squatter neighbourhoods and up to P500\footnote{During the period 1994 to 1998 the Philippine peso fluctuated from a valuation of the order P17 to 1AUD$ at its strongest, to P27 to 1AUD$ at its weakest.} in the more affluent private subdivisions, and, successively each month, a different contributing member received the total contributions for their personal use. The particular sequence in which members would receive their contribution was negotiated among the group members; for example, a group member may want to receive it in that month when they know they are likely to have a significant expense such as their birthday, or other members may rearrange their pre-planned schedule in the case of the unexpected death of the kin of one of the members. On occasions such as the sickness or death of a member, or the kin of a member, there is a felt obligation among confraternity members to make a financial contribution towards defraying the costs associated with such events. Those group members, better endowed financially than other members, are expected to make contributions in cash or in kind, in ways benefiting the welfare of other group members. For example, Leela from Bulacan Province, an active member in the Santa Maria Birhen Legion of Mary confraternity, is married to Tito, from Rizal Province, who is the chapel pastoral council co-ordinator. Leela and Tito are one of the few couples in the area with titled land, having inherited it from Tito’s maternal grandfather who had migrated to the United States. Leela and Tito established a family business on this property and, as they became more and more involved in the activities of the local chapel, they formed cross-linkages among those members of the religious confraternities and pastoral council in more financially disadvantaged circumstances than themselves. As a consequence of these relationships, Leela and Tito assisted some of these members of the local community, initially with part-time employment, and later with full-time work in their business. In addition, Leela and Tito donated considerable funds and materials towards the upgrading of the chapel building, with Leela purchasing and donating to the chapel the main Marian statue that has become a focus of veneration in the Santa Maria Birhen neighbourhood.

**Prestige, Beauty and the Communal Celebration of Mary’s Patronage**

The pre-eminent celebration in the annual cycle of Marian devotions in many of the Barangay All Holies neighbourhoods is the chapel or subchapel fiesta
dedicated to one or the other Marian image. These local chapel fiestas involve a wide range of people from the immediate neighbourhood and beyond. During the period 1994-1998, I attended four Santa Maria Birhen chapel fiesta celebrations, in 1994 and 1996 predominantly in an observer capacity, but in 1997 and 1998 in a much more active participant capacity due to being recruited by Paz to join the fiesta committee and work first as her assistant in 1997 and later as Delia’s assistant in 1998 in the planning and preparation of the fiesta activities. The feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 is the patronal feastday of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel and the principal planning and preparation for this chapel fiesta occurs in the three-month period from early September through to the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Fiesta is not a single celebration, but rather a complex of several inter-related events having social, economic and spiritual elements as my description and photographs, (see Plates 1-3, 33, 41, 43-44, 47-48, upper half of 49, 50, 52, 67-73, 81-82) of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel fiesta celebrations illustrate. Primarily the fiesta celebrations consist of the partially separate, but inter-related components of the Prinsesita, (Princess) Prinsesito, (Prince) and Miss Immaculate Conception contests with coronation night ceremonies and neighbourhood motorcade, plus the chapel fiesta Mass preceded by novena Masses and followed by a neighbourhood Marian fiesta procession. Each segment of the celebration necessitates considerable planning and preparation on the part of various individuals and community organizations under the overall co-ordination of the chapel pastoral council. Initial planning for these events begins on the occasion of ‘Mama Mary’s’ birthday celebrations on September 8. The large number of the local community gathered (see Plates 25 and 32) for this celebration provides an excellent opportunity for the chapel Pastoral Council co-ordinator to make contact with the leaders of the mandated organizations of the local chapel and other pastoral Council members, chapel street co-ordinators, Barangay purók (neighbourhood) leaders, plus contact

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382 In 1995 I was not able to be in the Philippines during Fiesta time due to having other commitments in Papua New Guinea at this time.


384 Plate 25 is inserted after p. 220, while Plate 32 is inserted after p. 239

385 These organizations in the case of Santa Maria Birhen chapel comprised five religious confraternities of the Legion of Mary, Apostleship of Prayer, Cursillo, Couples for Christ, and Charismatics; plus four groups representing those involved in the chapel’s formal religious celebrations as commentators, lectors, eucharistic ministers and choir members, in addition to representatives from the neighbourhood youth and from our religious community.
persons of other civil associations in the neighbourhood to invite them to a fiesta planning meeting at the chapel in the week following the annual ‘Mama Mary’ birthday celebration. This Marian celebration is a particularly opportune time for making the initial contacts to set in motion the fiesta planning process, as not only do a large number of the neighbourhood congregate at the chapel on this occasion, (as depicted in Plate 25), but an integral part of the celebration is an evening procession, (see Plate 32) in which the Marian statue from the local *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel decorated with flowers and birthday balloons, (see Plates 59, 61, and 74) is carried through many of the streets and laneways of the neighbourhood. Thus there is opportunity for the chapel co-ordinator and other pastoral council members, as they participate in this procession, to make passing contact with a wide cross-section of people from the area as they come out of their homes to either watch or join in the procession. This Marian procession is similar to, though smaller than, the Marian procession with which the chapel’s fiesta celebrations are culminated three months later on December 8, (see Plates 1-2, and 33). During the September 8 procession the Marian image which is venerated under the title of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal in a subchapel of the *Santa Maria Birhen* neighbourhood, (see Plate 75), and whose fiesta is celebrated on the last Sunday of November, is also carried in procession, (see Plate 61). The inclusion of this statue in the procession together with that of the main Marian statue in the *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel serves as a prelude to, and advance notice of, the forthcoming fiesta celebrations for these patrons in the small subchapel and main chapel dedicated to these images in the neighbourhood; it is like a personalised invitation to those in the immediate vicinity of these centres and those of the Legion of Mary confraternity dedicated to Mary’s image who are indebted to her benevolent providence to express their appreciation and devotion by entering into the preparation and celebration of her forthcoming fiesta events at the subchapel and chapel. While many of the women of the area live out their lives against the backdrop of an ongoing, continuous relationship of interaction with Mary, these two processions on September and December 8, frame a period of more intensified Marian interaction in the neighbourhood as a whole. On the occasion of the September 8 and December 8 processions, Mary comes out of her normal chapel abode and into close proximity and interaction.

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386 Plates 59 and 61 are inserted after p. 271 and Plate 74 is inserted after p. 288.

387 Plates 1-2 are inserted after p. 104 and Plate 33 is inserted after p. 239.

388 Inserted with set of plates after p. 288.

389 Inserted after p. 271.
with the local people and the overall neighbourhood surrounds. In both cases, from different perspectives, a process of exchange takes place. In the first instance on September 8, Mary celebrates her birthday, she ‘throws a party’, she has the resources to do so because members of Legion of Mary confraternities and other devotees contribute to a common fund for this purpose and also make personal contributions of flowers, candles and food. In this celebration, which is a rather simple affair, those who are most familiar with her, who are most frequently found in her company, Legion of Mary confraternity members and those engaged in a constant round of Marian devotions come to greet her with flowers and candles. They decorate and beautify her, and recite rosaries and the formulas of other Marian prayers, all actions directed towards enhancing the concentration of spiritual powers in her person. Her devotees draw close to her, visit with her, and escort her on visitation to the areas where they live and in so doing, mark out very publicly and visibly the main neighbourhood boundaries, bearing in mind that in a squatter locality there is always a certain fluidity to its location. Mary is brought on procession because her devotees believe that the proximity of her revered image to their locality will bring them a spiritual blessing that benefits their well-being in any number of ways, ranging from protecting them from ill-fortune or sickness to harmonising interpersonal relations, or benefiting them materially and socially. At the procession’s conclusion there is a symbolic sharing of food together, not only in the bread of the Eucharist but, in partaking of ‘Mama Mary’s’ birthday cake, which has been purchased from chapel funds by the pastoral council executive, and in sharing drinks and local snacks contributed by devotees. The Marian celebration of September 8, in Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood is a prelude to the larger, more extensive celebrations of the fiesta complex where exchange and reciprocation are being enacted on a number of different levels. Further, the approximate midway point of the period between September 8 and December 8 is marked with another small Marian neighbourhood procession on October 31, (see Plates 31 and 63).

During this procession, it is not the main Marian statue from the local chapel, which is carried throughout the neighbourhood, but the small statues that circulate from home to home throughout the year, and around which kin and close neighbours gather for daily recitation of the rosary, very especially during the months of May and October. These Marian images are, on one level, familiairs, part of people’s inner circle of kin and friends, but, on another level, they are also sacred objects which through being fashioned, most commonly, in imitation of the

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390 Plate 31 is inserted after p. 237 and Plate 63 is inserted after p. 275.
Marian image of Fatima, or of Lourdes, where miraculous happenings have occurred. Through this imitative fashioning they have been imbued with a share in Mary’s spiritual potency. Further, their spiritual efficacy has been enhanced by having been blessed, (see Plates 40, 64 and 84)\(^{391}\) because, as I highlighted in chapter two, citing from Beltran’s (1987:135) work, blessed religious images “are believed to share in the glory and the power of the person they represent”.

At the initial neighbourhood fiesta planning meeting led by the chapel pastoral council co-ordinator, the main elements of the fiesta celebration which need preparation and planning are outlined. In the main, these activities are nine evenings of novena masses prior to the Fiesta Day Mass on the Sunday nearest December 8, Coronation ceremonies for the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contestants on the eve of Fiesta Day, concelebrated Fiesta Mass, refreshments for celebrants, Hermanos/Hermanas\(^{392}\) and invited guests, baptisms, sports, motorcade of the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contestants on Fiesta Day, and an evening neighbourhood candle-light Marian procession on the actual feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8. Through a process of nomination and appointment, under the direction of the pastoral council co-ordinator, an overall fiesta committee is formed with specific members designated responsibility for the following facets of the celebration: decorations, stage management, altar setting, physical arrangements of additional seating and sound system etc., finance and fellowship, worship details, procession organization. In addition, five subcommittees are also established to liaise with the overall fiesta committee and particularly oversee the following components of the celebration: the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests; canvassing for Hermanos/Hermanas, sponsors, donors and patrons; the coronation ceremonies’ program; the motorcade parade, and the food. The first of these events needing to be set in motion are the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests, which are essentially fund raising events presented partially in the format of beauty contests. The primary responsibility for recruiting participants for these contests falls to the chapel street co-ordinators. These are a group of approximately fifty women from the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood, (see Plates 25 and 26)\(^{393}\) responsible for the flow of information.

\(^{391}\) Plate 40 is inserted after p. 241, Plate 64 is inserted after p. 275, and Plate 84 is inserted with set of plates after p. 288.

\(^{392}\) In this context Hermano/Hermana refers respectively to male and female major financial patrons of the fiesta celebrations.

\(^{393}\) Inserted after p. 220.
between the chapel council and for co-ordinating local level religious activities among the residents in their streets and nearby surrounds. The chapel street co-ordinators visit the homes of Catholics, in their immediate neighbourhood, whom they know to have family members who would be eligible to participate in the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests; that is respectively girls and boys aged from three to twelve years old in the case of the Princesita/Prinsesito contests and girls and single young women aged from thirteen to twenty-four years for the Miss Immaculate Conception contest. Chapel street co-ordinators explain the contests to newcomers in their area; try to encourage their neighbours with eligible family members to participate and, where their own children are in the appropriate age brackets, they may enter these in the contests. The Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests are primarily for the purpose of raising funds for the maintenance and extension of chapel facilities for the use of the community at large, such as the construction of a multipurpose hall annexed to the chapel building. However, there are returns for the participants and their families in that the three to four contestants raising the highest funds in each of the competitions receives back a small percentage of the funds they have raised as prize money for the contest. The main recompense though for participation in the contests comes, not in monetary form, but in the prestige of public recognition of the efforts of contestants and their families through being feted in the coronation night ceremonies, (see Plates 27 top half, and 67) and a neighbourhood motorcade, (see Plates 69-71). These occasions are a form of reciprocation from the community at large for the effort and resources expended by the families in contributing to community welfare and consolidation through their participation in the Princesita, Prinsesito, and Miss Immaculate Conception contests. Once candidates for the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests have been identified and agreed to participate, the relevant fiesta subcommittee (Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception Contests Committee – PPMICCC) takes charge of the conduct of the contests. In the years 1994-1998 the Princesita contest attracted on average nine contestants, the Prinsesito five and the Miss Immaculate Conception six, for a total of approximately twenty participating families overall. The PPMICCC is an all female committee comprised of the treasurer and three or

394 Up until and including 1997 the three contestants who raised the first, second and third highest funds in each of the three Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests received fifteen, ten and five percent respectively of the specific funds each had raised but in 1998, the contestants who raised the first, second, third and fourth highest funds in each contest received respectively twenty, fifteen, ten and five percent of the funds these contestants had individually raised.

395 Plate 27 is inserted after p. 220, while Plates 67-73 are inserted overpage.
Here, on a temporary outdoor stage next to the chapel, the third runner-up in the Prinsesita contest, in a beautiful white satin gown, is presented with her trophy by a formally attired female executive member of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel pastoral council, while her mother from the low income area, reflected in her simple, clean but non formal attire, pins on her daughter’s sash. To the left of the picture, other Prinsesita contestants are pictured awaiting their turn, while in the background are the older Miss Immaculate Conception contestants with their escorts. December 1998.
Plate 68: Coronation Night Entertainment Program

During the Coronation night ceremonies, entertainment numbers by individuals and groups from the neighbourhood are interspersed between the presentations to the various contestants. Here, as the Prinsesta/Prinsesito/Miss Immaculate Conception contestants watch from the background and people from the neighbourhood watch from the foreground, women from the chapel street co-ordinators, several of whom are also Marian confraternity members, show another face of their multi-faceted identities, as they perform in the dance group they formed especially for this occasion, December 1998.
Plate 69: Princesita and Prinsesito Contestant Winners

Pictured here in December 1997 are the crowned Princesita and Prinsesito contestants just prior to the neighbourhood motorcade on Fiesta Day afternoon. Although Prinsesito is temporarily trying out the driver’s seat, both winners actually travel side by side, with their trophies from the previous evening’s presentation ceremony, on the back of the jeep specially modified and decorated for the occasion. The contestants’ attire has usually been hired or borrowed for the occasion. Princesita wears a different gown here to that of the previous evening but this practice varies from contestant to contestant as some use the same attire on both occasions.
Plate 70: Miss Immaculate Conception Winner and Escort in Neighbourhood Motorcade

Again a jeep has been decorated and modified so as to conspicuously display the winning contestant and her escort as they travel through the neighbourhood streets along a route marked out by a string of ‘banderitas’, (refer to text). As many of the family members as possible ride in the jeep during the motorcade. December, 1997.
Plate 71: Princesita Contestant in Neighbourhood Motorcade

For those who cannot afford to access a jeep, utility or truck for their participation in the motorcade then a tricycle is decorated in a manner that enables the conspicuous display of the contestant. An integral part of this display is an obvious sign bearing the contestant’s name, which in this case was shown on the decoration on the front of the tricycle but which, for ethical considerations, I have blocked out in the reproduction of this photo. December 1997.
Plate 72: Princesita and Prinsesito participating in Coronation of Patronal Marian Image

The Princesita, Prinsesito and Miss Immaculate Conception contestant winners take the lead roles in a ceremony of coronation of the chapel Marian image on Fiesta Day. Here the Princesita and Prinsesito carry, in procession, the crown of the Marian image to Miss Immaculate Conception who performs the actual coronation, (see following plate). December 1998.
Plate 73: Miss Immaculate Conception Crowning Patronal Marian Image

The Miss Immaculate Conception winner, attended by small girls dressed as angels, crowns the Santa Maria Birhen chapel Marian image on the afternoon of the Fiesta day celebrating the Immaculate Conception. The Marian image is holding a floral bouquet and is surrounded by other flowers from the morning Fiesta Mass and floral offering procession, December 1998.
four other members of the chapel pastoral council under the leadership of an influential woman from the area nominated at the initial fiesta planning meeting to preside over the committee; for example a school principal or a doctora who is resident in the neighbourhood but whose place of work is outside the immediate locality, thus perceived to possess a certain degree of impartiality. The PPMICCC issues contestants with a set of guidelines and bundles of specially prepared donation envelopes which they distribute to neighbours, extended kin, co-workers, business associates and others over the two-month period, October-November, soliciting their financial sponsorship, with each peso of sponsorship received earning the respective entrant a vote in the contest. The entrant in each of the contests who is able to raise the most funds is respectively crowned Princesita, Princesito, and Miss Immaculate Conception on the eve of fiesta day and participates in a ceremony of coronation of the chapel Marian statue on fiesta day, (see Plates 72-73). In the course of the coronation night entertainment evening, in which the contestants and members of the local community present singing and dance items, specially invited guests present trophies to the contest winners and the respective first, second and third runners-up to honour their achievements, (see Plates 67-68). In addition, all contestants and their parents are presented by pastoral council members with certificates of appreciation signed by the pastoral council co-ordinator and parish priest in recognition of their contributions to the community, as well as being hosted to a meal and feted in a neighbourhood motorcade on fiesta day, (see Plates 69-71). Over the total fund raising period, contestants, on average, each raise around P2,000 – P4,000 but on occasions winners have raised up to P15,000 while some contestants have only been able to contribute as little as P20, but, so long as some contribution is made, contestants remain part of the event and are accorded public recognition in the coronation night ceremonies and the neighbourhood motorcade parade. All in all, these three contests as a combined entity raise around P60,000 per annum, of which at least half, oftentimes as much as three quarters, is drawn in from multiple small donations usually of the order of P5 or P10 made by people from the immediate neighbourhood. The family and friends of successful candidates in these contests invest much time and effort in soliciting donations from sponsors for their candidates, not only in terms of financial contributions to the chapel fund-raising, but also to assist them to present their candidates beautifully, in appropriate formal attire on both coronation night and for the motorcade, and also

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396Sample copies of these certificates of appreciation, the originals of which are printed on parchment paper, are given in appendix six.
with a formally attired male escort for the Miss Immaculate Conception contestants. Contestants also seek the help of more affluent kin or friends to secure the use of a jeep, truck, utility or tricycle as their transportation in the neighbourhood motorcade, as most participants’ families do not own a vehicle themselves. In an effort to defray, in part, the costs involved in this facet of the celebrations, the *Prinsesita* and *Prinsesito* contestants usually combine to partner one another during the motorcade, thus utilising the one vehicle between the two families, (see *Plate 69*). However, as there are normally more participants in the *Prinsesita* than in the *Prinsesito* contest, some *Prinsesita* contestants are partnered by other escorts. The motorcade route, decorated by householders under the direction of neighbourhood association leaders is marked out by a string of ‘*banderitas*’, (see *Plate 70*). The route is so organised as to pass along the streets of the contestants and along the main boundaries of the neighbourhood serving as a way of delineating community identity. Over the two month fundraising period the momentum of the contests and community interest are maintained by holding a fortnightly counting of votes meeting for contestants and their families, at which time contestants return to the committee those envelopes in which donations have been received and these are officially opened by the PPMICCC members in the presence of the chapel pastoral council co-ordinator and the monetary contribution counted with the resultant number of votes earned by respective contestants posted on a public notice board at the chapel. Part of my duties on the fiesta committee involved assisting Paz and Delia as a scrutineer in the counting of votes via the money returned at each of four ‘canvassing’ meetings. Every count is double checked by two sets of two scrutineers to ensure that tallies are correct as the honour of winning is highly coveted. However, despite these precautions, problems with the tallies do occur on occasions and may give rise to marked tension and ill-feeling within sectors of the community as occurred in 1997. In this year the Miss Immaculate Conception contest was extremely close with only P22.30 separating the two highest fundraisers at the end of counting in the fourth meeting marking the official close of the period of canvassing of donations, and the time, according to the rules of the contest, for the declaration of the winner. However, on a subsequent tallying of proceeds for banking at a later date, the total of the funds raised by each of the three highest contestants were found to be marginally higher than those of the official final count with the result that the final tally of the second placed contestant was P6.95

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397 The term ‘*banderitas*’ refers literally to flags, (see *Plate 38*) but in practice the term was used to refer to any kind of material that could be acquired in bulk at fiesta time to be strung up to provide a decorative effect, for example factory packaging off-cuts (see *Plate I*) or even plastic bags as in this plate.
higher than the contestant declared the winner. The PPMICCC decided that the initial declaration would stand, as it could not be ruled out that the additional funds were late contributions. However, as a consequence of the incident, the aggrieved contestant and her family withdrew from attendance at the coronation night ceremonies and the other fiesta activities along with a number of her neighbours and those members of the local community most closely involved in supporting her candidature. Although the fiesta was ostensibly about consolidating and re-enforcing community unity, linking people in networks of mutual co-operation, it was also the scene of division and fracture in the struggle to attain and exercise prestige and power in local community relations with such incidents being by no means isolated. It was part of the tenuous nature of life in a low income, multi-local, ethnically heterogeneous community intersected by multiple allegiances, and marginalised from sources of influence and affluence who paradoxically need one another to survive at the same time as competing against each other for limited access to material resources, prestige and spiritual empowerment.

In return for the contestants’ efforts the local community, led by the chapel pastoral council, hosts an afternoon and evening entertainment program in their honour. On the eve of Fiesta Day members of the fiesta committee responsible for decorations, stage management and physical arrangements organise the erection and decoration of a makeshift stage adjacent to the chapel, set up the chapel’s public address system and arrange benches and chairs for seating in the open air. Meanwhile, the coronation ceremonies program committee has organised for a number of local artists and dance groups to donate their services to entertain the community. Again it is frequently some of the women who come to the fore, chapel street co-ordinators or members of a confraternity presenting special entertainment numbers as a group, having organised special costumes for themselves, (see Plate 68), ‘unveiled’ for the first time on this occasion but used for a number of other subsequent performances throughout the following year. Further, local business establishments have been approached by the mixed gender canvassing subcommittee to donate trophies for the contest winners and runners-up and local Barangay officials and Quezon City councillors have been invited by the PPMICCC in a hand-delivered letter to present these trophies and make a public address to the assembled community. The ceremonies are opened with a prayer led by a member of the chapel pastoral council, followed by the singing of the national anthem led by one of the young female artists of the neighbourhood. Leaders of the chapel street co-ordinators have been invited to join the program committee members in hosting proceedings and officially
introducing the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contestants in accord with information about their date and place of birth, their education, their hobbies and their aspirations, which the contestants have provided on the bio-data forms they submitted to the PPMICCC, (see Plate 27 upper half). In addition to the presentation of the separate certificates of appreciation to all contestants and their parents, each contestant is presented with a sash pinned on them by one or both of their parents. The names of all the contestants and their parents are also printed in the fiesta program booklet together with their final positioning in the contest. Each contestant’s family receives a copy of the fiesta booklet, copies of which are also distributed prior to the fiesta to all guests invited for the trophy presentations and entertainment numbers, whose names are also printed in the program. The committee on food organise the preparation of a celebratory meal in the chapel meeting room for the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contestants and their parents at the conclusion of the coronation ceremonies. This meal is prepared in the homes of the women committee members and other women of the neighbourhood, whose help they have enlisted, using some of the resources contributed for the fiesta celebration by patrons, sponsors and donors.

According to Perttierra (1997:141-149), in his research in Zamora, the Flores de Mayo celebration took the form of a local beauty contest, similar to the Miss Immaculate Conception component of the Princesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests which I have described here. This was not usually the practice in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood, where the Flores de Mayo usually was not connected with fund raising activities. Instead Flores de Mayo was a Marian devotional activity practiced throughout the month of May, involving the recitation of the rosary before a Marian statue, followed by the presentation of flowers to Mary in the form of a floral offertory procession, (see Plate 62). However, a Ms. Mayflower contest was held as a special event in May one year in Santa Maria Birhen neighbourhood to raise funds for a small Marian subchapel, used mainly for ‘Pabasa’ celebrations and neighbourhood wakes with their associated novena devotions. This contest, which had some similarities to the Flores de Mayo celebration in Zamora, described by Perttierra (1997:141-149), was not an annual event, but a special once off fund-raising effort.

398 Inserted after p. 220.
399 An outline copy of the fiesta program booklet pages, without the actual names of contestants, sponsors etc., is given in appendix seven.
400 Inserted after p. 275.
to raise the money required to carry out necessary maintenance work on the subchapel.

At face value it may appear that the Prinsesita, Prinsesito, Miss Immaculate Conception contests and attendant coronation ceremonies have very little to do with the religious sphere, but they are intertwined with a parallel set of activities taking place as an integral part of the same fiesta celebrations. These are the activities, undertaken by members of the local community, directed towards beautifying and feting their local neighbourhood Marian patrons, (see Plates 74-84) in the Fiesta Masses to mark the respective feastdays of each patron, preceded in the case of the major Marian patron by nine days of novena Masses and a major culminating Marian neighbourhood procession on the feastday proper. In return, it is expected that Mary will reciprocate by enveloping the community in her benevolent, protective spiritual care in the ensuing year. An important initial phase of planning for these elements of the fiesta complex involves the chapel pastoral council executive members investigating the possible availability of one of the six MM Bishops, including the Cardinal, to officiate as principal celebrant for the fiesta Mass, (see Plates 41, 47 upper half, 48, 49 upper half, 52). This is done by means of a telephone call and visit in person to the executive staff of various bishops to ascertain whether, according to their schedule of appointments, the particular Bishop concerned already has prior engagements for the Sunday closest to December 8. Where it appears that the Bishop does not have any prior bookings at the time planned for the Fiesta Mass, then the Bishop’s secretarial staff are prevailed upon to make an initial approach to gauge his receptivity to officiating on this occasion. When indications are positive from a particular Bishop’s secretarial staff then a formalised letter of invitation is actually prepared and delivered in person by the pastoral council executive members to the office of the Bishop concerned under the signature of the chapel pastoral council co-ordinator, with a signature of endorsement from the Parish priest. If at all possible, an appointment has been made to meet with the Bishop at the time of delivering the invitation, but, if this is not possible, an appointment is made to meet with the Bishop at a later date prior to the fiesta celebrations. These personalised steps of approach and ongoing contact, although time consuming, are considered important steps of protocol that facilitate the maintenance of harmonious relations and are those most likely to produce the desired favourable

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401 Inserted overpage.

402 Plates 41-51 inserted after p. 242, and Plate 52 inserted after p. 248.
To celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Mary, ‘Mama Mary’s’ Birthday, the patronal Marian image from Santa Maria Birhen chapel has been specially beautified by being clothed in a festive satin brocade gown and sash, with carefully groomed wig, polished crown and the application of facial makeup. The statue, decorated with flowers and birthday balloons, is mounted on a platform, fitted with carrying handles, ready to be carried in candle-light procession on visitation throughout the neighbourhood, September 1997.
Plate 75: Venerated Marian Image –b)  

This Marian image venerated under the title of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal is specially attired, for her feast day celebrations, in garments sewn, from donated fabric, by her dressmaker neighbour who resides next door to the subchapel. The image is decorated aesthetically using the limited resources of two vases of white chrysanthemums, fern leaves and artificial flowers in this particularly low income subsection of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood. November, 1997.
Plate 76: Venerated Marian Image –c)  

*Santo Jesus* subchapel Legion of Mary confraternity members belonging to the local ‘*praesidium*’ dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption pictured on the feast of Mary’s Assumption, August 1997, with the regally attired Marian image from a neighbouring Parish Church to that of All Holies Parish. This image is presented here in the attire of a Spanish Queen, gold brocaded dress and cape, adorned with crown and sceptre in her right hand and rosary in her left.
Plate 77: Venerated Marian Image –d)
A ‘proxy’ Marian image venerated as Our Lady of Remedies in Holy Mary Blessings chapel community during neighbourhood fiesta procession, November 1997. This ‘proxy’ image is much less ornately beautified than the primary Marian patronal image of the neighbourhood, (see next plate) which is a fixture in the local chapel and towards which primary veneration is directed. Reflective of the more affluent locality the image here is elaborately transported in procession, placed on a ‘caroza’ (float) with wheels, in a lavishly decorated setting of lace, flowers and lights connected to a twelve volt battery.
Plate 78: Venerated Marian Image –e)
Marian image venerated as Our Lady of Remedies in Holy Mary Blessings chapel, on Fiesta Day November 1997, elaborately attired as a royal bride having freshly shampooed wig, pencilled eyebrows and mascara, bejewelled with pearl ear-rings, with a crown of gold and halo of sparkling light, holding a bouquet of roses and maiden hair fern in an arch of tulle veil decorated with white roses and orchids and surrounded by golden chrysanthemums.
Plate 79: Venerated Marian Image –f)

This Marian image elaborately attired in a purple satin gown heavily brocaded in gold is loaned by an influential, affluent woman from subdivision A for the annual Easter Sunday morning Salubong procession through the private subdivision in which All Holies Parish church is located and the neighbouring private subdivisions. The image on its ‘caroza’ (float) as, pictured here, is being manoeuvred by men into the church after the meeting of the grieving Mary and her risen son has taken place and Mary’s dark mourning veil has been lifted by the ‘sagalas’ (young girls dressed in white as angels), April 1997.
Plate 80: Venerated Marian Image –g)

This Marian image, on loan from another affluent, influential female parishioner is venerated throughout the month of October in All Holies Parish church under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary. The statue is of mother and child, both crowned and attired in white satin gowns, with the child supported by Mary’s left arm while she holds a golden rosary in her left hand and a golden sceptre in her right. Mary is draped in a cape of heavy gold brocade and surrounded by a halo of golden stars. October 1996.
Plate 81: Detail of Beautified Marian Patronal Image (a)

Close up photo of the face of the Santa Maria Birhen chapel Marian image showing the detail of the application of her facial make-up of lipstick, mascara, eye shadow and eyebrow liner to beautify ‘her’ for Fiesta Day celebrations, December 1998.
Plate 82: Detail of Beautified Marian Patronal Image (b)

Close up photo of the *Santa Maria Birhen* chapel Marian image prior to December 8, 1997 neighbourhood procession. Image is dressed in brocaded satin *terno* style gown with butterfly sleeves and edged at neck and sleeves with glass beading, with a blue satin sash draped from left to right off her left shoulder. She wears a long carefully groomed wig with crown on her head, surrounded by a halo of stars and carries a rosary in her hands. Being the Marian image in a chapel in a low socio-economic area, the undressed rafter beams and the corrugated iron of the chapel roof are visible in the background.
Plate 83: Detail of Beautified Marian Patronal Image (c)

Close up photo of the Holy Mary Blessings chapel Marian image beautified for ‘her’ Fiesta Day celebrations, November 1998. In this higher income neighbourhood the Marian image is set in a marble niche and dressed as a queen in layers of fine material. ‘She’ has a shampooed and carefully groomed wig, diamond ear-rings, and carefully applied mascara, eye-shadow, pencilled eyebrows and a very subtle touch of lipstick, and is surrounded by a lighted halo. She holds a beautiful bouquet of fresh chrysanthemums, daisies and orchids trimmed with maiden hair fern.
Plate 84: Solemn Blessing and Incensing of Patronal Marian Statue on Fiesta Day

At the conclusion of Fiesta Day Mass all those present are provided by the Fiesta patrons with a flower which they carry in procession to the chapel Marian image gradually filling the vases placed before the statue for this purpose (refer Plate 78) and at the conclusion of this floral offering, the celebrating priest incenses the image and sings a solemn blessing, after which people come to pay their individual respects, (see Plates 57-58). Holy Mary Blessings chapel, December 1997.
outcome. A similar but simpler process was used to extend invitations to the parish priest and various of the resident priests in the neighbouring subdivisions to celebrate one or more of the novena masses prior to Fiesta Day. Each priest was personally visited at his residence and hand delivered a letter of invitation and schedule of Mass dates, times and themes prepared by members of the fiesta planning committee responsible for printing official invitation letters and the fiesta program booklet. Usually in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel each of the novena masses were celebrated by one of five guest priests from neighbouring subdivisions or the Parish priest. It was noticeable that the practice of inviting a bishop to be the principal celebrant for the fiesta Mass was most markedly pursued as a priority in the low income Santa Maria Birhen chapel community rather than in the more affluent neighbourhoods of either the Holy Mary Blessings chapel or that of the All Holies Parish church. The reason for this appears to relate to the precarious social positioning of the local Santa Maria Birhen community who, although possessing limited resources and facing a constant threat of eviction, residing as they were on untitled land, had nonetheless established a neighbourhood centre of worship among a shifting population. However, as they did not have access to the regular services of a resident priest in their immediate neighbourhood, they lacked an assured future identity in the hierarchy of parish relations and so needed in a tangible way to make themselves and their plight conspicuous to the influential and powerful in official church circles, and for this reason much emphasis was put on, and effort directed towards, securing the services of a Bishop to officiate at the annual fiesta Mass. The same imperatives did not pertain in the case of the fiesta celebrations at All Holies Parish with its already well established ecclesial identity where the usual custom was for the fiesta Mass to be concelebrated by the present and past Parish priests assisted by the guest priests currently serving in various chapels of the Parish. Similarly, the Holy Mary Blessings chapel community, who had a guest priest in residence and a permanent chapel on titled subdivision land financed by affluent benefactors from within and beyond the community, were satisfied to simply have the Parish priest officiate as the principal celebrant of their fiesta Mass, assisted by their priest in residence. The whole fiesta celebration in the low-income Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood is directed, at one end of the scale, towards the consolidation of a local community identity through the involvement of people in the neighbourhood in activities of common endeavour and, at the other end, towards establishing wider and more dense webs of social relationship with other levels of Filipino society so as to draw in resources from
beyond the immediate locality and peoples’ everyday associates for the viability of the community.

Concurrently with arrangements being made to secure the bishop’s services as principal celebrant at the Fiesta Day Mass and other priest celebrants for the evening novena masses, other initiatives are in hand to ensure that there are sufficient resources available to host the fiesta celebrations and for the continued upkeep of the neighbourhood chapel. To this end, the canvassing committee send personally addressed letters under the signature of the chapel pastoral council co-ordinator to those operating local businesses in the immediate and surrounding neighbourhoods and to the slightly more affluent upper working class members of the neighbourhood with college education inviting them to become a fiesta hermano or hermana by making a contribution of P1000 or more towards the fiesta celebration, with the understanding that funds received in excess of those required to cover fiesta expenses are to go towards fund raising projects of the local chapel pastoral council. In return, the contributors receive public recognition by the publication of their names as fiesta hermano/hermana in the annual fiesta programme booklet and being given reserve seats of honour at the front of the chapel on fiesta day and being hosted to a festive meal with the bishop, concelebrants and members of the pastoral council after the fiesta Mass. At this occasion all hermanos/hermanas are presented with an official certificate of thanks signed by the pastoral council co-ordinator, the Parish Priest and the Bishop officiating at the fiesta Mass. The hermanos/hermanas also accrue a certain spiritual capital through their substantial donation that makes possible the holding of the annual fiesta honouring Mary, under the title of her Immaculate Conception, as the principal spiritual patron of the neighbourhood. In their reserved front pews at the fiesta Mass, dressed in white or cream formal Filipino attire of barong for the men and terno for the women, they are close to that centre of ritual activity and concentration of spiritual power and, like the ritual practitioners, through their proximity to this centre, they also imbibe a share of the spiritual potency of the occasion. The donations of those not able to make a contribution of the same order as that of the hermanos/hermanas, either in money or kind are still gratefully received, with the names of those making a contribution to the value of P500 or more also being listed in the fiesta programme booklet as donors and patrons. Through this direct appeal, funds in the order P30,000 to P50,000 are raised. The Princesita, Prinsesito and Miss Immaculate conception contests are a source of revenue raising among the low income sector of the community and the canvassing for hermanos/hermanas is a fund-raising
endeavour directed towards the more affluent members of the community, but the recruitment of sponsors for the novena masses is another mode of generating the revenue in which both sectors of the community make a contribution towards the resources needed in order to have the appropriate religious rituals performed. For the nine evenings preceding fiesta day there is a Mass held in the Santa Maria Birhen chapel, and at the initial fiesta planning committee meeting, each of the local religious and civic organizations are assigned the responsibility, either solely or in conjunction with another group, of sponsoring one of these novena masses with two members of the pastoral council executive liaising with these sponsors and having overall organising responsibility for the activities associated with each of these novena Masses. These activities involve organising a commentator, reader, eucharistic minister, acolyte, people to participate in the offertory procession and take up the financial collection in addition to arranging for flowers for the altar and contributions for the offertory procession. These contributions are in the form of wine or candles for use in Masses celebrated at the chapel, or food items for the priest celebrant, and money to cover the cost of the stipend given to the celebrating priest from the consolidated funds of the sponsoring mandated organizations or from the combined small donations of individual confraternity members made on the evening of the particular novena Mass being sponsored by their respective confraternity. Again, public recognition of these sponsoring organizations and individuals is given in the fiesta program booklet, (see appendix 7). Preparation of this fiesta program booklet is the responsibility of some members of the chapel pastoral council who either prepare the booklet themselves or solicit donations or the services of those who can assist them in printing the booklet. As part of my contribution to the fiesta planning committee, I was recruited to assist Delia and Paz in this process in 1997 and 1998 which involved continuous liaison with all the fiesta subcommittees to collate all the information to be printed in the booklet and the number of copies to be made. In addition, we were also responsible for the preparation of the official letters of invitation to invited guests from civil and church organizations.

There has been a tendency in some quarters to critically portray Filipinos as “little brown Americans”, as Perdon (1998:14) highlights in his historical overview of Australian images of the Philippines and as Siapno (1995:219) contends in her critique of American scholarship on the Philippines which she argues has largely reflected the “lingering colonial arrogance that Filipinos are ‘people without culture’, who are regarded as having been long alienated from their cultural roots and successfully cloned as American replicas. As a consequence, the interest of
Filipinos in beauty contests has at times been attributed to American colonial influences, and linked to the introduction of the formal beauty queen contests of the Manila Carnival held annually since 1908. And yet there are indications that the roots of Filipinos’ preoccupation with feminine beauty go back much further and that women’s beautiful self-presentation has always been highly valued among Filipinos from pre-Hispanic times to the present. In his research on sixteenth-century Philippine culture and society Scott (1994:28) notes that “Visayan clothing varied according to cost and current fashions and so indicated social standing” but more particularly with respect to Tagalogs he observes that a considerable vocabulary particular to dress indicates “considerable clothing consciousness” and that:

Tagalog ladies were well supplied with makeup – *tana* eyebrow paint, *pupol* face powder, red *kamuntigi* nail polish, and yellow *barak* root to rub on the body as a skin lotion. [And that] Father Blancas de San José inveighed against the vanity of their plucking their eyebrows every month.

Illustrations in the Boxer Codex (Quirino and Garcia 1958)(1958) of Visayans and Tagalogs used by Phelan (1959) and Scott (1994) in their work indicate a beauty conscious people who adorned their bodies with tattoos and a great array of jewellery. In her article on Spanish and Mestizo women of Manila, Doran (1993) cites the observations of a French physician Jean Mallat, who worked in Manila between 1840 and 1846, that the women, presumably of high society of that time, who participated in dance entertainment were extravagantly arrayed with “the most dazzling luxury in Chinese silk, diamonds from Borneo, pearls from Solou, [and that] young ladies are dressed with no less brilliance than married women and they never wear the same dress twice”. Both Cannell (1999) and Roces (1998) note that there are indications that, prior to the beauty contests of the American colonial era, religious fiestas and processions were linked with competitive fund-raising interconnected with displays of women’s beauty and family wealth although Cannell (1999) notes a decline in the popularity of this type of activity, in the Bicol locality in which she conducted her research in favour of beauty contests judged more on the basis of contestants’ beauty, intelligence and educational attainments or aspirations. A shift, which she links in large part to the legacy of American colonisation, especially in the increasing popularity of gay/*bantut* beauty contests which she describes as being “based on American-style meritocratic principles and known as ‘brains and beauty lang’ (‘brains and beauty only’) contests”, (Cannell, 1999:204). Johnson (1997:54)
arrives at a similar finding in his study of transgendered men’s beauty contests in the Southern Philippines observing that:

Beauty contests are filled with instances of stylistic and verbal discourse which are clearly embedded in colonial ministrations. ……The point is that the images of beauty purveyed in the beauty contest are rooted in and articulate a particular conceptual order of the world. Moreover, the images both of glamour and of education grow out of and are part of the same conceptual order.

In a related vein, Cohen et al. (1996:6, 8) in their study of the global phenomena of beauty contests, observe, in drawing on the work of Lakoff and Scherr (1984) and Nichter and Nichter (1991), that:

Cross-cultural studies suggest that beauty has everything to do with culture and power, and very little to do with a physically objective, or genetically prescribed basis for human notions of beauty……. Beauty contests are places where cultural meanings are produced, consumed, and rejected, where local and global, ethnic and national, national and international cultures and structures of power are engaged in their most trivial but vital aspects.403

Both Johnson (1997) and Cannell (1999) are at pains to point out also, that Filipinos’ preoccupation with displays of feminine beauty are complex phenomena, having roots preceding the period of American colonisation and are especially valued because ‘being seen to be beautiful’ is intertwined with a particular conception of power. An inner power that can be possessed and exercised independent of wealth and force that is paradoxically accumulated in the ascetic contexts of hardship and deprivation. Those who can manage and display female beauty in the context of such public events of beauty contests demonstrate their access to the necessary resources to do so, not necessarily through wealth but through the ability with limited resources to carefully and successfully execute certain imitative processes through which they are fleetingly transformed into those in possession of the accoutrements of beauty even if only for the brief period of the event. It was in predominantly this type of activity that the families of the Princesita, Prinesito and Miss Immaculate Conception contestants from Santa Maria Birhen chapel neighbourhood were engaged.

Just as the high point of the Princesita, Prinesito and Miss Immaculate Conception contests was the contestants’ beautiful presentation of themselves at

403 Original emphasis.
the coronation night ceremonies and for the neighbourhood motorcade, so the high point of the Marian fiesta and feastday celebrations is the beautiful presentation of the Marian statue for the Fiesta Day Mass and neighbourhood procession as is illustrated in Plates 1-3, 33, 74-80. In particular Plates 74-80 depict seven different Marian images honoured in Barangay All Holies while Plates 81-83 show the detail of the beautification of the principal Marian statues from Santa Maria Birhen and Holy Mary Blessings chapels during the Fiesta celebrations. The beautification of the Marian statues is marked by widespread use of white and gold garments with some blue trim and white and gold flowers in such a way that attention is drawn to the statues as focal points of concentration of light, of brilliance, of ‘liwanag’, in essence of spiritual potency. This effect is communicated not only through the use of white satin and gold brocade garments but through the further use of candles and other lighting effects to illuminate the images in various ways, (see in particular Plates 76-79). Further, through the beautification process, the statues are transformed from inanimate objects to persons with attention paid to highlighting the individual facial features of the images and use made of jewellery adornments, (see Plates 81-83). Within the limits of the resources of the local communities, Marian images are presented as beautified, affluent, regal women who are potent reservoirs of spiritual power, ironically all the more so because of containing within themselves an ‘otherness’ by virtue of their ‘white’ European appearance and being able to reconcile in their being that which does not naturally go together, the normally mutually exclusive states of being virgin and mother. Through this ‘otherness’ Marian images become potent symbolic representations of the divine. What at first seems contradictory and outside the normal boundaries of existence becomes contained and reconciled. Mary’s motherhood connects and unites her to women’s human experience while her virginity unites her to the spiritual realm beyond the human, without however becoming an impossible stumbling block, an unattainable ideal but rather is a manifestation of the spiritual sphere or domain of influence beyond boundaries of the present and immediate where opposites are harmonised. Such contrary states of being are not necessarily conceived of as being in opposition to one another but rather as being conjunctive, due to a manner of being in and conceiving time that both Quibuyen (1991) and Beltran (1987) have discussed in their research. In his research among adherents of indigenous religious movements in Banahaw, in particular members of the Ciudad Mistica de Dios, Quibuyen (1991:56-57) illustrates that time is conceived cyclically such that the element of time designated as now which is historical time is a period existing between the before and the after where both before and after are different yet
equivalent and in existence outside of history. In this conception the cosmos exists in a primordial unity of God before and after creation, the moment in which historical time exists. What was before but is not now, exists again over and beyond what is now. In Quibuyen’s (1991:56) words:

> That God created something new on earth means that something outside structure and historical time is introduced – the reversal of the principle of segregation and inequality. On earth, this is something new, but when viewed sub species etermitatis, under the species of eternity, this is identical to noon wala pang kasaysayan (before creation, when there was no history) when there was wholeness.

Similarly Beltran (1987:211) argues, as I noted earlier, that Filipinos are “capable of holding opposites and reconciling contradictory elements in their minds” because they have a non-linear perception of time so different to that most commonly held by Westerners. Beltran (1987:210) contends that:

> Where Westerners tend to isolate and dissect, Filipinos contemplate an ordered whole and intuit a depth behind spatial depth that grounds the simultaneity of all things that are successive in time. It is easier for them to see time and eternity not in terms of exclusiveness but of interpenetration

With respect to the practice of Spanish missionaries introducing “images of saints and madonnas as protectors of communities and as intermediaries with a feared God” Blanc-Szanton (1990:360) claims that “these images were selectively received by Filipinos” and that one of the Marian images that did not particularly take hold was that of the “Virgin Mary as the Immaculate Conception, whose accompanying emphasis on virginity and on sexuality as sin clashed with local definitions of femaleness.” From my observation, it is not so much that Marian images under the title of “Immaculate Conception” have not taken hold and been widely venerated, in fact this feastday is one of the few honoured as a Holy Day of obligation in the Philippines. Rather, it is that the way in which this Marian title is used and interpreted in Catholic theological circles and by the clerical hierarchy differs markedly from the way in which Mary is widely conceived by the Filipino population at large as communicated through their religious practices. Here, emphasis on Mary’s virginity is not singled out in isolation from her many other exceptional and miraculous attributes, and here, purity is read more as a state of extreme concentration of spiritual power than as a state necessarily

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404 See discussion in chapter two, p. 80.
connected to the maintenance of permanent sexual abstinence. This concentration of spiritual energy, of light and brilliance in her ‘loob’, in her inner being is what constitutes purity, this amounts to an absence of diffusion and the dissipation of energy,⁴⁰⁵ and is symbolically communicated in the presentation of her image in brilliant white and gold at times of specially honouring her, (see Plates 73-84). Mary’s potency means she is pure because none of her power has been dissipated and her spiritual power and veneration derives from this, rather than particular admiration for her having abstained from, or avoided sexual relations and any inordinate desire to emulate her in such abstinence from sexual relations. She is conceived of as having fertility and sexual potency, of in fact having such great potency in this regard that she can bring forth from her being, Jesus who is God, who is redeemer,⁴⁰⁶ without needing to resort to the normal course of sexual relations with men, something not normally able to be done, but in Mary the miraculous one, who shares intimately in the ultimate spiritual powers of the cosmos, a deed able to be accomplished. She is mother of God, so that in Marietta’s words, as discussed earlier, “without Mary there is no redemption because she gave birth to Jesus…..so without Mary there is no Jesus”.

**Closing Links**

Mary certainly occupies a place of great prominence in the lives of Filipinos, as highlighted by Lily in her reflections on her mother, grandmother and maternal aunts, as I previously recounted in chapter four, namely that: “it is really the Virgin Mary, which dominated their lives more than anything else, I think it was the identity, being mothers also. But it is really, you know, the nature, second nature to the Filipinos being, identifying with the Virgin Mary”. Mulder (1992:41) has reached a similar conclusion, asserting that:

> the central and most important personage in the pantheon of saints is the Virgin Mary. The Philippines is a Marian country and the Holy Mother is its patroness. This special relationship is also expressed at the individual level and ritual practices and prayers addressing her are very common and widespread.

⁴⁰⁵ Refer to my reference to this point in my earlier discussion of Ileto and Anderson’s work, see p. 102 ff.

⁴⁰⁶ Where redeemer is understood more as the one granting release from all that afflicts and oppresses rather than forgiveness from particular personal sin and fault and guilt.
It would seem that in many respects Mary is conceived of as the feminine face of God, in being Mother of God, where God is at one and the same time both feminine and masculine in keeping with reportedly pre-Christian conceptions of the supreme Tagalog deity, termed *Bathala*, a word which, when written in ancient Tagalog script, Mananzan ([1988b] 1992b:3) points out, was composed of the three consonants Ba-Tha-La, where Ba corresponds with the first syllable of *babae*, the Tagalog word for woman, and La corresponds with the first syllable of *lalake*, the Tagalog word for man joined by the aspirated H (Tha) meaning light or spirit. In short, *Bathala* is a spiritual being in which the feminine and masculine are co-existent, wholly united in the spiritual domain, or in concentration of light ‘*liwanag*’, a concentration of power, a potency so that, among Filipinos, God is experienced more as a pervading presence than predominantly a distant transcendent being. Usually Barangay All Holies women did not go so far as to explicitly call Mary God but, for some, there was definitely the sense that the line between Mary and God was very fine, that perhaps in fact Mary’s identity is one with and contained within the all omnipotent spiritual entity that is God, as Babette expressed “there is so much attention that we give to the Blessed Mother, to the extent of asking if God is the Blessed Mother”. There are indications for some Filipinos that Mary is conceived in precisely this manner especially among the followers of the indigenous religious movements centred around Mt. Banahaw where the Trinity is commonly honoured under the image of the *Sagrada Familia* (Holy Family), *Ama* (Father), *Ina* (Mother) *at anak* (and child). In this conception, Mary is an indispensable, intertwined element in the mystery of God.

Quibuyen (1991:64) argues that at the heart of indigenous Filipino religious understanding in the *Ciudad Mística de Dios* is:

the principle of a moral order in which men and women are not viewed as separate and antagonistic sexes but as both the genderless *Anak* (children) of the *Ama* (Father) and *Ina* (Mother). In the myth of the *Sagrada Familia*, the *Ama* and *Ina* are not merely equal, they are identical. Translating the myth in cultural terms, therefore, woman is either *Ina* or an *Anak*, and man is either an *Ama* or an *Anak*. These three………constitute an indissoluble bond, a unity of three identical, as it were, personages, sharing and constituting one power – a principle embodied in the myth of the *Sagrada Familia* as the Trinity.

There are indications that God is similarly conceived as being at one and the same time masculine and feminine among the followers of another indigenous religious movement in Mt. Banahaw, the *Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios* who twice daily pray a prayer of praise of God containing stanzas successively
addressed to Amang Makapangyarihan (Father Most Powerful), Ina ng Kaliwanagan (Mother of Light), Amang Ellustre (Father Ellustre), Dios Impenito (Infinite God), Dios Espiritu Santo (God the Holy Spirit), Dios sumakop sa atin (God who came to save us), Ina sa Karagatan (Mother of the Sea), Ina sa Kabayanan (Mother of the Towns), Ina sa Kabundukan (Mother of the Mountains), Amang Kabanal-banal (Father Most Holy), Ina ng Kagandahahan (Mother Most Beautiful), Rizal Makapangyarihan (Rizal Most Powerful), Ina ng Pilipinas (Mother of the Philippines), Ina ng Kapayapaan (Mother of Peace) and Amang Bathala (Father Bathala). In her analysis of this prayer Obusan (1994b:119) applies all the motherly titles used in the prayer to the Virgin Mary claiming that “it is obvious from this prayer that the group has a special regard for the Virgin Mary. She is given no less than seven titles in a prayer addressed to God Most Powerful.” However the prayer seems to suggest a blurring of the boundary between God and Mary. In fact the Father, the Mother, the Spirit, the Son and Rizal, sometimes honoured as a Filipino Christ, and Father Ellustre, the common mouthpiece of God as the founder of the religious movement, are all in a sense honoured as facets of the one omnipotent spiritual entity. It is not so much that Mary is honoured as a particularised individual person whose life one must imitate in the smallest detail but rather that she is part of the spiritual world wherein all ultimate power is contained and through her ubiquitous images a particularly accessible conduit, channel to access this spiritual world. Just as in pre-Hispanic times ‘Filipios’ believed that those who died became ‘anitos’, part of the total spiritual milieu in which they were enveloped and that they could be favourably prevailed upon through the veneration accorded images made in their honour and that images fashioned in honour of deceased priestesses were particularly powerful so a similar disposition appears to underlie present day Marian devotion in the Philippines.
Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the place of religious beliefs and practices in the lives of contemporary, predominantly Catholic Filipino women living in Metro Manila. In so doing, I have been involved with Filipinas in reading the script of Filipino women’s symbolic expressions of belief through a description and analysis of local level religious practices. My work has been concerned with looking behind the immediate and obvious signs of change, as characterised by Filipinos widespread espousal of Christianity and marked Catholicity, to highlight the many threads of continuity between the past and the present that appear to exist in the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary urban Filipinos. Very especially, I argue that Filipinos have retained their belief in feminine personages being primary conduits of access to spiritual agency through which the course of human life is directed. One particular expression of this belief is the ubiquity and pre-eminence of Marian devotion in the Philippines. This is one of the many forms of the appropriation of the symbols of Catholicism by Filipinos. This appropriation has occurred in a manner that facilitates the continuation and strengthening of Filipinos’ basic indigenous beliefs. A further manifestation of Filipinos’ belief in feminine personages being primary avenues of access to spiritual resources is that religious activities continue to be conceived as predominantly women’s sphere of work in the Philippines. Consequently, women are widely involved in both informal and formal religious leadership, at local community level. This takes place even though male priests continue to officiate as the principal ritual practitioners in Catholicism’s formal rituals, in accord with the practices introduced during the widespread Catholic evangelisation that accompanied Spanish colonisation. In order to identify threads of continuity between the past and the present, I have engaged in an iterative discussion examining what can be gleaned about Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices, and women’s social and religious roles prior to colonisation, under the influence of colonisation, and in the contemporary post colonial era.

407 This is especially pronounced in the NCR where approximately ninety-nine percent of the population profess to be Christian and almost ninety-one percent of the population are affiliated with Catholicism as indicated in Figure 1, p. 21.
In recognition of the fact that all research is positioned, I began this thesis with some background information on how my anthropological research interest in women’s religious beliefs and practices first developed and the circumstances that led to my exploration of urban Filipino women’s perception of the influence of religious belief and practice in their lives. I provided some background information about myself, explaining how as a Catholic religious sister I have been both an insider and an outsider in researching Catholic women’s religious beliefs and practices in a social milieu different from my own Australian Celtic heritage. I acknowledged that due to having participated in many Catholic rituals throughout my life, I was faced with the dilemma of whether my very familiarity with such religious practices facilitated or hindered my ability to interpret and analyse levels of meaning operative in such practices. Although some rituals were familiar to me, I also experienced that many of the religious practices, which Filipinas commonly engaged in, were unfamiliar to me. Further, I found that, in the Philippine milieu, even those formal and devotional Catholic rituals with which I was conversant, like Mass and devotions honouring Mary, were performed in subtly and markedly different ways to my experience of them in other contexts. While the imprint of centuries of Spanish colonial missionary presence is evident in many of the rituals of Filipino Catholicism, there are also other indications that much of the ethos of pre-Hispanic religious belief has been retained. In view of the fact that a complex relationship has obviously existed in the Philippines between religious praxis and the social changes precipitated by colonisation involving an intensive and extended Catholic missionary presence, I have endeavoured to be quite upfront with respect to the fact that I belong to a religious sisterhood bearing the name ‘Missionary’. However, my being in the Philippines, and my involvement in this research has in no way been concerned with any of that proselytising type of activity, which has been extensively critiqued by some anthropologists due to its perceived disruptive and destructive effect on people’s culture. Evidence certainly exists that in times past the approach of some missionaries rested on premises of cultural superiority. Similarly, the work of some anthropologists was equally ethnocentric with its emphasis on the analysis of ‘primitive’ societies. However, it is simplistic to portray everyone as having the same approach or to deny the existence of changed practices among people belonging to each of these groups. I highlight that, although little studied, women’s missionary practice has tended to be more about rendering a service in the community and thus has usually been very different to men’s missionary approach which has often focused on baptisms, conversions, and the establishment and operation of a hierarchical institution.
Throughout my account of this research I have emphasised that neither I, nor the people among whom I have lived and worked during the course of this research, have only one persona or identity and that as a consequence I recognise that research such as mine will always provide only a partial insight into complex realities. I have intertwined discussion of my social identity with a thumbnail sketch of the research location in which I worked and an account of the methods I used in the course of this research together with acknowledgement of those people who have helped me with introductions and other assistance, especially in the initial phases of my settling in the Philippines. My primary research method has been that of participant observation in the local level religious practices of my neighbourhood community, complemented by in-depth life story conversations with women from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, set against a review of historians’ research on women’s social and religious position in pre-Hispanic ‘Filipino’ society and under the influence of colonisation.

Before detailing my research findings, I reviewed the literature in terms of what is known about the place of women in Filipino religious practices. The analysis of sociological surveys on the religious beliefs and practices of contemporary Filipinos suggest that overall Filipino people are strongly religious and that there are no appreciable differences in religious fervour attributable to people’s age, class or residence locality, but that some differences are observable due to gender. A recurrent theme in these survey findings is that women are perceived, either by themselves, or by others, to be more frequently engaged than men in activities of a religious nature. Further, women are also perceived as having a ‘closer’ relationship to God than men. While these survey findings attempted to quantify Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices, according to those criteria adjudged by researchers to be indices of religiosity, the studies provided little detail about the qualitative nature of women’s actual religious lives in terms of what they do and think. In view of this lack of information, my research has been directed towards furnishing primary data from the life experiences of contemporary urban women on the place of religious belief and practice in their lives. In reviewing the literature I found very little reported qualitative research on this subject, with the exception of some Filipinas’ brief accounts of their experiences of religious socialisation and their reflections on the liberating and oppressive dimensions of religious beliefs and practices in their lives, as published by Mananzan ([1988a] 1992a). These women, most of whom
identify themselves as Catholics, frequently indicated that they experienced a disjuncture between their primary and secondary religious socialisation. This disjuncture caused them considerable angst until, through their life experiences, they had been able to disentangle themselves from the authoritarian, prescriptive dimensions of religious belief and practice, often accentuated in their secondary socialisation, and reconnect with the relational, affective and social dimension of religious activity, imbibed during their primary phase of socialisation. As a result these women reported shifting their religious practices to those directed towards harmonising social relations and enabling them to access and concentrate spiritual energy within, rather than in being pre-occupied with trying to manipulate their lives in accord with the directives of a remote, disciplinarian, transcendent being. Most other studies of a qualitative nature relating to Filipinos’ religious beliefs and practices, either had little to say specifically about women’s contemporary context, or related predominantly to research in provincial rather than metropolitan localities. However some of the more important insights from this qualitative work were the observations that religious images occupy an important place in Filipinos’ religious practices and that most domestic religious rituals appear to be under women’s leadership, especially those associated with death.

There is more information available concerning women’s religious role in pre-Hispanic ‘Filipino’ society than there is on the contemporary context. Historical studies clearly indicate that among most of the people of the archipelago religious leadership was predominantly in the hands of mature aged women who were regarded as the main mediators for the community in the important interactive exchanges between humans and the spirit world, so necessary for material well-being. On the other hand political authority was more usually in mature male hands, but the two, religious and political authority, were inter-related. Ultimately however, the course of human life was conceived to be directed by the spiritual powers pervading the whole of the cosmos and so, women’s major mediating role between the human community and the spiritual domain was a prestigious, alternative avenue to power to that normally open to men through their management of political relations and military resources. However, neither of these two avenues to prestige and influence was the sole prerogative of either gender. There were a few males, characterised by their identification with the feminine gender operating as spiritual mediums, and similarly a few women, displaying masculine characteristics, who exercised military prowess and political leadership. Further, both men and women from affluent families owned property and personal wealth in societies where kinship was generally
traced bilaterally. In the pre-Hispanic ‘Filipino’ milieu, indications are that the exercise of religious and political authority was usually differentiated along gender lines and legitimated through establishing and maintaining harmonious social relations, rather than through a process of domination accomplished by the use of external force or coercive action. These historical studies pointed to the need for a rethinking of the intersection of cultural conceptions of gender, religion and power in the Philippines. There are indications that at the advent of colonisation the nexus between gender, religion and power was conceived very differently by most of the hierarchically structured, but gender egalitarian, peoples of the ‘Philippine’ islands to the way in which the Spanish colonial missionaries conceived the intersection. From a Filipino perspective, those who were in possession of power derived from spiritual potency did not have to resort to force and coercion, whereas the Spanish justified their use of force by recourse to the argument that their actions of colonisation and evangelisation were divinely ordained. Humanity and all of creation was conceived to be ultimately beholden to a transcendent, male, creator divinity, God the Father, whose designs were interpreted and mediated through an elite class of male ritual practitioners whose very activity served to legitimate the actions of the Spanish State’s colonisation of the peoples of the archipelago. The privileged status of the male ritual practitioners was ensured through State patronage and, where deemed necessary, enforced through the power of State military rule. Under Spanish colonial rule, political, military and spiritual authority, which in indigenous ‘Filipino’ society had been complementary to each other and largely differentiated along gender lines, became inextricably intertwined through the terms of the Patronato Real. In this milieu, the exercise of power, which was pre-eminently a male prerogative, was accomplished not primarily through mediation but through the exercise of external force. As a result, the authority and leadership of female indigenous religious practitioners threatened the assumed ‘natural’ nexus between male gender and the exercise and control of both religious and political power. Thus, indigenous female religious practitioners were constructed as deviant aberrations of the human condition, demonised as witches and especially targeted for persecution. Although there are many accounts indicating that some of these women resisted this persecution over an extended period, some were obviously destroyed, others persisted with the practice of their ritual activities in hiding, while still others joined religious and political movements of resistance under Filipino male leadership. Finally, it would seem that many women participated in public religious rituals, reframed in the new or modified external forms of their Spanish colonisers, all the while reinterpreting in part the
meaning of these rituals in continuity with their pre-Hispanic practices, through the presence and use of similar symbolic elements.

This is the broad stroke approach of the effects of Spanish colonisation in the Philippines. A general overview of what we can infer were the colonisers’ intentions from a reading of historical accounts mainly based on the writings of Spanish missionaries and government officials. However, throughout this thesis I have been arguing the necessity to refrain from such generalisation and to look instead at the particular and the actual. Although, it is difficult to do this in respect of the past, a reading of the ‘cracks in the parchment’ as Scott (1994) advocates, suggests that in actuality during the period of Spanish colonial rule women’s influence in the spiritual sphere may not have waned as much as is suggested in initial considerations of historical accounts. Certainly, my research, in the contemporary milieu, suggests that not all traces of the past have been obliterated from the present. We do not know the details of the tenor of the social relations between many of the individual missionaries and the people among whom they ministered, nor a great deal about differences in approach between the various missionary groups. Some, like the Dominicans, Schumacher (1984:254) claims, “rejected altogether the presence of armed men in their missionary expeditions, even for security purposes” and according to Aragón (1969:18), the Dominicans also questioned the legitimacy of Spanish rule over the archipelago. The total number of Spanish in the colony at any one time was relatively small and predominantly concentrated in Manila408 and nearby surrounds. Further, the Spanish policy of resettlement, aimed at reducing the scattered rural population into larger town settlements, appears to have been only partially successful with the result that large sectors of the population only had minimal contact with the Spanish friars. Moreover, there was even less contact from 1770 onwards with the expulsion of the Jesuits. In all probability the majority of the population continued, for the most part, with many of their pre-Hispanic ritual practices as well as participating in the newly introduced religious rites when the friars came on their occasional visits to their local chapels. Schumacher (1979) argues against this by claiming that the evangelisation practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

408 According to Doran (1993:270) from 1571 when “the Spanish established Manila as their administrative center…..until the early nineteenth century Spanish colonization of the Philippines focused heavily on Manila” but “the total Spanish population of Manila [only] numbered about 4,000” around the beginning of the third decade of the seventeenth century. Yet according to Scott (1994:8) it has been estimated that at the beginning of colonisation “there were between one and two million inhabitants in the archipelago”.

were particularly thorough and gave rise to the establishment of a completely new religious framework. Yet, other sections of Schumacher’s (1984:254) work suggest that change and continuity existed side by side, since he claims that

as time went on, missionaries learned to distinguish between superstitious practices, more cultural than religious, still preserved in rural areas even among committed Christians through the force of tradition, and truly pagan beliefs.

The new was embraced and practised together with elements of former ritual practices and incorporated into a wider overall body of cultural beliefs as must necessarily happen, even though Schumacher mistakenly implies that beliefs can be religious but not cultural. Religious praxis cannot stand in the abstract, it must be enacted in and through cultural forms, and Filipinos have embraced it in precisely this manner, and yet in much of the discussion of religious praxis in the Philippines, this appears to have been only partially appreciated. Further, I note that culture is a much more complex reality than earlier anthropological research portrayed, being less unitary, more fragmented and yet more resilient and flexible than previously thought. Even though centuries of colonisation have brought about marked social and religious change in the Philippines, the change has not been all one way. Filipinos have re-interpreted and reframed many dimensions of the beliefs and practices introduced during the colonial period to achieve continuity and harmony between the past and the present. This process of Filipinos’ re-interpreting and reframing religious beliefs and practices happened most intensively during the period of Spanish colonisation. In addition, during this time, the exercise of political and religious authority temporarily shifted from the gender egalitarian and complementary base on which it had rested in pre-Hispanic ‘Filipino’ society. In the public domain, it became concentrated, in the hands of male governors and friars, and frequently these two avenues of power coalesced in the single person of the male ritual practitioner. Yet, in everyday life, many vestiges remained of women’s role of mediating between human beings and the spiritual domain. With the passage of the colonial mantle from the Spanish to the Americans, a separation of the exercise of religious and political authority was introduced with the aim of lessening the power component of religious authority. However, contrary to intentions, this move did not particularly diminish the perceived importance of religious power in the Philippine milieu. Rather, the outcome was that religious and political leadership once again became more clearly differentiated, complementary entities but remained largely under male control in the public arena. A central policy of American colonial rule was the introduction of an extensive school
network. The widespread establishment of schools possibly contributed as much, as Spanish colonial rule did, to reconfiguring the balance, and the dynamic, in gender, religion and power relations. Again the outcomes from American colonial policy were mixed rather than being unidirectional. The lives of a greater number of females were more directly and intensively exposed to the colonialists’ ideology during this time than had been directly affected during the Spanish period. More women were drawn in from rural localities to an urban environment in order to enter the schooling system. At base the American colonialists subscribed to a patriarchal ideology so that, ironically in the name of liberation, education, as Sobritchea (1990) points out, channelled most women into narrower arenas of social and economic endeavours than those in which they had been engaged in prior times. Although direct religious education was not specifically a key element of the public education system, educational institutions became central points where secondary religious socialisation occurred. Frequently, in this setting, a nucleus of younger women was gathered under the mentorship of older women who introduced them to involvement in many local level religious activities and confraternities. Further, a widespread parallel Catholic education system soon developed, and in it, more direct secondary religious socialisation occurred, often under the direction of Filipino women religious. Thus, contrary to the viewpoint sometimes expressed, namely that the colonisation process dramatically and irrevocably changed indigenous cultural conceptions, I contend that ultimately centuries of colonisation and evangelisation under both Spanish and American rule only partially succeeded in reconfiguring the inter-relationship between the three crucial spheres of gender, power and religion. This became evident to me as I explored the family experiences and religious beliefs and practices of contemporary Barangay All Holies women who have lived through the era of transition from colonisation to post colonisation, and whose mothers and grandmothers lived during much of the period of American colonial rule.

Gross (1994:342) has argued that in the study of ‘today’s woman in world religions’ what is required is:

first and foremost, that the actual lives and thoughts of women be studied [as] cultural stereotypes and normative laws about women cannot, under any circumstances, be substituted for the actual information about what women, in fact do and think.

In view of this, I began my study, of contemporary women’s experiences of the nexus between gender, religion and power, by exploring women’s accounts of their family
relations. Here I found that contrary to common ‘typifications’, Philippine family relations are close and intimate, while also being strained and distant with marked variations in household composition and residential arrangements. Further, both men and women commonly exerted influence and power in Filipino families in ways quite different from one another. In particular, I found that women commonly perceived their power and influence in family relations to be connected to their ability to access and harness spiritual powers. Power derived from this source was believed to be able to subvert and confound notions of power derived from coercive force, material wealth and status. The women among whom I lived in Barangay All Holies were quite clear about the difficulties, which they, their mothers and their grandmothers had encountered, and the resultant suffering which they experienced. Yet their manner of reading these experiences was such, that they admired their mothers and grandmothers and wished to emulate in their own lives the same qualities of inner strength, which they saw displayed in the lives of their feminine forebears. These were women who were not seen to be confrontational and openly forceful or militant but not passive either. Rather, they were women who were seen to have mediated a path through contradictory and ambiguous family social relations by drawing on inner spiritual reserves, and their own resilient resourcefulness. I hold that in the Philippine milieu, where the spiritual realm permeates life at all levels, any analysis of women’s social positioning must also examine women’s agency in the spiritual domain. Women from Barangay All Holies communicated a religious worldview in which feminine personages, directly and unambiguously, were conceived to be the usual channels through which spiritual power was accessed and mediated to others. This religious worldview differs from that commonly held in Christianity, particularly Catholicism, where the reading of women’s spiritual worth has been much more ambivalent.

Women’s harmonising of family relations extends beyond the living to encompass the management of relations between the living and the dead. The rituals associated with death and grief are engendered spaces where women usually occupy the central foreground while men are more commonly located on the margins. This gender differentiated pattern of participation is also reflected, although less dramatically, in most families’ annual celebration of All Saints/All Souls Day, which is largely organised by mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, or daughters-in-law of the deceased. On an annual basis people from all socio-economic backgrounds, celebrate on All Saints/All Souls Day what is enacted more intensely during deaths and funerals. I
illustrate through my written account and through pictorial plates the manner in which All Saints/All Souls Day is actually celebrated in both public and private cemeteries in MM and women’s role in these celebrations. Although the details and social conditions are very different, the basic form and tenor of the celebrations are the same for the poor and the affluent. During life, Filipino families are becomingly increasingly dispersed around the globe, but in the strategic moments associated with death and mourning, social identity is reaffirmed by reassembling and connecting at a home ‘locale’ where the living and the deceased celebrate for a moment in time their unity, in a sharing of food and each other’s presence. All Saints/All Souls Day celebrations have an ascetic and festive dimension to them and play an instrumental role in consolidating kinship relations and in publicly affirming the wider social order. Even in the urban MM environment where the forces of social change are reputed to be greatest due to the prolonged and continuous presence of foreign influences, there are clear traces of continuity from the past to the present. Although many of the externals associated with death in the Philippines have changed, and ritual practices have been redressed in different forms, at a deeper level a resilient thread of continuity remains, especially with respect to women’s important mediating influence among the living and the dead, and in terms of the continued use of many common forms of ritual paraphernalia.

This use of symbolic ritual paraphernalia has played an important part in creating a space in which Filipinos have been able to receive the ritual practices of Catholicism introduced by the Spanish colonisers in ways able to be read in continuity with their basic indigenous spiritual beliefs. Religious symbols are inherently polysemic. Thus there are indications from historical records that much of the ritual paraphernalia of pre-Hispanic ‘Filipinos’, particularly that used by the female priestesses, was regarded negatively by the Spanish and targeted for destruction. However, the items with which the Spanish replaced them were, in many instances, not so dissimilar that these new ritual items were open to being interpreted by ‘Filipinos’ as serving a similar purpose to those articles, which had been destroyed. Thus Filipinos have appropriated the practices and symbols of Catholicism in ways which have allowed for a continuation and strengthening of their basic indigenous beliefs. Consequently in their widespread espousal of Catholicity, Filipinos have not cut off their cultural roots, as has sometimes been suggested, neither have they become divided psychotics with a ‘split-level’ spirituality. It also follows that the question of whether Filipinos are really Catholics or not is a misplaced question. It arises from a particular conception of religious belief and practice as being an entity insulated from cultural
expression, and from an undue emphasis on the religious belief component of religious expression being essentially cognitive assent to doctrinal formulations. Instead there is need to recognise that the totality of religious experience, which may be variously labelled, is unable to be contained in any particular doctrine or dogma. At best, these formulations are merely efforts to capture and communicate in the finite language of a particular historical period and cultural milieu, the effects and implications of the mysterious experience of the interface of human-spiritual interaction. Each ritual and symbolic articulation giving expression to this experience is valuable and contributes to understanding but is always less than the total reality of religious experience. It is similar to the readily acknowledged anthropological reality that the study of people operating in any one set of social relations contributes to our understanding of the human condition, without being the final word and precluding other dimensions of understanding being contributed from the study of other people operating under other sets of social relations.

In terms of continuity with Filipinos’ past religious beliefs and practices, I have argued that the role of religious practitioner in the Philippines still tends to be read as a womanly role. This occurs even though Filipinos have realigned, in part, their forms of religious practice around those formal rites, presided over by male ritual practitioners, as introduced by the Spanish Catholic colonisers. I have traced the lines of connection between women’s roles as religious practitioners in pre-Hispanic times and the roles being exercised by contemporary women in the local level, formal and informal, religious practices in Barangay All Holies neighbourhood communities. As part of this process, and in the spirit of the participatory nature of my research, I have included a pictorial record of these women’s local level religious practices together with a brief commentary in the accompanying captions and descriptors. I demonstrate that contemporary women are not marginalised from leadership roles in local level religious practices. Even in the context where the formalised religious rituals of Catholicism are under the primary leadership of male priests, women make vitally important contributions through their auxiliary and informal roles without which formal ritual enactments could not satisfactorily proceed. Indications are that Filipinas exercise their religious leadership through characteristically feminine modes of social relations in harmony with Filipino cultural notions of spiritual authority in ways that are quite differently directed to that form of religious leadership practiced by many of Catholicism’s male priests whose training, even until recently has largely remained under the control of foreign influences.
The resolution of the question of whether women’s local level religious leadership confers on them ‘real’ power or merely token power, hinges very much on starting conceptions of power. It depends on whether power derived from spiritual sources is ultimately to be regarded as marginal in today’s world and on whether what really counts as power is considered to be military might, economic wealth, brute force, and rational calculation and manipulation of resources. This has often been either the explicit or implicit contention of much Western discourse, and yet for the majority of the peoples of the world religious practices continue to be conceived as important avenues through which to access and harness spiritual resources believed to have power to very directly influence the course of their lives. As Bowen (1998b:10) noted in his edited work on *Religion in Culture and Society*:

Contrary to the predictions of religion’s demise issued in the 1950s and 1960s, religious commitment is one of the most important forces contributing to new social and political movements throughout the world, in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas….Religious practices are deeply interwoven with the daily and the not so daily lives of many people in the world…..The capability of religions to energize social and political movements must be traced back to these roots in social and cultural life.

The existence of one conception of power does not necessarily have to preclude the existence of the other. Power has many dimensions to it, some facets will more predominantly operate in certain circumstances rather than in others, but there is a fluidity in which both may be interactively operative. To suggest that force, coercion, military might and economic exploitation are not operative in the Philippine milieu would be to blatantly ignore reality. Yet, my argument is that these conceptions of power are not the only ones operative, and neither are they necessarily always those that prevail. On a dramatic level, the EDSA peoples’ power movements I and II are illustrative of this dynamic occurring every day, in multiple ways, in Filipino society on a smaller scale. In the EDSA events of 1986 the military might of armoured tanks are shown juxtaposed to lines of prayerful religious women (see Plate 54). However, contrary to what might be expected, the tanks did not annihilate these women. This turn of events, many Filipinos hold, is attributable to the effects of spiritual power. On behalf of the community at large, religious women accessed the power from spiritual resources needed to prevail in the face of the adversity with which they were faced. Women were conduits of the spiritual potency concentrated in, and mediated through the spiritual figure of Mary. In the EDSA events of 2001
the power of economic wealth, coercion and corruption that led to the suspension of the impeachment trial of President Estrada was pitted against the ire of the common populace for whom the EDSA Marian shrine became the ‘locale’ wherein they again focused and concentrated their opposition and ultimately displayed their power. And while the religious elements were not the only components of both these people power movements, they have been ‘read’ by Filipinos as major contributors to their empowerment. Significantly, in both 1986 and 2001 the male political leadership positions of Marcos and Estrada were transferred respectively to the females Aquino and Macapagal Arroyo. The corrective applied was to shift authority in the direction of the feminine gendered avenue of power when male political leadership failed by being directed more towards domination than the accomplishment and maintenance of harmony through a process of mediation, which Covar (1975b) claims are the hallmarks of all legitimate authority in the Philippines.

The Marian devotion, which figures prominently in the EDSA events, is a key component of Filipinas’ local level religious practices as I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis. The immense popular appeal of Marian devotions, which have been embraced widely and enthusiastically by Filipinos from the very earliest years of colonisation until the present, is connected with Filipinos’ belief in feminine personages being the primary conduits of access to spiritual agency. In Barangay All Holies, Marian devotion ranges from the intensely personal to the thoroughly communitarian, and life is lived out against the backdrop of a continuous round of regular religious practices in which Filipinos honour, intercede with and thank Mary; the year is punctuated by a cycle of communal Marian celebrations. Through these forms of devotion, women in particular, ensure that the source of divine power concentrated in Mary is mediated through them for the benefit of their personal lives as well as for the lives of their families and the wider community. Mary has become an especially important image of spiritual potency because of containing and reconciling within her person what seems at first contradictory and outside the normal boundaries of existence. Mary’s motherhood connects and unites her to women’s human experience while her virginity unites her to the spiritual realm beyond the human, beyond boundaries of the present and immediate to that sphere where opposites are harmonised. In Filipinos’ conceptions of Mary, emphasis on Mary’s virginity is not singled out in isolation from her many other exceptional and miraculous attributes. Mary’s potency means she is pure because none of the
extreme concentration of spiritual power she contains within herself has been dissipated. Mary is conceived of as having fertility and sexual potency, such great potency in this regard that she gives birth to Jesus, God from her being without needing recourse to the normal path of sexual relations with men. Much time, energy and money is spent in the beautification of Marian images. Through these processes of beautification, Marian statues are transformed from inanimate objects to regal persons possessing reservoirs of spiritual power able to be accessed through engaging in affective personal relations with Mary. Mary is honoured, not primarily as an individual whose life is to be imitated in great detail, but rather as one who is in harmony with the all omnipotent reality of the spirit world and thus a particularly effective mediator in harmonising relations between the human and spiritual spheres of life.

At the beginnings of this research, some feminists and social scientists intimated to me that if my study of Filipino ‘religiosity’, was set in the contemporary, predominantly Catholic urban milieu it would most likely be somewhat sterile. Their cursory opinion of the subject area was that I would most likely find that Filipino Catholic religious practice was inherently ‘foreign’ and under thoroughly male leadership even though the majority of those regularly participating in its religious observances would be women. As I have indicated here, contrary to these perceptions, I found that looking beneath the surface of the immediate and obvious signs of religious change revealed that, in practice, all is not as first appearances may suggest. In respect of the study of women and religion, Miles’ (1985:1-2) insight of over fifteen years ago remains particularly pertinent to this research, namely that:

> When women’s historical and contemporary experience is taken as the focus of study, not only do new stories come to light to be added to the store of humanistic learning already in hand, but our understanding of historical and contemporary societies itself changes. Neither religion nor culture in isolation from the other yields a basis for analysis of women’s experience. Seen together, they enable us to form educated hypothesis about women’s energies and activities.

While my research is a small contribution in this arena, much further work awaits exploration. I am particularly aware that many of the local level religious practices in which Filipinas engage, have similarities and parallels in other cultural contexts, which warrant in depth comparative study. For example, Marian devotion is widespread throughout the Catholic world but very especially in countries of Central
and South America, Southern Europe and the Caribbean: (cf. Rey, 1999; Crain, 1997; Rodriguez, 1994; Brinbaum, 1993; Crandon-Malamud, 1993; Breuner, 1992; Carroll, 1986; Orsi, 1985; Preston, 1982); similarly there is a considerable body of literature on various aspects of gender and mourning rituals that merits closer consideration in relation to Philippine practices: (cf. Turner, [1973] 1992; Bloch and Parry (eds.) 1982; Caraveli, 1986; Nutini, 1988; Bloch, 1992; Vásquez, 1993; Younoszai, 1993; Barley, [1995] 1997; Graeber, [1995] 1998; Howarth and Jupp (eds.) 1996; Davies, 1997); other material dealing with contemporary cultural expressions of Catholicism are of particular relevance: (cf. Christian, 1972; Grimes, 1976; Turner, 1978; Galilea, 1988; Mitchell, 1990; Taylor, 1995; Watanabe, 1998; Bowen, 1998a); and finally contemporary urban Filipinas’ experiences deserve consideration in relation to wider studies on aspects of gender, power and religion: (cf. Holden (ed.) 1983; Davis, 1984; Bynum et al. (eds.) 1986; Du Boulay, 1986; 1991; Sharma (ed.) 1987; 1993; 1994; Carmody, 1989; Jeffery and Basu (eds.) 1998). In my discussion and analysis I have at times made passing reference to various facets of these studies but unfortunately within the scope of this thesis it has not been possible to engage in any in-depth discussion of this particular literature. However, it appears from brief initial considerations of this material that it could form the basis for future fruitful comparative analysis in respect of the Philippine milieu.

It is evident from my research that religious beliefs and practices are an integral and important dimension of the underlying cultural matrix of ‘ordinary’ urban Catholic Filipinas’ lives. Although there are some differences in external forms of expression, similar religious beliefs and practices deeply permeate the lives of urban Filipinas from markedly different socio-economic backgrounds, not just the rural, or those from the poorer strata of society as has sometimes been suggested. Further what counts as religion for these women is very different from religion as it has been defined and codified by predominantly western educated male clerics, who “represent an atypical perspective in relation to most people of their cultures”, (Miles, 1985:8). There is evidence that concerted efforts, over centuries, to introduce Catholicism to the Philippines, in ways which devalue women’s contribution and spiritual influence have been largely unsuccessful, mainly because women have refused to surrender their agency in matters spiritual and their influence in local level leadership. A study of contemporary local level religious belief and practice indicates that while Filipinos’ embrace of Catholicism, has resulted in a substantial reconfiguration of their religious
beliefs and practices from those of pre-Hispanic times, nonetheless this reconfiguration has occurred in ways such that significant cultural continuity with the past has been retained.
Appendices
Appendix 1:

Life Story Conversation Lead Questions

To stimulate, or initiate conversation and recollections about the past.......

Could you speak about your experience of growing up?
Puwede bang sabihin mo yong mga naging karanasan mo noong kabataan mo?

Who else was with you in your house?
Sino pa ang mga kasama ninyo sa bahay?

What is it that you remember about your parents?
Ano ang natatandaan mo tungkol sa mga magulang mo?

What was of most importance in the life of your mother?
Ano ang pinakamahalaga sa buhay ng nanay mo?

What were the opportunities, or circumstances, of your schooling?
Ano ang mga pagkakataon, o pangyayari, sa iyong pag-aral?

To encourage conversation about the present.....

Why did you come here to live?
Bakit kayo tumiro dito?

Could you share a little about the experiences of your daily life or the ordinary circumstances in your life at present?
Puwede mong maibahagi ng bahagya ang iyong mga karanasan sa pangaraw-araw na buhay / o ang mga karaniwang pangyayari sa iyong buhay sa kasalukuyan?
What are the things you consider of most importance to you and what influences or serves to guide you in your decisions?

Ano ang itinuturing mo pinakamahalaga sa iyo at ano ang mga bagay na humikayat at nagsilbing gabay mo sa iyong mga pagpapasiya?

To enquire after the place of religion in the woman’s life if this area has not already been raised and directly addressed in the conversation thus far:

For you does religion have an effect on parts of your life?

If so, how?

If not, why?

Nakakaepekto ba ang relihiyon sa iyo saan parte / bahagi ng buhay mo?
Kung nakakaepekto, paano?
Kung hindi, bakit?

Have there been some times or moments in your life that you think or consider as being particularly religious moments?

Mayroon bang pagkakataon sa buhay ninyo na pinapalagay ninyo / binibilang ninyong mga banal na sandali

Would you say that you are religious, if yes, why?

if no, why not?

Masasabi mo ba na relihiyosa ka: kung oo, bakit?
Kung hindi, bakit hindi?

For you, what would you say being religious is?

Sa iyo, ano ba ang ibig sabihin ng pagiging relihiyosa?

During your life has there been a change for you in your understanding of, or the meaning of religion for you?

Noong panahon mo mayroon bang pagbabago ano ang pagkakaintindi / kahulugan ng relihiyon sa iyo?
Appendix 2:

Respondent Profile Information Base Data Sheet

RESPONDENT PROFILE INFORMATION
(TAGASAGOT SA PANGKALAHATANG KAALAMAN)

CODE:
(Tanda):
INTERVIEW DATE:
(Petsa ng Panayam):
LOCALITY:
(Lugar ng Tirahan):
VENUE:
(Lugar ng Panayam):
AGE:
(Edad):
CURRENT CIVIL STATUS (i.e. Single/ Married/ Widowed/ Divorced/ Separated/ Defacto):
(Esto Sibil: May Asawa/Dalaga pa/ Byuda/ Hiwalay/ Nagsasama lang):
YEARS MARRIED:
(Bilang ng taon na kayong kasal)
YEARS WIDOWED / DIVORCED / SEPARATED/ DEFACTO:
(Bilang ng taon na kayong Byuda/ Hiwalay/ Nagsasama lang):
HOME PROVINCE:
(Pinanggalingang Probinsya):
LENGTH TIME RESIDENT IN BARANGAY:
(Bilang ng taon na naninirahan sa Barangay)
PRIOR LOCALITY OF RESIDENCE:
(Lugar na Pinanggalingan Bago Lumipat sa Kasalukuyang Tirahan):
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ATTAINED:
(Pinakamataas na antas na pinag-aralan):
PRESENT OCCUPATION:
(Hanapbhay sa Kasalukuyan):
HUSBAND or PARTNER'S OCCUPATION:
(Hanapbhay ng Asawa o Kinakasama)
OCCUPATION OF PARENTS:
(Hanapbhay ng mga Magulang):
MOTHER: (Ina):
FATHER: (Ama):
NO. OF CHILDREN NATAL FAMILY: (Self and siblings):
(Bilang ng mga Kapatid):
Male: (Lalaki):
Female: (Babae):
Relative age to other siblings: (Pang ilan ka sa magkakapatid):
NO. OF OWN CHILDREN:
(Bilang ng mga Anak):
Sons: (Anak ng lalaki):
Daughters: (Anak ng babae):
Appendix 3:
Letter of Confirmation of Participant Consent

19 Faustino St.,
Isidora Hills Subdivision,
DILIMAN,
QUEZON CITY 1104
Metro Manila
PHILIPPINES
Tel./Fax 632 931 0607

{Date}

Dear {Respondent's name}

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research work I am conducting in connection with Deakin University in Australia and the University of the Philippines. The study is about women's lives today in the Philippines and the ways in which they may be different from or similar to that of women in the past: for example from that of your mother's or grandmother's, and also the similarities and differences that you see between your experiences and that of your daughters.

I am interested in your day to day life and what you feel is important, or means a lot to you. I would be appreciative if you could share something about what are the sorts of things that guide, or influence you in your choices, decisions and actions, now and in the past. What have been the effects, if any, of the opportunities for and circumstances of your schooling? Whether there are times in your life that you consider to have been of more importance than others and if so why? Why you have come to live in this area where you are, and how you came to be involved in groups that you may be active in or the type of work that you do? I am trying to get an overall picture about the experience of women's lives in the Philippines today and what it is that women themselves see as giving meaning to their lives so as to be able to write about this. It is completely up to you how much and what you choose to tell me. I will not be repeating to others what you say to me individually but rather what I am trying to do is to take your viewpoint into account as part of a whole in a study going on over the next two to three years. What you say to me about your life experience will remain totally confidential: your name will not be revealed to others and will not be used in the report write up. When the study is finished, a copy of the report will be available for consultation through the University of the Philippines. However I am also prepared to share with you from time to time, insights from the study as the research progresses if you so wish. You are welcome to make further contact with me anytime at the above address.

I would also be appreciative if it would be possible for me to participate sometimes in some of your activities, group meetings, community celebrations etc. so that I can get a better understanding of your life situation. I would welcome any invitations or opportunities to participate in your community life in this regard.

I am very much looking forward to our meeting on {Day} next, {Month} {Date} at {Time am/pm}, and hearing your views and experiences. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Mary T. Drum
Appendix 4:

Research on the Life Experiences of Women in the Philippines Today and Before

I am conducting research work in connection with Deakin University in Australia and the University of the Philippines. The study is about women's lives today in the Philippines and the ways in which they may be different from or similar to that of women in the past; for example, from that of your mother's or grandmother's, and also the similarities and differences that you see between your experiences and that of your daughters or other young women growing up today.

I am interested in your day to day life and what you feel is important, or means a lot to you. I would be appreciative if you could share something about what are the sorts of things that guide, or influence you in your choices, decisions and actions, now and in the past. What have been the effects, if any, of the opportunities for and circumstances of your schooling? Whether there are times in your life that you consider to have been of more importance than others and if so why? Why you have come to live in this area where you are, and how you came to be involved in groups that you may be active in or the type of work that you do? I am trying to get an overall picture about the experience of women's lives in the Philippines today and what it is that women themselves see as giving meaning to their lives so as to be able to write about this. It is completely up to you how much and what you choose to tell me. I will not be repeating to others what you say to me individually but rather what I am trying to do is to take your viewpoint into account as part of a whole in a study going on over the next two to three years. What you say to me about your life experience will remain totally confidential. Your name will not be revealed to others and will not be used in the report write up. When the study is finished, a copy of the report will be available for consultation through the University of the Philippines. However I am also prepared to share with you from time to time, insights from the study as the research progresses if you so wish. You are welcome to make further contact with me anytime at the address below.

I would also be appreciative if it would be possible for me to participate sometimes in some of your activities, group meetings, community celebrations etc. so that I can get a better understanding of your life situation? I would welcome any invitations or opportunities to participate in your community life in this regard.

Mary T. Drum
19 Faustino St.,
Isidora Hills Subdivision,
DILIMAN, Q.C., MM 1104
PHILIPPINES
Tel./Fax (632) 931 0607
Pananaliksik tungkol sa mga Buhay at Karanasan ng mga Kababaihan Ngayon at Noon sa Pilipinas

Gusto ko humingi ng tulong sa inyo sa aking pananaliksik na ginagawa ko sa Unibersidad ng Deakin sa Australya at sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas. Ako ay gumagawa ng pananaliksik tungkol sa pagkakaiba o pagkakatulad ng mga buhay at karanasan ng mga kababaihan ngayon sa kababaihan noon sa Pilipinas.

Gusto kong malaman kung nakahanda kayong makipagtalakayan sa akin ng tungkol sa inyong pangaraw-araw na pamumuhay. Interesado akong malaman kung ano ang itinuturing ninyong pinakamahalaga sa inyo at ano ang mga bagay na humikayat at nagsilbing gabay ninyo so inyong mga pagpapasiya. Gusto ko ring malaman kung ano ang kabutihan nagawa sa inyo ng inyong pag-aral; kung paano kayo napatira sa lugar na ito at napabilang sa mga pangkat na inyong kinasasapiin; at kung paano ninyo napuntahan ang uri ng inyong hanapbuhay.

Asahan ninyong hindi ko uulitin sa iba ang ano mang sasabihin ninyo sa akin at nasasainyo kung ano o alin sa mga itatanong ko sa inyo ang inyong sasagutin o kung ano ang mga ibig ninyong ibahagi. Sisikapin kong makuha ang kabuuang mga pamumuhay at karanasan ng mga kababaihan sa Pilipinas para masulat ko ang tungkol dito.

Gusto ko ring malaman kung gugustuhin ninyong makibahagi ako sa inyong mga gawain, pagpulong o mga pagdiriwang para mas maintindihan kong mabuti ang inyong pamuhay. Malugod kong tatanggapin ang inyong pagdalaw sa akin upang malayang matalakay ang inyong mga karanasan.

Nakahanda ako ng maibahagi so inyo ang magiging resulta ng pag-aaral na ito at maglalagay din ako ng mga kopya ng resulta sa U.P.

Mary T. Drum
19 Faustino St.
Isidora Hills Subdivision
Diliman, 1104, Q.C. MM.
PHILIPPINES
Tel/Fax: (632) 931 0607
Appendix 5:

Comparative Gravesite Costs

In the time frame 1995 – 1996 the cost of grave sites in ‘Himlayang Pilipino’ Memorial Park ranged from P33,000 to P42,000 (see Figure 5 overpage) for the simplest gravesite for below ground lawn cemetery interment depending on the particular location of the plot in the overall geography of the cemetery with corner plots positioned next to asphalt pathways being the most expensive. While the cost of mausoleums of the family estate kind (see Figure 5) ranged in price from P758,000 to P976,000, those of the memorial terrace kind (see Figures 4-5) cost in the order P1,363,000 to P1,636,000, with the most expensive of the Rajah Sulayman Suite type costing P3,008,000. These costs covered a perpetual maintenance plan but not the actual cost of internment, which was P7,800 for Mondays through to Fridays and P8,000 for Saturdays and Sundays, the latter being the days on which a great majority of funerals are held in the Philippines. There was an additional cost of P475 for the grave markers of the lawn gravesites and P410 for the grave markers for the above ground niches. These were just the cemetery costs: the cost of coffin and funeral parlour services were additional. Such costs are prohibitive for the great majority of Filipinos, especially the urban poor who were, at the time, earning an average monthly income of P3,000-P4,000. However, some who have family members working abroad are sometimes able, over an extended time frame, to pay off the purchase of a memorial plan for a parent or other family member. Most of the urban poor, though, bury their dead in public cemeteries like that of Bagbag where, over the same period, the cost of a simple single niche above ground burial site for five years was P4,500, for a larger niche made from darker stone the cost was P7,000, while a niche plus frame (see the lower right hand side of Plate 18) cost approximately P9,000. Below ground burial was markedly cheaper, being P700 for an adult and P300 for a child with an additional fee of P1,000 for a marker for a child’s grave and P1,500 for a marker for an adult’s grave. Caretakers were paid of the order P150 to P300 annually. The cost for exhumation and transfer to another cemetery was P1,000 and exhumation and transfer to the bone vaults at Bagbag (see Plates 19-20) was P2,500 for permanent interment with no additional annual fees.

409 At this time the exchange rate was 1AUD$ to approximately P18. With inflation and changes in exchange rates, costs cited here have since increased of the order 25%-30%.
Figure 5: Comparative costs of Gravesites in ‘Himlayang Pilipino’ Memorial Park

- **Family Estate (FE-16 J)**
  - Block dimensions and area: 4.88 m x 8.00 m = 39.04 sq. m.
  - Standard double above ground niche
  - Allows construction of mausoleums of standard designs and above ground bone crypts
  - With provisions for electrical installation
  - Interment Capacity
    - Above ground level – two (2) full interments
    - Regular level – six (6) full interments
    - Above ground bone – fifteen (15) bone crypts
  - N.B. With storage space

- **Memorial Terrace (MT-40)**
  - Block dimensions and area: 10.0 m x 10.0 m = 100.0 sq. m.
  - Standard double above ground niche
  - Allows construction of mausoleums of artistic designs
  - With provisions for comfort room, kitchenette and electrical installation
  - Interment Capacity
    - Above ground level – two (2) full interments
    - Regular level – twenty-two (22) full interments
    - Above ground bone – thirty (30) bone interments
  - Crypt
  - N.B. With storage space

- **Lawn Lot**
  - Double interment privilege (D. I. P.)
  - Measures 1 m x 2.44 m.
  - Interments are underground and markers are placed on the grass
  - Interment Capacity
    - Regular level – one (1) full interment or four (4) bone crypts
    - D. I. P. level – one (1) full interment or one (1) bone crypt

From P758,000 to P975,900

From P1,363,200 to P1,635,900

From P32,800 to P42,100
Appendix 6:

Certificate of Appreciation presented to *Prinsesita* Contestants

Certificate of Appreciation presented to *Prinsesito* Contestants

Certificate of Appreciation presented to Miss Immaculate Conception Contestants

Certificate of Appreciation presented to *Prinsesita, Prinsesito* and Miss Immaculate Conception Contestants’ Parents

Certificate of Appreciation presented to *Hermanos/Hermanas*
Santa Maria Birhen Chapel  
Bayan Road, Purok Village A-1 All Holies Barangay, Q.C.

awards this

Certificate of Appreciation

to

{Contestant's Name}

In appreciation of your wholehearted support as 1998 Priucesita Contestant  
and in recognition of your contribution to the cause of a better church and united community.

Given at the

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL  
Bayan Rd., Purok Village A-1,  
All Holies Barangay, Quezon City this 5th day of December 1998

Bro. Tito Tao  
SMBPC - Coordinator

Fr. Nino Santo  
AHP - Parish Priest
Santa Maria Birhen Chapel
Bayan Road, Purok Village A-1 All Holies Barangay, Q.C.

awards this

Certificate of Appreciation

to

{Contestant's Name}

In appreciation of your wholehearted support as
1998 Prinsesita Contestant
and in recognition of your contribution to the
cause of a better church and united community.

Given at the

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL
Bayan Rd., Purok Village A-1,
All Holies Barangay, Quezon City this 5th day of
December 1998

Bro. Tito Tao
SMBPC - Coordinator

Fr. Nino Santo
AHP - Parish Priest
Santa Maria Birhen Chapel
Bayan Road, Purok Village A-1 All Holies Barangay, Q.C.

awards this

Certificate of Appreciation

to

{Contestant's Name}

In appreciation of your wholehearted support as 1998 Miss Immaculate Conception Contestant and in recognition of your contribution to the cause of a better church and united community.

Given at the

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL
Bayan Rd., Purok Village A-1,
All Holies Barangay, Quezon City this 5th day of December 1998

Bro. Tito Tao  
SMBPC - Coordinator

Fr. Nino Santo  
AHP - Parish Priest
Santa Maria Birhen Chapel
Bayan Road, Purok Village A-1 All Holies Barangay, Q.C.

awards this

Certificate of Appreciation

to

{Contestant's Parents' Names}

In appreciation of your wholehearted support as parents of the Miss Immaculate Conception and Princesita/Princesito contestants, and in recognition of your contribution to the cause of a better church and united community.

Given at the

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL
Bayan Rd., Purok Village A-1,
All Holies Barangay, Cebu City this 5th day of December 1998

Bro. Tito Tao
SMBPC - Coordinator

Fr. Nino Santo
AHP - Parish Priest
Santa Maria Birhen Chapel  
Bayan Road, Purok Village A-1 All Holies Barangay, Q.C.

awards this

Certificate of Appreciation

to

{Hermano & Hermana's Names}

In appreciation of his/her wholehearted support and contribution as Hermano & Hermana to the cause of a better church.

Given at the

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL  
All Holies Barangay, Quezon City this 6th day of December 1998

Bro. Tito Tao  
SMBPC - Coordinator

Fr. Nino Santo  
AHP - Parish Priest

Bishop Teodoro J. Buhain, Jr.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Manila
Appendix 7:

Notes on Fiesta Program Copy and Priests’ Letters

Fiesta Program Booklet

Sample Letter to Priests re Fiesta Novena Masses

Sample Letter to Parish Priest re overall Fiesta Plans
Notes on Fiesta Program Copy and Priests’ Letters

The Fiesta program reproduced on the following pages is a copy of the actual fiesta program as celebrated by the Santa Maria Birhen chapel community in the 1998 Fiesta except that I have changed all the names other than my own, indicating the assignments I was given by the community in the fiesta related activities. I have given the Chapel pastoral council co-ordinator and the Parish Priest pseudonyms and changed the name of the Bishop who attended this particular year, although the Bishop named was in attendance for one of the Fiesta celebrations in which I participated at Santa Maria Birhen chapel. For all other people named in the program, I have adopted the following procedure: for all others who are named in the program I use the term of address Sis./Bro. or Mr./Mrs./Miss as used in the original program and, in general, employ the term Member to indicate those who belong to one or other of the religious associations or confraternities associated with the chapel which are referred to under the general category of mandated organizations. As a means of differentiating between individuals, I use the first letter of their family name and a numeral for each different person. Thus if the same person participated in the fiesta in several different capacities, their name will appear in the program several times, as for instance, Sis. Member S2 who was one of the co-ordinators of the sponsors for the Monday evening novena Mass, as well as being one of those on the fiesta committee having responsibility for decorations, altar and physical arrangements, also for worship activities, in addition to also being overall street co-ordinator representative on the chapel pastoral council; or, in the case of Sis. Member T4 who had responsibility for finance and fellowship in the fiesta committee and was also co-chairperson of the fiesta subcommittee on food as well as being, together with her husband, advisor to the chapel pastoral council, (She and her husband were among the founding patrons of the chapel, having donated financial resources for its establishment, and continue to provide ongoing patronage as is indicated by their involvement as hermana/hermano.); and further, Bro. Member T1 who was one of the co-ordinators of the sponsors for the opening novena Mass. Where those named in the program have official roles in the community, then they are named accordingly, e.g. Kgd. (Kagawad) Barangay Officer meaning a member of the local Barangay civil polity; or guest priest for those priests who assist in officiating at Masses in All Holies Parish but are not resident at this particular chapel, although in some cases, they are resident at one of the other chapels but usually not engaged fulltime in ministry in the All Holies Parish; or parents for those holding a role specifically in relation to being the parent of one of the contestants. The Fiesta celebration was an event involving the total neighbourhood community and thus recognition is given in the program to local civil associations operating in the
neighbourhood through acknowledging representatives from each of these organizations with whom the fiesta committee members liaised in their planning and preparation. Thus after members of the overall Fiesta and subcommittees are named, the ‘Purok’ (neighbourhood) village co-ordinators and Barangay ‘Purok’ leaders are named as well as the president of the ‘Samahan ng Santa Maria Birhen mga Kapitbahay’ [SSMBKB], (Santa Maria Birhen Neighbours Association) and a representative of other Non-Government Organizations (NGO), plus the ‘Samahan ng Mini Talipapa’ (Association of neighbourhood Mini Fish Market) and from the ‘Purok’ Settler’s Association, representing members of families of those who served during World War II and who have been given preferential residence rights to some of the government land in the locality. The involvement of representatives from all these groups in the celebrations and the sports activities and an annual mass Baptismal ceremony, (see the listed schedule of fiesta activities given in the fiesta booklet) all contribute to consolidating and marking out community identity as I indicated in chapter seven. However, I have not entered into further discussion of these facets of the celebration because my focus has been on the Marian dimensions of the celebration and on feminine paths to prestige through beautiful self presentation.

The program was produced mainly in English, as given here, with the exception of the ‘Tema ng Nobena’ (novena theme), based on the Marian “Hail Mary” prayer, (as given in Tagalog on the inside front cover of the fiesta program booklet), which I was asked to prepare in consultation with committee members, so that a copy of this could be delivered to each of the priests officiating at the novena Masses together with a copy of the novena Masses schedule and an official invitation letter, a copy of which is attached as an addendum to the fiesta program booklet, plus a copy also of the letter sent by the chapel pastoral council to the Parish Priest, announcing their fiesta plans and soliciting his support and co-operation. The initiative for these activities comes from the community members, not from the Parish Priest. Further, the significance of these sample letters is that, although these have gone out under the signature of the chapel pastoral council co-ordinator, who is in this instance a male, the letters have actually been drafted, prepared and mainly delivered by women executive members of Santa Maria Birhen chapel pastoral council. I have also attached in this addendum an English translation of the ‘Tema Ng Nobena’, although the English version was not part of the fiesta booklet. Also included in the addendum is an English translation of the hymn on the back page of the booklet which was used throughout the novena Masses, and at the Fiesta Day Mass and the Marian Fiesta procession.
Fiesta Program Booklet

Santa Maria Birchen Chapel

Fiesta December 5th-8th 1998
Aba, Ginoong Maria!

Napupuno ka ng grasya,

Ang Panginoong Diyos ay sumasaiyo,

Bukod kang pinagpala sa babaing lahat,

At pinagpala naman ang iyong Anak na si Jesus.

Santa Maria,

Ina ng Diyos,

Ipanalangin mo kaming makasalanan,

Ngayon at kung kami’y mamamatay. Amen.
FIESTA DONORS and PATRONS 1998
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR A10 & A11
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR B6 & B7
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR M10 & M11
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR M12 & M13
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR M14 & M15
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR P3 & P4
MR. & MRS. PATRON/DONOR R4 & R5

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL
AREA 1, PUROK VILLAGE, ALL HOLIES PARISH
SCHEDULE OF FIESTA ACTIVITIES

Nine Days Novena Masses
Nov. 27 - Dec. 5, 1998 at 8:00 PM excepting Sunday November 29th at 6.00 PM

Princesita/Prinesito/Miss Immaculate Conception Coronation Ceremonies
Saturday December 5, 1998 at 3:30 P.M.

Concelebrated Fiesta Mass with Most Rev. Bishop Buhain and Fr. Nino Santo and co-priests All Holies Parish, Quezon City
Sunday Dec. 6, 1998 at 9:00 A.M.

Refreshments for Celebrants and Hermano/Hermana and Invited Guests
Immediately following Mass

Baptism to be officiated by Fr. Nino Santo- Parish Priest
Dec. 6, 1998 at 11:00 A.M.

Sports as organized by SSMBKB, Civic organisations & Bgy. Purok Leaders
8:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Crowning of Patroness Statue by Miss Immaculate Conception and Motorcade of Miss Immaculate Conception and Prinesita/Prinesito'98 Contestants
December 6, 1998 at 2:00 PM.

Evening Mass Celebration to be officiated by Guest Priest 2
December 6, 1998 at 6:00 PM.

Marian Procession
December 8, 1998 at 6:00 PM.

Evening Mass Celebration officiated by Guest Priest 6
December 8, 1998 at 8.00 PM
TEMA NG NOBENA

Aba, Ginoong Maria!

Ang anghel Gabriel, na sugo ng Diyos ay bumati kay Maria ng “Aba Ginoong Maria!” At si Maria, na isang babae ay may mababang na tabi na taga Nazareth ay nagulat dahil hindi niya inaasahan ang ganoong pag-bati. Ito ay kaniyang isinapuso. Ako ngang ibig ipabatid ng pagtawag sa kanya na nasa tabi ng umiibig. Sa pamamagitan niya, ang pag-ibig ng Diyos ay sinagot ni Ginoong Maria!

Ang anghel Gabriel, na sugo ng Diyos ay bumati kay Maria ng “Aba Ginoong Maria!” At si Maria, na isang babaeng may mababang loob na taga Nazareth ay nagulat dahil hindi niyang sinagot ang kaniyang sarili ngayon, “Kung kayo'y magibigan, makikilala ang Diyos sa ating boses!” (Jn.13:35).

Santa Maria.

Si Maria ay banal dahil siya ay kasama sa kabalan ng Diyos. Dakila ang mga pangyayari na nang si Jesus ay isinagot. Ang mga anghel ay nag-asenso, ang mga pastol ng kaniyang pinagpakita sa kaniyang gawain (43:1) “Huwa ang katauhan ng Diyos!”

At pinapala naman ang iyong Anak na si Jesus. Ang pananalig ni Maria ay nagpabatid ng tinawag ni Maria ng Diyos ay “Napapalad ng lahat, tayo ay may kapangyarihan!” (Lu.1:48-49).

Ina ng Diwos

Ang pinsan ni Mariang si Elizabeth ay nagwikan daw: “Sino ako upang dalawin ng isang pinagpala kay Maria!” (Lu.1:43). Si Maria ay banal at pinapalagay dahil “nang dumating ang kaniyang kalusugan, sumasangkot ang mga pangyayari ng kaniyang gawain!” (Lu.1:50).

Isang ina ng diyos na may mapagmahal na katauhan. Ayon kay Maria, ang iyong sinabi, mangyari sa akin ang iyong sinabi”, (Lu.1:38). Paano ko tinutugon ang mga pangako ng Diyos sa akin?
SCHEDULE OF FIESTA NOVENA MASSES
November 27th - Dec 5th

Friday November 27th:     Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 1
8.00 pm.
Co-ordinators:     Bro. Tito Tao and Bro. Member T1
Sponsors:     MINISTRY OF THE EUCHARIST
Saturday November 28th:    Celebrant:     FR. NINO SANTO
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Sis. Member T2 and Sis. Member C1
Sponsors:     MINISTRY OF THE WORD
Sunday November 29th:     Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 2
6.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Bro. Member S1 and Bro Member P1
Sponsors:     COUPLES FOR CHRIST
Monday November 30th:     Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 3
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Sis. Member S2 and Sis. Member M1
Sponsors:     STREET CO-ORDINATORS
Tuesday December 1st:   Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 4
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Bro. Member M3 and Barangay Captain
Sponsors:     CURSILLO and BARANGAY
Wednesday December 2nd:  Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 1
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Sis. Member A1 and Bro. Member L1
Sponsors:     LEGION OF MARY and SMBKB
Thursday December 3rd:   Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 5
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Sis. Member M1 and Bro. Member R1
Sponsors:     APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER & CHARISMATICS
Friday December 4th:     Celebrant:     GUEST PRIEST 1
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Sr. Mary Drum and Sis. Member H1
Sponsors:     MSC SISTERS and SMBC WORKERS
Saturday December 5th:    Celebrant:     FR. NINO SANTO
8.00 pm
Co-ordinators:     Pastoral Council
Sponsors:     ALL MANDATED ORGANISATIONS

WINNERS OF PRINSESITA 1998

PRINSESITA '98 - CONTESTANT C11
FIRST RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT B8
SECOND RUNNER UP    - CONTESTANT A12
THIRD RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT L8
FOURTH RUNNER UP    - CONTESTANT F3
FIFTH RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT S7
SIXTH RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT T6
SEVENTH RUNNER UP   - CONTESTANT A13
EIGHTH RUNNER UP    - CONTESTANT I1
NINTH RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT V1

REIGNING 1997 PRINSESITA - CONTESTANT M16

WINNERS OF PRINSESITO 1998

PRINSESITO '98  - CONTESTANT F4
FIRST RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT Q1
SECOND RUNNER UP    - CONTESTANT G4 JR.
THIRD RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT P5
FOURTH RUNNER UP    - CONTESTANT G5
FIFTH RUNNER UP     - CONTESTANT A14

REIGNING 1997 PRINSESITO - CONTESTANT S8
WINNERS OF MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 1998

MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 1998  CONTESTANT B9

FIRST RUNNER UP  -  CONTESTANT M17
SECOND RUNNER UP  -  CONTESTANT S9
THIRD RUNNER UP  -  CONTESTANT L9
FOURTH RUNNER UP  -  CONTESTANT H4

REIGNING 1997 MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION-CONTESTANT D7

CORONATION DAY ‘98
3.30 PM
Program of Activities
PRINSESITO & PRINSESITA ‘98
and
MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ‘98

CEREMONY HOSTESS  Sis. Member E1
Opening Prayer  Bro. Member T1
National Anthem  Miss Entertainer D3
Opening Remarks  Bro. Tito Tao
Distribution of Parents’ Certificates of Appreciation  MSC Sisters Member J1

Awarding Rites
PRINSESITO & PRINSESITA 1998

Presentation of Princesito & Princesita Candidates  Sis. Member T2
Sis. Member R2

Presentation of Talents by Princesito and Princesita Contestants

PRINSESITO 98
Presentation of certificates to fifth and fourth RUNNER UP and pinning of SASHES by Contestants’ Parents

Fifth Runner Up  by  Mr. & Mrs. Parents A14
Fourth Runner Up  by  Mr. & Mrs. Parents G5

Third Runner Up
Sash  Mr. & Mrs. Parents P5
Trophy  Sr. Mary Drum

Second Runner Up
Sash  Mr. & Mrs. Parents G4
Trophy  Sis. Member G1

First Runner Up
Sash  Mr. & Mrs. Parents Q1
Trophy  MSC Sr. Member W1

PRINSESITO 1998
Sash  Mr. & Mrs. Parents F4
Trophy  Bro. Member D1

Surprise Entertainment Numbers

Farewell Address  CONTESTANT S8  Princesito 1997
Inspirational Address  Kgd. Barangay Officer B1
Intermission Number  Miss Entertainer D3
**PRINSESITA 98**

Presentation of certificates to ninth to fourth RUNNER UP and pinning of SASHES by Contestants’ Parents

Ninth Runner Up by Mr. & Mrs. Parents V1
Eighth Runner Up by Mr. & Mrs. Parents I1
Seventh Runner Up by Mr. & Mrs. Parents A13
Sixth Runner Up by Mr. & Mrs. Parents T6
Fifth Runner Up by Mr. & Mrs. Parents S7
Fourth Runner Up by Mr. & Mrs. Parents F3

Inspirational Address

Third Runner Up
Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents L8
Trophy Sis. Member C2

Second Runner Up
Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents A12
Trophy Kgd. Barangay Officer B1

First Runner Up
Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents B8
Trophy Kgd. Barangay Officer B2

**PRINSESITA 1998**

Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents C11
Trophy Kgd. Barangay Officer E1

**Farewell Address**

CONTESTANT M16 Prinsesita 1997

**Intermission Number**

Sis. Entertainer Member O1

**Special Award for Prinsesito & Prinsesita Talent**

Presented by Bro. Entertainer Member T5
Sis. Entertainer Member O1

**Presentation of Miss Immaculate Conception Candidates by Sis. Member G1**

**Awarding Rites**

**MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 1998**

Presentation of certificate to fourth RUNNER UP and pinning of SASH by Contestant’s Parents:

Mr. & Mrs. Parents H4

**Inspirational Address**

Kgd. Barangay Officer B2

Third Runner Up
Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents L9
Trophy Sis. Member M1

Second Runner Up
Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents S9
Trophy Bro. Tito Tao

First Runner Up
Sash Mr. & Mrs. Parents M17
Trophy Bro. Member T1

**Special Award for Miss Immaculate Talent Presented by Sis. Member G1**

**Intermission Number**

Sis. Entertainer Member E1
Bro. Entertainer Member D4

**Inspirational Address**

Barangay Captain

**MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

Sash Mrs. Parent B9
Trophy Barangay Captain & Wife

**Farewell Address**

CONTESTANT D1 Reigning Miss Immaculate Conception 1997

**Acknowledgements**

Bro. Member M4

**Closing Prayer**

Sis. Member B1
FIESTA COMMITTEE 1998

Overall Coordinator:
  Bro. Tito Tao

Asst. Coordinator:
  Bro. Member T1

Decorations, Stage Management, Altar, Physical Arrangements:
  Bro. Member P2 and Bro. Member M4
  Sis. Member S2 and Street Co-ordinators
  Sis. Member L2 and Apostleship of Prayer
  Bro. Member A2 and Bro. Member C3
  Bro. Member G2 and Bro. Member S3

Finance/Fellowship:
  Sis. Member D2 / Sis. Member T4
  Sis. Member G1, Legion of Mary
  Apostleship of Prayers
  Heads of Chapel Mandated Organizations

Worship:
  Sis. Member B1, Sis. Member T2
  Sis. Member M6 Sis. Member S2
  Legion of Mary, Apostleship of Prayer

Procession:
  Street Co-ordinators
  Legion of Mary, Apostleship of Prayer

MISS IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND
PRINSESITA/PRINSESITO’98 COMMITTEE

Chairperson:
  Sis. Member C2

Board of Canvassing:
  Sis. Member G1

Members:
  Sis. Member D2
  Sis. Mary Drum

HERMANO/HERMANA and SPONSORS/DONORS/PATRONS
‘98 COMMITTEE

Chairman:
  Bro. Member A2

Co-Chairpersons:
  Sis. Member T2
  Sis. Member B1

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Chairperson:
  Sis. Member M6

Co-Chairpersons:
  Sis. Member E1
  Bro. Member D4

COMMITTEE ON PARADE

Chairman:
  Bro. Member S3

COMMITTEE ON FOOD

Co-Chairpersons:
  Sis. Member T4/ Sis. Member C1

Members:
  Sis. Member D2/ Sis. Member D5
  Sis. Member M1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To: All Parishioners of Santa Maria Birhen Chapel

On behalf of the SMBC Pastoral Council I would like to express our gratitude for the continuous support that you have given to make our yearly activities a success. Because we have listened to God’s call to a spirit of unity in our community we have become one and proved that it is possible for good things to happen if we will only walk together with God. He was always at our side to help us out, especially in honoring and remembering his mother, Mama Mary during this Fiesta Celebration. We hope in the years to come we will have the same acceptance and support in all our activities, not only during Fiesta but all year round.

In the name of the SMBC Pastoral Council and other mandated organizations I would like also to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the wonderful and successful result of these fiesta activities. May we have many fruitful years to live and God’s blessing be always upon us as brothers and sisters of his son Jesus Christ.

In Mary’s Fiat,

Bro. Tito Tao

SMBC Pastoral Council Co-ordinator

CHAPEL’S MANDATED ORGANIZATIONS

MINISTRY OF THE WORD Mrs. Member B1
MINISTRY OF THE EUCHARIST Mr. Member L3
LEGION OF MARY Mrs. Member A1
APOTLESHIP OF PRAYER Mrs. Member M1

CURSILLO GROUP Mr. Member M3
CHARISMATIC GROUP Mr. Member R1
COUPLES FOR CHRIST Mr. Member S1, Snr.
MUSIC MINISTRY Mr. Member T5 and Mr. Member S1
YOUTH AFFAIRS Miss Member M7
MSC SISTERS Sis. Mary Drum

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL PASTORAL COUNCIL

Coordinator : Bro. Tito Tao
Secretary : Sis. Member T2 and Sis. Member R3
Auditor : Bro. Member S1
Over-all-Street Coordinator : Sis. Member S2
Worship: Sis. Member M5
  a). Ministry of the Word (MOW) - Sis. Member B1
  b). Ministry of the Eucharist (MOE) - Bro. Member L3
  c). Music Ministry (M.M.) - Bro. Member T5
  d). Knights of the Altar (K of A) - Bro. Member L4
  e). Altar Services (A.S.) Sis. Member A3
      Sis. Member H1
      Sis. Member D5

Education : Sis. Member C2 and Sis. Member C4
Services/P.R.O. : Bro. Member S3
Temporalities/Treasurer : Sis. Member D2 and Sis. Member M6
Information : Bro. Member A2
Youth : Sis. Member M7
Advisers : Bro. Member T1, Bro. Member M4, Sis. Member T4
           Bro. Member L4, Sis. Member N1
A. PUROK VILLAGE CO-ORDINATORS
   Co-ordinator J1
   Co-ordinator C1
   Co-ordinator M1

B. PRESIDENT SSMBKB
   (Samahan ng Santa Maria Birhen Mga Kapitbahay)
   Member L1

C. BARANGAY PUROK AREA LEADERS
   Purok 1  Leader Name  Purok 2  Leader Name
   Purok 3  Leader Name  Purok 4  Leader Name
   Purok 5  Leader Name  Purok 6  Leader Name
   Purok 7  Leader Name  Purok 8  Leader Name
   Purok 9  Leader Name  Purok 10 Leader Name
   Purok 11 Leader Name  Purok 12 Leader Name
   Purok 13 Leader Name  Purok 14 Leader Name

D. NGO
   NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE

E. SAMAHAN NG MINI TALIPAPA
   NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE

F. PUROK SETTLER’S ASSOCIATION
   NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE

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Ang Puso Ko’y Nagpupuri

Koro:
   Ang puso ko’y nagpupuri, nagpupuri sa Panginoon.
   Nagagalak ang aking espiritu, sa ‘king Tagapagligtas.

1. Sapagkat nilingap Niya, kababaan ng Kanyang alipin.
   Mapalad ang pangalan ko sa lahat ng mga bansa.
   (koro)

2. Sapagkat gumawa ang Poon ng mga dakilang bagay;
   Banal sa lupa’t langit ang pangalan ng Panginoon.
   (koro)

3. Luwalhati sa Ama, sa Anak at sa ‘Spiritu Santo,
   Kapara noong unang-una, ngayon at magpakailanman.
   (koro)
Addendum to Fiesta Program booklet:

**NOVENA THEME**

**Hail Mary!**

The angel Gabriel, sent by God, greets Mary, “Hail Mary!” And Mary, a humble young woman of Nazareth is taken by surprise, she is not expecting such a greeting, but her attention is captured to ponder in her heart, what message can possibly be following these initial words calling her to attentiveness and openness? Am I attentive to those sent by God to me, calling me by name? Like Mary, can we trust God’s word to us as promised in the prophet Isaiah, (43:1), “Do not be afraid - I will save you. I have called you by name - you are mine.”

**Full of Grace**

The angel Gabriel’s message to Mary continues. Mary is reassured that there is no need for fear because God has been gracious to her, (Lk.1:30). Mary is full of the grace of God, she has accepted fully the gift of life offered to her by God. In her we see the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to all of us, “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full”, (Jn. 10:10). Mary has co-operated with the fullness of God’s love. In her we see the fullness of God’s grace. In baptism we too have been offered the fullness of God’s grace, are we open to this gift of God’s grace and love in our lives, are we attentive to God’s word and graciousness in our lives?

**The Lord is with You.**

The angel Gabriel brings tidings of peace and reassures Mary of God’s loving presence with her, “Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!”, (Lk. 1:28). In and through Mary we are given the gift of Emmanuel, “God-with-us”. God desires to be with us, to live through us today in our world. We are called to bring tidings of peace to others through the presence of God with us. In faith Mary trusted in God’s power at work in her, we too are called to believe in “God’s love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit”, (Rom.5:5).

**Blessed are You among Women**

Mary is blessed in her faith and trust, she leads the way for us in her courage, to believe in God’s promises to her, even though she and others cannot understand God’s ways. She risks misunderstanding, judgment and rejection from others. She gives us an example in her life of how God can work in our midst, “There is nothing that God cannot do”, (Lk.1:37). Mary responded wholeheartedly and unconditionally to God’s promise to her, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it happen to me as you have said”, (Lk.1:38). How am I responding to God’s promises to me?

And Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Mary’s faith bears fruit. Through her God’s love is revealed in Jesus, born of Mary. Jesus is Word of God, made flesh who comes to us through Mary’s womb. Through our Jesus also seeks to be revealed today, “if you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples”, (Jn.13:35).

**Holy Mary.**

Mary is holy, because she shares in the Holiness of God. Wondrous things happen at Jesus’ birth, choirs of angels sing, shepherds and kings visit the infant Jesus, Simeon and Anna rejoice that Israel’s savior has come. Mary sees all these happenings, “she remembers them in her heart and ponders them deeply”, (Lk. 2:19, 51) acknowledging God’s hand at work, “from now on all people will call me blessed because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me. His name is Holy”, (Lk.1:48-49). We too are called to a share in God’s holiness.

**Mother of God**

Mary’s cousin Elizabeth exclaimed, “Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother comes to visit me?(Lk.1:43) Mary is holy and blessed because “when the right time finally came God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother”, (Gal.4:4) Mary, promised in marriage to Joseph of the line of David, (Mt.1:18, 20). Mary holds Jesus in her care, and at the last Jesus, through the apostle John, gives Mary to us as our mother, “She is your mother”, (Jn.19:27). Mama Mary continues her caring role in our lives.

**Pray for us sinners**

In her loving care, Mary is attentive to the needs of others. After the angel Gabriel’s visit Mary hurries off to visit and assist her elderly cousin. Mary notices there is no wine at the wedding feast of Cana and beseeches her Son’s help. Mary waits in prayer with the frightened disciples after Jesus’ ascension. Mary remains attentive to our needs, seeking for us the help we need in our lives.

**Now and at the hour of our death.**

“Mary is standing close to Jesus’, cross”, (Jn.19:25) at the time of his death. She cares, she lives her faith and trust to the end. We can count on her standing with us as we face death. May her example strengthen us to remain with Jesus all our days, to stand firm in faith and trust in the face of pain and suffering.
My Heart Gives Praise

Chorus:
My heart praises, praises the Lord.
My spirit rejoices in my Savior.

1. Because He/She has remembered me, His/Her lowly servant.
   People from all countries will call me happy.
   (chorus)

2. Because of the great things the Lord has done;
   Holy is the Lord’s name on earth and in heaven.
   (chorus)

3. Glory to the Father, to the Child (Son) and to the Holy Spirit,
   As it was in the beginning, is now and forever.
   (chorus)

Ang Puso Ko’y Nagpupuri

Koro:
Ang puso ko’y nagpupuri, nagpupuri sa Panginoon.
Nagagalak ang aking espiritu, sa ‘king Tagapagligtas.

1. Sapagkat nilingap Niya, kababaan ng Kanyang alipin.
   Mapalad ang pangalan ko sa lahat ng mga bansa.
   (koro)

2. Sapagkat gumawa ang Poon ng mga dakilang bagay;
   Banal sa lupa’t langit ang pangalan ng Panginoon.
   (koro)

3. Luwalhati sa Ama, sa Anak at sa ‘Spiritu Santo,
   Kapara noong unang-una, ngayon at magpakailanman.
   (koro)
November 3, 1998

REV. FR. GUEST PRIEST 3
Priest-in-Charge
Squatter Areas 5-8 Chapels
All Holies Parish
Quezon City

Dear Fr. J:

Greetings of Love and Peace!

We will celebrate the feast of our Patroness - IMMACULATE CONCEPTION on December 6, 1998, in which we have planned and organized our programs for this fiesta celebration. We will have a nine (9) days novena in honor of our Patroness which will start on November 27, 1998. Since we informed you beforehand over the phone and you have accepted our invitation, we would like to give you the complete schedule and the themes that will help you facilitate your homily.

In line with this celebration we prepared themes for each day which we invite you to use as a base for your homily and thoughts for the day. All the themes are in relation to the “AVE MARIA” of Mama Mary, since she is our Patroness.

Attached are the list of themes assigned for each day and the introductory thoughts which you may use as a guide to your homily if you so wish. Since you are assigned on the fourth day of the novena, Monday November 30th, 1998, the Day 4 theme will be the one relevant for your homily preparation. The mass will be at 8:00PM for your convenience.

We hope to see you on the said date and thank you for accepting our invitation. May God bless you always and we pray for you too.

In Mary’s Fiat,

BRO. TITO TAO
SMBC Pastoral Council Coordinator

Noted by:
REV. FR. NINO SANTO
Parish Priest of All Holies, Quezon City
Sample Letter to Parish Priest re Overall Fiesta Plans

SANTA MARIA BIRHEN CHAPEL
AREA 1 BAYAN RD. PUROK VILLAGE
ALL HOLIES, QUEZON CITY
TEL. NO. 123-45-67

September 27, 1998

FR. NINO SANTO
Parish Priest
All Holies Parish
Quezon City

Dear Fr. Nino:

We will celebrate the forthcoming feast of our Patroness - Immaculate Conception on December 6, 1998.

In this regard, we will have various activities and fund raising which, in a spirit of respect as a sub-chapel of the All Holies Parish, we wish to inform you about and make request for your approval.

The following is our program of activities and fund raising for your information and approval:

A) Activities

1. Nine Days Novena Masses starting Nov. 27, 1998 with different invited guest priests (We would like you to be one of the celebrants for these Novena Masses).
2. Coronation of Winners of Miss Immaculate Conception and Prinsesita/Prinsesito 1998 December 5, 1998 at 3:30 P.M.
4. Refreshments for Celebrants and Hermano/Hermana and Invited Guests
5. Baptism - December 6, 1998 at 11:00 AM
6. Crowning of Patroness statue by Miss Immaculate Conception and Motorcade of Miss Immaculate Conception and Prinsesita/Prinsesito ’98 Contestants
7. Marian Feastday Procession December 8, 1998 at 6:00 PM

B). Fund Raising

1. Search for Miss Immaculate Conception and Prinsesita/Prinsesito 1998.
2. Solicitations for Mass Sponsors and Hermanos/Hermanas and Donors for the fiesta.

The proceeds will be used in further financing of our Multipurpose Hall building. We know that you have a heart for us in making all our activities and fund raising a success.

We are also inviting you to be one of the concelebrants of the Holy Mass with Bishop Teodoro Buhain on the said date at 9:00 A.M., Sunday. Your presence is of great importance to us.

We hope for your kind consideration and approval on the above request. May God bless you with good health and guide you in all your undertakings.

In Mary’s Fiat,

BRO. TITO TAO
SMBC Pastoral Council Coordinator
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