BRILL

Asian Journal of Social Science 37 (2009) 892–917

Asian Journal of Social Science
brill.nl/ajss

Negotiating Charisma: The Social Dimension of Philippine Crucifixion Rituals

Peter J. Bräunlein
University of Bremen

Abstract
The Philippines are the only predominantly Christian nation in Southeast Asia. The tradition of the passion of Christ is supposed to be the centre of Philippine religiousness and the fascination with the suffering, battered and dead Christ can be regarded as a characteristic feature of Philippine lowland society. The most spectacular expressions of the so-called Philippine 'Calvary Catholicism' are flagellation and crucifixion. In 1996–1998, the author studied Philippine passion rituals in the village of Kapitangan. During the Holy Week, thousands of people mostly from Manila visit the church and observe the spectacle of ritual crucifixions on Good Friday in the churchyard. In Kapitangan, mostly women are nailed to the cross, which is, however, is not an act of volition. They act under directions 'from above', possessed by Sto. Niño or Jesus Nazareno. All of them are (faith-)healers. All of them are founders of a religious movement. In this article, the author uses Ernst Troeltsch's typology — church, sect, mysticism — as a tool to raise questions about ritual crucifixion as a focus of community and collective identity formation, both on the local and national level of society. Troeltsch's typology sheds light on the delicate relation between the Philippine 'official' church and practices of the so-called 'folk-Catholicism'. It illuminates motives and aims of the healers, who are called 'new mystics' by some scholars, and the sense of belonging of their followers. It also reveals discourses of consent and dissent among the spectators and general public, provoked by that literal re-enactment of Jesus' death.

Keywords
Philippines, Catholicism, crucifixion, identity formation, New Religious Movements, faith-healing

In the years 1996–1998, I carried out anthropological fieldwork on Philippine passion rituals.[1] The research area, the province of Bulacan, is socio-politically

[1] My field research was part of the research project "Philippine Passion Rituals" at the Department of the Study of Religion of the University of Bremen, Germany. The research was supported by a grant from the DFG (German Research Society). In the Philippines, I was kindly accepted as a research affiliate of the IPC (Institute of Philippine Culture) at the Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City. I would like to express my gratitude to Noel Salcedo, research assistant and friend in Bulacan, to Jan Oberg, assistant and friend in Bremen, to all of my interview-partners, especially to Lucy Reyes, in the Province of Bulacan, and to Hans Kippenberg for

DOI: 10.1163/156848409X12526657425262

and economically part of the continually-expanding capital Manila. Many Bulaceños are working in Manila and commute daily. Thereby, they increasingly join the middle-class Manileños, who tend to escape the unbearable urban conditions and settle in housing projects outside of the overcrowded and heavily polluted mega-city. In many families, at least one member lives abroad to earn money as, for instance, an overseas contract worker (OCW), a domestic helper or simply a marriage migrant. Financial remittances from Saudi Arabia or Singapore are considered usual transactions. The same counts for telephone calls from Italy or Israel. Bulacan is considered as a prosperous province with a bright future not only by politicians, but by the general public as well. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I found myself in a setting which was anything but tribal. The growing number of huge shopping malls, daily traffic jams (even in small provincial towns), omnipresent advertisement banners advertising computer classes offered by local high schools, the spread of internet cafes, where the new era of global communication was celebrated by enthusiastic teenagers — all these manifestations of the economic 'take off' stood in sharp contrast to the phenomena which I intended to study in the very same area. Bloody rituals of crucifixion, self-flagellation and other forms of religiously-motivated self-mortification seemed not to belong to the late modern era, but were clearly relics of an archaic, pre-modern Catholicism. By presupposing such a perspective, I have to confess frankly that I was influenced by a common characterisation of Catholicism designed by Protestant polemics in 19th century Europe. It declared Catholicism as an anti-modern force within the period of European industrialisation. The anti-Catholic propaganda announced that Catholicism is unable to cope with modernity since it is less rational than Protestant Christianity, essentially magical in nature and still propagating the cult of saints and miracles in times of social dislocation and miserable working conditions. The portrait of Catholic Christianity as backward and medieval in character was scientifically perpetuated by Max Weber amongst others. He considered the Catholic Communion, the practice of confession and the absolution as largely magical. According to Weber's view, Roman Catholicism lacks an inner-worldly ascetic ethos and the cult of saints is 'fairly close to polytheism'.[2]

---

his encouragement and constructive suggestions. I am also greatly indebted to Nick Barker and Smita Lahiri. Both of them generously shared their knowledge with me. Special thanks are due to my wife, Andrea Lauser, and my son Moritz, without whom the research would not have been possible. This paper is part of my more general work on self-crucifixion and flagellation in Europe and the Philippines. It is based on anthropological fieldwork and theory, and on research in the fields of religious history. See Bräunlein (2003).

[2] With emphasis on the sacraments Weber says, "Of an essentially magical nature is the view that one may incorporate divine power into himself by the physical ingestion of some divine

Despite the insight that such a view is grounded in anti-Catholic sentiments, stirred up in the 19th century rather than in sociological research, my irritation persisted. In the course of my research I was left with an impression that was ambiguous, if not outright contradictory. The juxtaposition of seemingly backward religious expressions with the success of global capitalism and communication technology was, and still is, enigmatic to me and to some of my Philippine colleagues. To solve the problem by declaring Philippine society as 'pre-modern', or by analysing ritual celebrations during lent as forms of 'folk-religion' are poor attempts at finding release from such uncomfortable contradictions. The desire for an explanation resulted in an increasing awareness of the social dimension of the *lenten* rites under study and, therefore, it was obvious to recall related key questions of a sociology of religion: what is the place of religion in human society and how do worldviews and religious ethics influence the way people behave, individually and collectively? How can we understand and explain the similarities and differences of elite and popular patterns of religious action? What is the relationship of religion, human motivation, individual agency and social structure?

The development of a sociology of religion is closely connected to the development of Western modernity and Christianity.[3] As an occidental scientific enterprise, sociology of religion started out with the ambition to answer questions about *Christian churches* and their place in a rapidly changing society under the premises of modernity. Implicitly presupposed are specific concepts of religion (the belief in the transcendent, soteriological doctrines concerning the salvation of the individual) and modernity (rational capitalism, functionally differentiated society). Sociology of religion, therefore, unfolds quite convincingly its explanatory capacity, though sometimes contested and debated, in the realm of Western society and its Christian traditions. The application of such models to non-Western societies, without being constantly aware of the fundamental differences, however, may be a risky venture.

---

substance, some sacred totemic animal in which a mighty spirit is incarnated, or some host that has been magically transformed into the body of a God" (Weber, 1965:186; quoted in Hamilton, 1998:191). With respect to the doctrine of the Trinity and the cult of the Virgin Mary and the saints, Weber regarded "Catholicism to be less monotheistic than either Judaism or Islam, which he thought was perhaps the most strictly monotheistic religion of all," as Malcolm Hamilton summarises. Weber asserted, "In practice the Roman Catholic cult of masses and saints actually comes fairly close to polytheism" (see Weber, 1965:138,186; hereafter, Hamilton, 1998:191–192).

[3] Almost all of the famous founders of the discipline of sociology of religion were deeply involved in political, socio-political and theological issues and affairs of the day. The biases and epistemological ambiguities produced by that engagement, however, were rarely reflected (see Krech and Tyrell, 1995).

While sorting out my field notes, interviews, collected stories and videotaped rituals, I looked for a useful theory in just that sociological toolkit. What I found were not ultimate answers, but inspiring questions. Questions, which were already raised by founding fathers, such as Ernst Troeltsch or Max Weber.

My paper is an attempt to throw light on the social dimension of crucifixion rituals and, furthermore, on the type of religious movement and/or association emerging from the activities of its protagonists. It is not my ambition here to deconstruct the typologies of Max Weber or Ernst Troeltsch — church, sect, mysticism — or to propose a better-suited typology. Instead, by adopting related questions as the starting point, I attempt to investigate the social forces, either of consent or dissent, radiating from a seemingly bizarre ritual of the literal imitation of Christ's death.

The Philippine 'Calvary Catholicism' and the Invention of Crucifixion Rituals

Although the label 'Calvary Catholicism' is more a creation of journalists than of social scientists, it denotes clearly the character of Philippine Catholicism with emphasis on the passion for Christ, represented in the images of the suffering son of God, the Father. The fascination with the battered and dead Christ may be regarded as a characteristic feature of Philippine lowland society. Due to its Iberian heritage, Philippine Catholicism resembles Spanish and Latin-American Catholicism in many respects. However, beyond such resemblances it also developed its own peculiar character.[4] The textual basis of

[4] It might come as a surprise that research comparing Iberian Catholicism with Philippine Catholicism, be it anthropological, sociological or historical, is marginal, if not nonexistent. As well, studies in the fields of cultural history and anthropology of Philippine Catholicism are poorly developed. There are no comprehensive studies on the cult of the saints and the Virgin Mary, local feasts and processions, pilgrimages, apparitions, miracles, etc. Most of the relevant materials published are journalistic, theological, or outdated. Outstanding exceptions are the works of Reynaldo Ileto (1979) on religio-political movements in the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary period, and Vicente Rafael (1988) on the process of vernacularisation of Christianity. Since the late 1980s, more and more research projects on Philippine Christianity/Catholicism/popular religion were initiated. Highly stimulating are the works of British anthropologist Fenella Cannell (1995, 1999, 2005, 2006) on popular religion in the province of Bicol, especially on the cult of a miracle-working saint, and the study of German historian Reinhard Wendt (1997) on the Fiesta Filipina. Filomeno V. Aguilar provides an illuminating account of the convergence of capitalism and the indigenous spirit world on Negros Island (1998). Anthropologist Katharine L. Wiegele studied the Catholic charismatic movement El-Shaddai (2004, 2006), and Smita Lahiri contemporary forms and practices of mystical nationalism located at Mount Banahaw (2005).

Philippine Catholicism is the Pasyon Mahal, the translation of the biblical story in vernacular and in verse form. Since the 18th century, the Pasyon became increasingly popular, especially in those parts of the country seen as the power centres of the colonisers. The poetic form, actually a peculiar interpretation of the biblical passion, effectively transmitted indigenous cultural values. The Pasyon replaced the traditional epics and, as a consequence, the ritual singing of the Pasyon is in use until today. Without a doubt, the Pasyon is the best-known text, at least among the people of Central Luzon (Tiongson, 1976).[5]

The most spectacular expressions of the so-called Philippine 'Calvary Catholicism' are flagellation and crucifixion. Flagellation was introduced by the Spaniards as a monastic exercise (*disciplina*), usually practised privately behind closed doors or in the church's gloom on every Friday throughout the year. The indigenous Philippine male population enthusiastically accepted flagellation and started to perform this bloody practice in public. The fanatical acceptance of flagellation, even by children, was surprising, as religious self-mortification was unknown in the pre-Spanish Philippines. Thirty years after the arrival of the Spaniards, self-flagellation was already an established mass phenomenon, exercised in some parts of the archipelago. This caused the church to forbid the exercise (Chirino, 1969; Ribandeneira, 1947). The prohibition, however, turned out to be ineffective; ritual self-flagellation has been an uninterrupted tradition for more than 350 years up to the present day.[6]

Ritual crucifixions, however, were absolutely unknown in the Philippines until the second half of the 20th century. The first Philippine crucifixion happened in 1961; it was a faith healer, Arsenio Añosa, who was nailed to a cross in the town of San Fernando. His crucifixion was performed annually between 1961 and 1976. Prior to his first crucifixion Añosa was a flagellant, who, by crucifixion, intended to get closer to Christ, closer than flagellation permitted. For Arsenio Añosa, proximity to the dead Christ through the performance of crucifixion was a means to acquire healing power. The anthropologist Nicholas Barker, who conducted fieldwork in San Fernando, understands Añosa's decision to be crucified in the context of a specific revival of religious self-flag-

[5] The content of the Pasyon, the story of Christ's death, is obviously 'Western' and imported. The social context and the aesthetic, however, are related to Southeast Asian theatre practices. Ricardo Trimillos refers to a revealing analogy between the singing of the Pasyon and the Javanese *wayang kulit* puppet theatre. In discerning such a connection he offers an indigenous model of theatre performances in the Philippines which is only masked by the Christian content (*cf.* Trimillos, 1992).

[6] For the development of self-flagellation in the Philippines after World War II, *cf.* Barker , n.d. An insightful sociological study of self-flagellation in Central Luzon and the underlying concept of *panata* — vow — presented Fernando N. Zialcita (1986).

ellation which was evident from the 1960s onwards. The revival of self-flagellation, starting in the early 1960s and reaching its peak in the late 1970s, was itself clearly fostered by the Philippine media with sensational front-page headlines, news reports and photographs. The attention of the media had a direct impact on ritual performances, as Nicholas Barker lucidly demonstrates in referring to crucifixion and flagellation in San Fernando/Pampanga (Barker, n.d.).[7] The media had become even more influential when I conducted fieldwork in Kapitangan in the 1990s.

Crucifixions in the Philippines are phenomena of modernity and not centuries-old archaic relics. Ritual crucifixions are confined to a few places, located mainly in the region near the capital of Manila. The most famous places are San Pedro Cutud (in the province of Pampanga) and Kapitangan (in the province of Bulacan).

The observations on which this text is based were made in Kapitangan, a small barangay (town district) within the municipality of Paombong/Bulacan; the settlement was founded approximately in the late 19th century. Until the 1960s, its population consisted mainly of rice-growing peasants. During the last decades the growing and selling of turf became a major source of income in Kapitangan. Through the construction of paved roads in the 1970s, Manila has become easily accessible. As a result, many people commute daily to Manila.[8] While economic conditions have generally worsened in the Philippines over the past twenty years, the province of Bulacan is considered to have prospered. With few exceptions, most of the people I interviewed regarded themselves as neither particularly rich, nor poor.[9]

Kapitangan has been a well-known pilgrimage centre since the turn of our century. In the Barangay chapel, a miraculous wooden figure of Christ (Sto. Cristo) is venerated. Numerous accounts of miraculous healings are known and many cases of dream apparitions of the Sto. Cristo have been, and continue to be, reported.

[7] Nicholas Barker conducted anthropological fieldwork in San Fernando in 1984, 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1991. Barker was able to interview Añosa, who died in 1993.

[8] In the 1950s and early 1960s of the last century, American anthropologist Charles Kaut conducted fieldwork in Kapitangan focussing on the socio-economic structure of the Philippine peasant society. His published results and insights, as well as his generous readiness to provide useful informations by e-mail messages, were extremely helpful for my own study. See Kaut (1960, 1961, 1965).

[9] Almost all of the people with whom Fenella Cannell lived during her fieldwork in the province of Bicol (southern Luzon) classed themselves as 'we who have nothing at all'. Such a statement is very common in the Philippines, where the gap between a privileged few and the majority of those 'who have nothing' is immense. See Cannell (1999:15ff.).

Pilgrims either seek healing by touching the body of Sto. Cristo or visit the place because they have already experienced miraculous healings in the past. During the Holy Week, curing oil and perfumed water, which were used ritually for bathing the Sto. Cristo, is distributed for free. Semana Santa pilgrims are attracted not only from the nearby area, but also from the capital of Manila and, furthermore, from all over the island of Luzon. Hundreds of flagellants and other penitents can be seen in Kapitangan, especially on Good Friday.

In 1977, the local tradition of crucifixion started with Lucy Reyes, then an 18-year old girl.[10] On Good Friday at noon, she was nailed to a cross, which was erected on a temporary stage made of wood and bamboo. Her crucifixion was repeated for 13 consecutive years. In the late 1980s, Kapitangan increasingly became a place which attracts not only Philippine Good Friday pilgrims, flagellants and different kinds of penitents, but also journalists and tourists.

Growing up in a very poor family, Lucy had been a rebellious and headstrong person since her early childhood. Endowed with a spirit of resistance, she was fiercely opposed to the expectations of her family. Oftentimes Lucy was very sick. Her sickness was accompanied by states of unconsciousness and later by states of trance. Under the guidance of her aunt, contact with Sto. Niño, the Christ-child,[11] was established and Lucy developed healing abilities.

---

[10] On different occasions when I asked Lucy about her first crucifixion, she sometimes remembered 1976 as her first year on the cross, but sometimes it was the year 1977 or 1978. By asking friends and acquaintances of Lucy and by reading newspaper reports, 1977 came out as the most probable year for her first crucifixion. The gap in Lucy's memory is not necessarily a personal fault or inability, but reflects a culturally-specific perception of the past. Fixing and memorising events precisely in accordance with the calendar is not valued. The process of learning remembrance is culturally embedded, as we learn from the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and, more recently, from Aleida Assmann (1999) and Jan Assmann (1992).

[11] In Philippine Catholicism, Sto. Niño is the most popular and venerated image besides Jesus Nazareno, Jesus carrying the cross, and Mother Mary. Venerated are numerous representations of Sto. Niño, distinguishable by garments, colour, gesture, size, facial expression, etc. Images of Sto. Niño are placed on countless house altars. Oftentimes they function as patron saints of families. Frequently, a regional type or predilection, for example, Sto. Niño de Cebu, prevails. The devotion of Jesus the Child in the Philippines dates back to late 15th century Spain. In the 20th century, the Sto. Niño cult was officially enforced on the occasion of Fourth Centennial Celebration of Christianisation of the Philippines (1965–1966). The year 1965 was declared as Jubilee Year by Pope Paul VI and the 'original' Sto. Niño, brought to the Philippines by Magellan in 1521, was transferred from the Visayan island of Cebu to Metro Manila. Novenas were propagated and, in the 1970s, a phenomenal spread of the Sto. Niño devotion outside Cebu was noticeable.

Inspired by such observations, sociologist Douglas Elwood hypothesised that there were only two dominant Christ images in the Philippines: that of the Santo Niño, the holy child-king, and that of the tragic victim, Jesus Nazareno. *Cf.* Elwood (1971); for the history of the Sto. Niño veneration in the Philippines, see Bräunlein (2009), Takefumi (1987) and Tañazas (1965).

Sto. Niño regularly visited Lucy during her trances and since then has used her as an instrument to cure sick people.

The aunt, a childless spinster, saw it as her vocation to take care of young Lucy. For her, Lucy was sent by God and it was her obligation to serve as Lucy's 'spiritual mother'. "When Lucy came to me she was turning seventeen. She was like a newly born. It was as if I had given birth. She was my child spiritually," she explained.

The aunt organised the healing sessions; under her guidance a core group of 12 ladies, the "apostles", was formed. She invented rituals and taught prayers in her house, henceforth the "temple" of a group of (mostly) female followers. They regularly assembled there and supported Lucy not only with prayers, but also with material goods. At that time Sto. Niño commanded Lucy's crucifixion — repeatedly. Lucy was frightened but encouraged by her spiritual mother. Finally she agreed. Her whole family was shocked and the parents strongly opposed the plan, but failed.

For her crucifixion, Lucy/Sto. Niño chose the churchyard of Kapitangan. Lucy's house was only two miles away and the place was well known for the Good Friday celebrations. As a person chosen by Sto. Niño and as a healer she felt obliged to visit Kapitangan frequently because the miraculous Sto. Cristo is considered as the patron saints of healers.

Lucy asked a group of passion-play actors, called Hudyo, to assist her crucifixion. The leader of the Hudyo group hesitated at first and then agreed. He and his men served Lucy not only as helpers with the skills to use a hammer, but in arranging every detail of the event. They gave instructions on how to construct the stage and provided Lucy with the costume, a wig, the cast-iron crown and the wooden cross. Dressed as colourful Roman centurions, they came for Lucy early in the morning of Good Friday in 1977. They accompanied Lucy on her two-mile 'way of the cross' to the 'calvary' in Kapitangan by pulling her along, beating and humiliating her. At noon, in front of a huge crowd, two of the Hudyo hammered the alcohol-soaked stainless steel spikes through her hands. Lucy fainted. After a few minutes the nails were removed by vice grips and alcohol was poured on the wounds. The motionless, 'dead' body of Lucy was brought into the chapel and laid on the altar. After 30 minutes, she revived and was able to walk back to her house, carrying the cross on her shoulder. For 13 consecutive years, Lucy's crucifixion was repeated. Whenever she was asked about her motives she replied: "I am doing this because Sto. Niño told me to do this." In exchange, she had been given divine power to heal the sick, she said.

Starting with the crucifixion, Lucy's career advanced rapidly. The number of her clients and followers grew, although disputes caused the splitting of the

group quite frequently. After five years, Lucy and her spiritual mother separated. Lucy revolted against her and chose another spiritual mother, who provided housing, food and clothes, and organised her healing sessions. Later a 'spiritual father' appeared and offered his assistance. Under the guidance of Lucy's spiritual parents, the core group undertook excursions to the provinces and visited pilgrimage sites and churches. These activities they called 'mission trips'. For Lucy, a house, as well as a chapel next to it, were constructed. The magnificent (and very expensive) image of Lucy's patron saint, Santo Niño de Pandacan, was placed inside with the help of her spiritual father. After a while, though, Lucy also rejected his support and regulations. After quarrels over financial matters she decided to live independently on the compound, assisted only by a close follower. It is in this chapel, where Lucy heals under the guidance of her Santo Niño regularly.

Soon journalists came to Kapitangan to interview Lucy. Film crews also appeared and made her well known through TV documentaries. Invitations to TV talk-shows followed and Lucy became famous nationwide. In 1990, Lucy was nailed for the last time. In the late 1990s, when I regularly visited Lucy, she was a respected and well-to-do woman.

In the 1980s, more and more people, mostly females, received the command to be crucified in Kapitangan. All of them were healers; all of them were, in the beginning, followers of Lucy, scrutinising her healing techniques and the way of her crucifixion. All of them received messages from Sto. Niño or Jesus Nazarene, and all of them considered Lucy their role model. All of them claimed to have been really chosen by Sto. Niño or the Nazarene. All of them built their own chapel where they held healing sessions under the image of their specific patron saint. All of them compete with each other for the most authentic performance, spiritual power, for disciples and prestige.

In Kapitangan, not more than 3,000 people are able to watch the events on stage. Compared with the Good Friday events in San Pedro Cutud/San Fernando (Pampanga), Kapitangan has not reached that level of attraction yet and it probably never will. Located some 20 miles away from Kapitangan, San Pedro Cutud/San Fernando is the most popular and best-known crucifixion site in the Philippines. More than 20,000 spectators are present to observe the crucifixion of 10–15 persons, exclusively males, annually.[12] In Kapitangan,

[12] There are two remarkable exceptions: in 1994, a Belgian lady, the 54-year old Godelieve Rombaut, was crucified there as the first foreigner in the history of Philippine crucifixions. In 1997, Amparo Santos, known as 'Mother Paring', hitherto crucified in Kapitangan for ten years, decided to move to San Fernando for further crucifixions. She justified her decision by saying that the masses of spectators and the bigger number of the media representatives in San Fernando are more attractive for her compared to Kapitangan. For that reason she might be able to disseminate more effectively her message there.

between one and three persons have been nailed to the cross each year. It is vital to note here that the persons' underlying motifs and intentions to be crucified differ in San Fernando/Pampanga from those nailed in Kapitangan/Bulacan. In San Fernando, a 'vow' is the dominant pattern, whereas the 'possession/trance/healing-complex' plays the most important role in Kapitangan. In San Fernando, the ritual of nailing is embedded in theatrical, expressive forms. Especially the tradition of passion play (*sinakulo*) is still vital there, whereas in Kapitangan all the concerned persons insist, that local stage crucifixions have nothing to do with passion play.[13] Nick Barker's and my findings reveal two different patterns of ritual crucifixion within a relatively small area.

The Philippine *New Mysticism* as New Religious Movement (NRM)

The story of Lucy's crucifixions, her career as healer, and the group around her form a pattern that fits perfectly into the category of the so-called *New Mysticism*. This label was introduced by the Philippine Jesuit and psychologist Jaime Bulatao (1981 [1992]). Bulatao characterises New Mysticism as a 'religious-mystical flowering' of the post-World War II period, occurring all over the Philippines, 'though often unobserved by the official church'.

Summarising Bulatao (1992:54ff), characteristics of the New Mysticism are as follows:

(a) The trance state: "Usually without willing it, s/he is 'possessed' by the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin, or some saint… Typical characteristics of the trance are body rigidity with convulsive movements, tightly closed eyes, rapid breathing, speaking in a voice and accents quite different from the usual. This voice follows the personality of the 'possessing spirit': deep and heavy in the case of the Nazareno, playful and childish in the case of Santo Niño, sweet but aggrieved in the case of Blessed Virgin of Fatima or the Mother of Perpetual Help."

(b) Oftentimes a message is delivered during the state of trance. This message is usually "a lugubrious one about the sinfulness of men, the need for repentance, and the threat of foreboding calamities."

[13] Anril Pineda Tiatco and Amihan Bonifacio-Ramolete (2008) analyse the nailing ritual in Pampanga under the perspective of performance and theater studies. They refer to a *sinakulo* titled *Via Crucis o Pasion y Muerte* [Way of the Cross or Passion and Death], which was written 1955 by the local author Ricardo Navarro. The *sinakulo* text served as drama script for the first real enacted crucifixion in the early 1960s in San Pedro Cutud, Pampanga.

(c) Healing is done in the state of trance by massage or the laying on of hands, rubbing of oil, the drinking of water blessed by the mystic, or simple herbal medicine.
(d) The mystic and their followers are, for the most part, faithful Catholics.
(e) Once a new healer appears, a new social organisation starts growing around him/her. A core of disciples and firm believers act "as middlemen between the mystic and the crowds of followers as well as protectors against sceptics and disrupters of ritual. Typically too, one of the group's first projects is to build a chapel in honour of the patron saint. To one side of the chapel a room is set aside for consultations and for healing… The chapel is financed by donations of patients and clients. No payment is demanded for healings."
(f) The healer is the founder and centre of the group. Ritual creativity and inventiveness is highly developed.
(g) The group around a mystic tends to expand: "They all speak of their urge as a 'mission'. Certain days of the week are set aside for excursions into the provinces, sometimes to foreign countries," such as Guam or Australia. Some groups claim a following consisting of thirty to forty thousand people, others count only two dozen followers.
(h) The movement has no centralised organisation. Each group around a mystic goes on its own, usually competing with another "or, like the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople, mutually excommunicating each other." Towards the Catholic Church and its priest, however, an overwhelming desire for acceptance and approval is felt. The new mystics and their followers regard themselves by no means as dissentient or heterodox.

In Bulatao's depiction, we can easily identify Lucy as a new mystic and the group around her as a typical Philippine New Mysticism group.

Furthermore, the Philippine New Mysticism is a facet of the so-called New Religious Movements (NRMs), a worldwide phenomenon which has mushroomed in the industrial societies of the West in recent decades (Hamilton, 1995:193). New Religious Movements show an extraordinary variety, which challenges and confuses sociologists of religion.[14]

[14] The definition of an NRM given by Eileen Barker is a very broad and pragmatic one: "The definition from which I personally start — for purely pragmatic reasons — is that an NRM is new in so far as it has become visible in its present form since the Second World War, and that it is religious in so far as it offers not merely narrow theological statements about the existence and nature of supernatural beings, but that it proposes answers to at least some of the other kinds of ultimate questions such as: Is there a God? Who am I? How might I find direction, meaning and purpose in life? Is there life after death? Is there more to human beings than their physical

By placing Lucy and her crucifixion in the context of the New Religious Movements, it is helpful to recall the famous typology *church, sect*, and *mysticism*, developed by Ernst Troeltsch, which identifies the basic forms of Christian organisation (*cf.* Troeltsch, 1931).[15]

Troeltsch explained mysticism as a religion in its own right, constituted by its own set of beliefs, characterised by radical religious individualism, and by the goal of some form of union with God. It is mysticism which Troeltsch judged most likely to flourish in the modern world and which he envisaged as the end point of Christianity, "in the sense that it drew on modern scientific ideas and [is] closely related to the individualism of contemporary societies" (Hall, 1987:155). Troeltsch's idea was developed further by many scholars into diverse classification-schemes. As a rule, however, those typologies only partially apply to most organisations.[16]

Howard Becker developed the category 'cult' following Troeltsch's category of mysticism. Typical for a cult is the high degree of individualism. Becker distinguished the 'cult' from the 'sect' "by the fact that adherents of this loosely knit and unstructured form of religious expression were little concerned with protecting their organisation but were seeking 'purely personal ecstatic experience, salvation, comfort, and mental or physical healing'" (Becker, 1932:628; after Hall, 1987:156).[17]

---

bodies and immediate interactions with others?" (Barker, 1999:6). However, Eileen Barker does not forget to emphasise that generalising about NRMs is nearly impossible: "One cannot generalise about NRMs. The only thing that they have in common is that they have been labelled as an NRM or 'cult'. The movements differ from each other so far as their origins, their beliefs, their practices, their organisation, their leadership, their finances, their lifestyles and their attitudes to women, children, education, moral questions and the rest of society are concerned. Attempts to produce typologies have been limited, and even relatively useful distinctions… do not really help us to anticipate with much certainty the *empirical* characteristics that might follow from the *defining* characteristics of each category" (Barker, 1999:20).

[15] The contrast of "church", i.e. established religion, and "sect", a schismatic group which is in tense relation with the parental religion, is not very fruitful for the analysis of New Religious Movements. And in its common technical usage it promotes prejudicial understandings. If we understand the church-sect dichotomy less as a taxonomy but instead as a continuum, at least some problems with such a dichotomy are eliminated, as Lorne L. Dawson recommends (cf. Dawson 1992).

[16] Bryan Wilson (1982:90) added a third dimension of denomination between church and sect. Through the 'discovery' of *New Religious Movements*, a fourth addition to church-sect theory had to be introduced (*cf.* Barker, 1982, 1999).

[17] Becker included in his category 'cult' spiritualism, theosophy, Christian science, and a variety of 'pseudo-Hinduisms' linked with 'swamis and yogis who consent, for a consideration, to carry their messages to the materialistic Western world' (Becker, 1932:628; after Hall, 1987:156).

The emphasis on personal experience, salvation and physical healing on the one hand, and the characteristic weak forms of organisation on the other, can be easily identified among the New Mystics. Unlike the sect, such mysticism is not a protest-movement or schismatic group opposing the teachings of the church. It is *not* a voluntary institution with a strong sense of distinct identity and separateness, as Bryan Wilson (1970) defines 'sect', but a movement *within* the church emphasising and seeking spiritual experience.

The New Mysticism in the Philippines described by Bulatao can be seen as a hybrid of sect and mysticism, but being more mysticism than sect. We have to note here that Bulatao's term 'New Mysticism', which points to New Religious Movements in the Philippines, might be misleading. Bulatao neither explains from which source he took the term, nor does he discuss the term sociologically or theologically. It is evident that his use of the term resembles, wilfully or not, Troeltsch's somewhat vague category. Troeltsch laid emphasis on a growing individualism, whereby personal religious experience is sought independent of the fellowship of a religious community (Chryssides, 1999:7). What is labelled mysticism in the Philippines, exemplified by Lucy and her group, is different from the common notion of mysticism. Actively sought is not mystical union or inexpressible experience of oneness with God as a lifelong personal project. Unlike European mystics of the late medieval ages, such as Heinrich Seuse (1295–1366) or Meister Eckhardt (1260–1328), the Philippine mystics do not teach or preach about the 'unspeakable', nor are they intentionally longing for such unification.

Instead, God is viewed as the active party using a chosen person as his instrument. God commands and the believers follow passively the instructions from above. This has, however, not to be confused with the loss of agency. Mary Keller developed in her book "The Hammer and the Flute" (2002) the concept of *instrumental agency*, which fits quite well in our case. Instead of asking: "Who is acting — the possessed one, the spirit of the ancestors or God?," she asks: "What is aimed at, and with what means?" According to her concept the subject is used, either as a hammer or as a musical instrument to be 'played', and it is from this apparent passivity that the possession medium derives the specific ritual authority accorded him by the community.

There is no need to search for God, his presence is taken for granted. God's intervention comes first and is physically felt by the chosen ones through grave sickness and pain. Being nailed to the cross is the ultimate sacrifice a human being can offer and a person who went through it is awarded with healing power. For the person undergoing crucifixion the ritual serves as an instrument of empowerment.[18] On the cross, the nailed person, whose perceptible

[18] With the underlying pattern we are instantly reminded of shamanistic illness. In addition,

painlessness proves his/her authentic calling, is very close to God. The followers are attracted by healing powers which demonstrate the intimate relationship between healer and God.

From a Weberian perspective, we may consider ritual crucifixions and the connected group of believers to negotiate charisma by self-stigmatisation. Crucifixion, thus, is an act of self-humiliation and a highly refined and effectively dramatised self-stigmatisation. The performance of crucifixion imitates Christ's sacrifice and, through this, charismatic authority emerges — at least from the perspective of the core group of followers. Suffering as evidence of being chosen by God transforms suffering into salvation. This was symbolically connected in early Christianity and is just as closely connected in the present New Mysticism movement. The relationship between the suffering and the conquest of suffering contained and contains legitimating qualities for the early Christians and for the contemporary supporters of Lucy Reyes, for example. Suffering changes into salvation, stigmatising into de-stigmatising, and stigma into charisma. Jesus, the original charismatic and stigmatic exemplified such fundamental changes of spiritual power and status by altering his position from a slave to a world-conqueror. Imitating this pattern, self-stigmatising was a means to gain and institutionalise power, but also to express critique against power, as Ebertz (1999) emphasises with respect to the process of personal-charismatic and institutional-charismatic stabilisation of early Christian communities. The 'pathos of humility' (*Demutspathos*), the rhetoric of sacrifice, martyrdom and self-denial, enforces charismatic authority, which is diversely illustrated in early Christianity (see Ebertz, 1999:139; Mödritzer, 1994:256).

In crucifixion rituals, such a 'pathos of humility' unfolds its power. The person nailed to the cross owns charismatic authority by way of example. In the Philippine context, or in the context of crucifixion rituals in Kapitangan, such charismatic power is intimately connected with physical healing. Self-stigmatisation is transformed into charisma which works effectively among the followers as healing power. Illuminating in this context is the etymological connection between the German words *Heil* (salvation) and *Heilung* (healing). Thus, *Heil* — salvation — is not an otherworldly, but rather an inner-worldly, concept and able to be pragmatically realised as *Heilung* — healing.

In the process of stabilising the charisma, the regularly performed healing ritual becomes the centre of such a group. The healer's ritual performance provides for cohesion within the community and opens the way to a 'routinisation of charisma' in the Weberian sense. Through the weekly healing

---

the problematic categories 'syncretism' and 'folk-Catholicism' have to be addressed. I intend to publish a paper to discuss this issue separately.

performances, which function as a ritual transmission of healing power or charisma, the position of the healer is legitimised. S/he uses such healing performances (mission trips or other activities) to secure certain powers of control, including the designation of charismatically-qualified staff, revelation through oracle, trance and associated monetary exchanges.

Healers who underwent crucifixion can, at least to a certain degree, be compared to the Weberian 'ideal-typical' prophet. A prophet bases claims to leadership on his or her own personal powers of charisma. Like the ancient Hebrew prophets, Philippine healers, like Lucy, consider themselves to be simply tools or instruments of God. Their orientation is this-worldly and concrete, though they are motivated entirely by religious concerns. Humility and insistence on their complete dependence on God are of great importance. Prophets in that sense were not chosen by any formal means; usually they receive a call, which often they accept only with great reluctance. This definition of a prophet matches exactly with the present case from the Philippines. Almost all of the persons who received a call to undergo crucifixion hesitated and resisted at first. At the beginning, the experience of receiving a call or encountering a divine force, let us call it charisma, caused an internal reorientation and a radical alteration of the persons central system of values. Most of the 'chosen ones', thus, came into deep conflict with their families and had to endure social humiliation until their charismatic authority was accepted, at least by a few of them.

Charismatic authority, however, is never uncontested. Rivalry is part of the business and the question of whether one is really chosen or only pretending to be causes serious gossiping among followers and competition on the cross. Ideal and material interests of followers in the continual reactivation of the community, and the interests of the administrative staff and close disciples of the charismatic leader in stabilising their positions can promote a 'routinisation of charisma'. Under certain circumstances the very same interests can lead to the destabilisation of the group and, in many cases, to serious quarrels. As B. O. Long (1981) reminds us, conflicts between prophets are typical and occur in many cultures (Hamilton, 1998:151).

Similarities between the Philippine New Mystics and 'ideal-typical' prophets in the Weberian sense should not be overstated. The Philippine healers whom I have interviewed do not aim to create a new social or religious community by means of prophecy, nor do they attempt to predict anything. The basis of their religious communities is provided instead by their healing powers and associated ritual activities.[19]

[19] Weber's characterisation of the Israelite prophets was criticised among others by Berger (1963) and B. S. Turner (1974). A lucid overview of Weber's concept of prophets and charismatic authority and his critics is presented by Hamilton (1998:143–146, 150–155).

From an outside perspective the performance of crucifixion may be regarded as the central ritual and the community around the healer as a crucifixion cult. On account of their spectacular character and extraordinary publicity, crucifixion rituals can be characterised as performative events designed to attract clients, followers and disciples. From an inside perspective, however, such a characterisation would be rejected. A healer would argue that crucifixion is not an act of volition. Crucifixion has no end in itself and does not stand apart, since the whole life of a healer is devoted to the service of God.

By applying the category of New Mysticism (Philippine style) to healers, to their ritual crucifixion and to the motivations that inspire the core group of followers, we can discern a specific form of community within which a healer, trance healing, the availability of miraculous power and the veneration of a saint (Sto. Niño) play the most important role. The dynamic of such communities is based on the ritually gained and perpetuated stigma and charisma of the founder. It is the intimate relationship between the healer and God, which forms the attraction for a group of followers, whereas the regular spiritual intermediaries of the Catholic Church, namely priests, are of minor importance. By claiming direct access to divine power, the group and its leader question the authority of the clerical hierarchy. Such an implicit protest, however, is in most cases neither reflected upon, nor overtly expressed, nor used as a means of propaganda against the church. New Mysticism is more of a potential or 'undercover' critique.[20]

Crucifixions, Sto. Cristo and the Local Community

Beyond the core group around the mystic, the effects of stage crucifixion are quite different. The interpretation of crucifixion and, hence, its meaning changes across widening circles of perception around the Good Friday event. Until now we have maintained a microscopic focus on the inner circle, the mystic and the core group of followers. Let us now use a wide-angle lens

[20] Joachim Wach (1944) "distinguished two forms or religious protest — secession, leading to the formation of an independent organisation, and 'protest within', leading to the formation of an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*" (Hall, 1987:156). Philippine New Mysticism can be regarded as an *ecclesiola* in *ecclesia*, at least in some aspects, such as imitation of liturgical forms, questioning the sacramental monopoly of the church, direct availability of divine power. On 'passion' as an idiom of critique and resistance in Philippine Catholicism, see Bräunlein (2008).

In early Christian communities (of the first century), oftentimes, the authority of its leaders was challenged by self-stigmatising ascetics. Affirming to be 'holy in flesh', they aimed at the removal of the elected leaders and, instead, claimed exclusive leadership for themselves (see Ebertz, 1999:145f). Self-stigmatisation, thus, worked as critique of institutional power. In the Philippines, no person undergoing crucifixion challenges church authority openly, but expresses nevertheless implicit critique of a church being distant and lacking charismatic power.

to gain some insight into discourses of consent and dissent, of identity and identification.

By placing crucifixion in the centre of the circle, different categories of observers, spectators, onlookers and gazers can be discerned:

(a) The *disciples and followers of the crucified*, who are dressed in uniforms, hold candles and sing songs. They assist the healer on his or her way through the crowd and help to bring their body down after the crucifixion. They enjoy the privilege of greatest proximity to the crucified. They compete however with,
(b) The *representatives of the media*, i.e., cameramen, photographers, reporters on the crammed stage. Journalists try to interview the leading 'actors' on stage before crucifixions whenever possible and photographers are constantly struggling to position themselves in the crowd to catch a clear shot of the spectacle.
(c) The *crowd of spectators* on the ground is equally fighting for the best position to watch the main event, the hammering of the nails through the hands.
(d) Among the crowd there are *Good Friday pilgrims* whose main concern is to visit the miraculous Sto. Cristo in the church. Others, including villagers, foreign and domestic tourists are mainly attracted by the spectacle.
(e) Few *local inhabitants* of the village of Kapitangan attend, and most of these are curious children who climb trees, roofs and walls.

The actual ritual of crucifixion arouses the emotions of the spectators. The act of hammering the steel spikes through the palms evokes sudden "uuhs" and "ahhhs" from the crowd. The shared emotional tension among the crowd, however, is not spontaneous *communitas*, the experience of heightened sociality.[21] Emotions are provoked simply by the spectacular aspect of the ritual. In that regard, crucifixion is comparable to a thrilling circus-performance or public executions during early modern times in Europe.[22] The emotions or,

[21] Victor Turner distinguishes three types of *communitas*: spontaneous existential *communitas* (opposite to social structure), normative *communitas* (attempts to preserve *communitas* in a system of ethical precepts and legal rules), and ideological *communitas* (remembered *communitas* in form of an utopian blueprint for the reform of society) (see Turner and Turner, 1978:252). None of these types can be connected with crucifixion rituals.

[22] See Foucault's *Surveiller et punir. La naissance de la prison* (1975). Foucault opens his work with the detailed and dreadful account of the quadricpartition of the assassin Robert-Francois Damiens in the year 1757, publicly performed in front of a church in Paris. The historian Richard van Dülmen (1995) focuses on the ritual aspects of public executions in his book *Theater des*

more precisely, emotional identification with the person on the cross, the sense of compassion, and the virtual sensation of pain through the work of imagination can have a cathartic effect on spectators. When I asked them after the crucifixion about their feelings and impressions, the answers varied considerably. Doubt, astonishment, bewilderment, explicit critique and even jokes were expressed. Only a few said they were truly captivated by the events on stage and, therefore, could better understand now what Christ must have endured on his way to the cross.

For the local population, the events in the churchyard of Kapitangan and the huge crowd of visitors during Semana Santa ('Holy Week') are connected with their patron saint. The presence of the Santo Cristo in the church recreates and corroborates local religious identity. Most of the older people know stories or report their personal experiences of miracles caused by Sto. Cristo. A group of older persons regard themselves as caretakers of the Santo Cristo and feel obligated to organise the events inside and outside the church during Semana Santa.

For every Good Friday pilgrim it is obligatory to enter the church to touch and pray before Sto. Cristo. The icon has to be rubbed with a handkerchief to receive healing power. Since Santo Cristo is the patron saint of healers, many healers are in the church treating sick people of every age. Good Friday is healing day. While curing palm oil is distributed for free, most of the pilgrims also throw pesos into the donation boxes.

In the late afternoon on Good Friday, the donated money is counted by a committee of the older people. In 1995–1998, the average amount was 100,000 Pesos annually, a considerable amount of money for a small village. Apart from these donations, there are further monetary gains as dealers have to pay rent to local landowners for setting up their booths along the main road. Many local families also sell snacks and beverages to the pilgrims. In other words, Semana Santa in Kapitangan is also a significant economic enterprise.

Despite rising problems with garbage removal, sanitation, water shortages, pollution, parking shortages due to the continually increasing numbers of pilgrims, I have never heard a single word of complaint from locals. "We feel honoured by the pilgrims and tourists. We welcome all of them. Imagine, the visitors come from all over the island of Luzon, and even from far away from countries like the U.S., Australia and Germany. This is due to our famous patron saint. Our Santo Cristo is very mighty, he is guarding us", most of the inhabitants of Kapitan agree. Locals associate the flow of visitors with cultural

Schreckens. Gerichtspraxis und Strafrituale in der frühen Neuzeit [Theatre of horror. Judicial practices and rituals of punishment in early modern times].

prestige, not with environmental pollution. For the locals, it is Santo Cristo, in the first instance, who attracts the pilgrims and tourists. Of course, everyone knows that the crucifixions have made Kapitangan a well-known place. Within local perception, however, crucifixions are seen as a secondary, though economically important, phenomenon.

Whenever I asked inhabitants of Kapitangan about the crucifixions they signalled consent. Most locals had observed crucifixion only once in their lives[23] and many know scarcely anything about the motives of the persons nailed to the cross. The decision to be crucified and the act of crucifixion itself were never criticised, nor questioned. No theological, philosophical or commonsense objections were expressed. However, whenever materialistic motives and selfishness were suspected to be the attitudes of some of the healers undergoing crucifixion, critical comments were provoked.

Crucifixion rituals do seem to strengthen the sense of community at the local level. This effect is not due to *communitas* evoked by the ritual itself, but due to the presence of Sto. Cristo. Since the miraculous discovery of the Sto. Cristo (probably at the end of the 19th century),[24] the inhabitants of Kapitangan have been very proud to have direct access to Christ. Many of the older generation affirm there is no need of a priest, except for basic services, such as baptism, marriage ceremonies and funerals. In times of hardship they ask Sto. Cristo, not the local priest, for support. An intimate relationship with Sto. Cristo secures salvation. This kind of relationship contains a latent potential for heterodoxy. Individual salvation depends only partly upon reception of the sacraments and acquiescence to the Catholic creed.[25] The local community of

[23] Good Friday is the central and most important date for family gatherings in the Philippines. Friends and relatives are invited and delicious food is offered the whole day. The place of adults during Good Friday is, therefore, at home. Most of the local people explained that the duties of the family union demand presence. Moreover, waiting under the broiling sun in a crammed churchyard, watching how a person is nailed through hands and feet is not amusing.

[24] The legend tells that the Sto. Cristo was found under a pile of soil. It was not a piece of art, but relics of Christ's body itself. The real bones of Christ are still believed to be inside the carved image. The theological statement that due to the rising of the Lord no human relics of Jesus Christ on earth exist does not create any 'cognitive dissonance' among the followers of the Sto. Cristo in Kapitangan. The believers simply ignore such arguments.

[25] In 1998, the Bishop of Malolos came up with the idea to install the church of Kapitangan as a quasi-parish church with a permanently resident priest. Many of the families of Kapitangan agreed because they expected an improvement of the church services and religious education. The influential group of elders, however, strongly opposed the plan. "We don't need a priest, we have our Sto. Cristo," the caretaker of the Sto. Cristo, and a faithful Catholic, told me outraged. "All priests are liars, they never keep their promises. We are determined not to tolerate any priest in our village. The Bishop's priest will not be able to stay for a long time in Kapitangan. Be sure, we will stone the priest." The fierce outburst was not only the result of bad experiences of the past, but also caused by the suspicion that the bishops' main interest is money, namely the huge amount of money which is donated every Holy Week.

believers, although they consider themselves 100 percent Catholic, is, therefore, self-reliant and enjoys a certain degree of religious autonomy. The Catholic Church and its priests represent institutional aspects of religious identity but do not necessarily fulfil personal needs and creeds. The teachings of the church are regarded as distant and out of touch with life of simple people. The people's needs are related with their mundane existence. Of interest are less otherworldly gains but the material improvement of life conditions and relief of sickness. Christ, the patron saint of Kapitangan, acts through visions, dreams and miracles. For the locals he is first and foremost a healer and caretaker. In a neo-feudal society, the patron-client relationship persists. Besides the family-network, which hopefully safeguards the individual against insecurity, a mighty patron is needed. The mightiest patron, however, is Christ. In the case of Philippine crucifixion rituals, the literal re-enactment of the biblical passion story serves as source of power and a means for coping with powerlessness.

Crucifixions, the Media and Philippine Catholicism

Leaving Kapitangan aside and analysing crucifixions instead as media events, we can discern another layer of identity discourse. Shortly after World War II, when the Philippines became independent and the process of decolonisation was initiated, cultural and national identity was publicly debated. The definition and re-definition of cultural/national identity remains an unfinished project until today, especially for politicians and intellectuals. Since religion, especially Roman Catholicism, is intimately connected to Philippine identity, it is not surprising that passional practices like the *Semana Santa* rituals attract the interest of the Manila Media and, thereby, the interest of the educated middle- and upper-classes. In the 1960s, flagellation became a visible 'movement', a movement that was actually a revival.[26] In countless newspaper articles, flagellation was interpreted as a performance of penance.

Philippine nationalists, who interpret the passion-complex from a Marxist perspective, try to use practices and symbols of popular Catholicism for their political aims. Flagellation and crucifixion are, thus, perfect symbols of the misery of the rural and urban poor. In squatter areas of Manila, passion-plays are re-enacted by political activists in order to call the publics' attention to poverty and miserable living conditions.

[26] The revival of self-flagellation among lower-class Filipino men started shortly after the World War II. Nicholas Barker asserts that unlike other revivalist movements, the revival of religious self-mortification in the Philippines was not organised. Brotherhoods, fraternities, formal or informal leaders are absent (see Barker, n.d.).

Foreign media reporting on Philippine Lenten rites tend to adopt this interpretation. Supplementary statements are added about the perilous effects of religion in underdeveloped Third World countries. Maintained thereby is the image of a divided world, with a few advanced, enlightened, secular societies opposed to the rest, which is pre-modern, permanently exposed to natural and political disasters, and inhabited by religious fanatics.[27]

For the politically left, the Philippine passion complex is an outgrowth of the colonial past and proof of a 'colonial mentality', of an inferiority complex. For them, flagellation and crucifixion are obviously linked to social inequality and oppression. This burden will vanish, so they argue, in the wake of growing class-consciousness. Others perceive flagellation as horrifying and barbaric but nevertheless intrinsically Filipino, part of a 400-year old cultural heritage. Accordingly self-induced pain and suffering is seen as a necessary ingredient of the Filipino world view. The term 'Calvary Catholicism' is a reflection of this outlook.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the media interest in flagellation declined and shifted to another form of self-mortification, namely crucifixion. It was the village of San Pedro Cutud in the province of Pampanga which became increasingly popular due to its Holy Week rituals of flagellation *and* crucifixion by nailing, which started in 1961. There are between ten and fifteen Cristos nailed to the cross and hundreds of flagellants are present yearly. In the late 1980s, the Department of Tourism started to sponsor crucifixions financially. Meanwhile, multinational soft drink corporations, Coke and Pepsi, discovered the place and erected "Welcome" sponsorship banners and drink stalls at 'Calvary', where the crucifixions take place.[28] On Good Friday, 20,000 people visiting San Pedro Cutud annually to witness the flagellation and crucifixion.

Through the efforts of the Philippine print and broadcast media, a standard version of flagellation and crucifixion was created. The Holy Week rituals in San Pedro Cutud served as the initial model and the standard interpretation derived from this model, is applicable to any other place.

On the Saturday following Good Friday, in almost all newspapers of the country one can read articles on the front page like the following:

> **San Fernando, Pampanga**
> Fourteen people were crucified in Barangay San Pedro Cutud here on Good Friday and dozens whipped their own back into bloody pulp as the country commemorated the death of Jesus Christ nearly 2,000 years ago. One Japanese and thirteen Filipinos

[27] See, for example, the TV-documentary of the German journalist Hetkämper, "Kreuzigung unter dem Vulkan" [Crucifixion under the Vulcano] (NDR (ARD-Studio Tokio), 1996).

[28] See Barker, n.d.

were nailed to wooden crosses under a broiling noon sun while thousands of tourists from the United States, Japan, and Europe gawked at the spectacle in Asia's only majority Catholic country.

The Catholic Church however frowns on the bloody rites which combine Catholic fervour with traditional primitive beliefs… One of the men who flagellated himself with a bamboo whip encrusted with glass shards said the rite was part of a vow he took to implore God to stop the flow of volcanic mud called *lahar* from nearby Mount Pinatubo… Reaction by tourists to the crucifixions ranged from revulsion to admiration.

'It's nice to see, but it's crazy,' said Frank Demeyere, a 27-year old native of Brussels who works in Hong Kong for a trading company.

'Religion drives people too far', said Antoinette Bruin, a 25-year old secretary from Rotterdam… George Morgan, a 41-year old businessman from London, was horrified about the risk of contracting AIDS. 'It's very interesting to understand a bit of the local culture. I wasn't disappointed but these people should be more careful about the HIV virus,' he said. Local officials assured participants only clean nails were used.

The 14 individuals were nailed to the cross for about 15 minutes before being brought down and given herbs to close their wounds.

Roland Ocampo, who has been nailed to the cross every Good Friday for the past seven years, defended the practice and said he would continue being crucified as part of a vow to God.

'I am doing this because the birth of my wife went well,' he said as he winced in pain after his ordeal.

Hawkers in Cutud did a brisk business selling soft drinks, fried fish balls, and wide-brimmed hats along the narrow two-lane road leading to the crucifixion site.

This excerpt from an article in *The Philippine Journal* (Saturday, 6 April 1996) provides an apt example of how newspaper reports are produced. All of these Good Friday reports, so I learnt from a Filipino journalist, are usually prefabricated. Only the number of crucifixions, the names of local actors, and some comments of tourists were inserted after the reporter witnessing (at least part-time) the Good Friday rites has transmitted this information by telephone.

The phrase "the Catholic Church frowns on the bloody rites," the depiction of flagellation and crucifixion as a combination of Catholic fanaticism with primitive beliefs, the emphasis on vows as the main motivation for flagellation and crucifixion, and the comments by non-Philippine tourists are often repeated themes.

Public knowledge about the 'true nature' of flagellation and crucifixions and the public discourse on Good Friday is shaped by the media. The discourse is ambivalent throughout. The Catholic Church neither condemns, nor condones the Lenten rituals. Fascination of and opposition to flagellation and crucifixion are simultaneously at hand. Crucial questions are raised: "Who are we Filipinos?" or, at least, "Who are those Filipinos with the lashed and

bloody backs, or nailed to the cross?" Semana Santa, as the main religious celebration of the year, and the bloody Lenten rites give occasion to politicians, representatives of the Catholic Church and journalists to release statements about the meaning of Christ's death for the communal whole, for the nation, for 'being Filipino.' The sense of 'togetherness', of unity, of a shared cultural heritage and destiny, is evoked and affirmed. Thus cultural identity is negotiated through the interpretation of passional Catholicism.

Conclusion

Inspired by the typology of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber's ideas on stigma/charisma and his concept of the 'ideal-typical' prophet, I reflected upon Philippine crucifixion rituals under the perspective of Christian community formation. Three different community formations were explored:

(a) *The community of followers around a healer*: Here the focus is on healing power. Salvation is pragmatically equated with physical healing. The centre of the group is a charismatic leader who regularly performs healing sessions. Crucifixion is evidence of his/her complete submission to God. Crucifixion can be considered as a ritual by which self-stigmatisation is transformed into charisma. Crucifixion provides charismatic authority on which the religious community is based.

(b) *The local community of believers of Kapitangan*: Bonds of solidarity are maintained among villagers by their intimate relationship to the local patron saint. Salvation can be received through Sto. Cristo. Therefore, the 'means of grace' (*Gnadenmittel*) are not completely in the hands of the Catholic Church and its representatives. The ritual crucifixions in the churchyard of Kapitangan are interpreted as proof of Sto. Cristo's power. Thousands of pilgrims and spectators underscore the importance of the Sto. Cristo and afford the local community with social prestige. The sense of belonging within the local community is, thus, enforced by ritual crucifixion irrespective of the motives and ambitions of the victim.

(c) For *the national community* — still in the making — crucifixions, recoded by the print and broadcast media, serve as a focus and illustration of the nations' cultural heritage. Crucifixions are not practiced in all regions of the Phillipines, but because flagellation and crucifixions are media events they are *known* across the archipelago. Token opposition and critique of the barbaric and gruesome spectacle are a part of the public discourse on religion and modernity, but Lenten rites, self-

mortification, blood-shedding, and suffering are nonetheless depicted as components of Filipino identity.

I cannot share the daring ambitions of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, both fascinated by the all-embracing impact of modernity, in constructing grand narratives on the essential structures of Christian community formation. New Religious Movements defy sociological theorising and the explanatory capacity of the models I have used herein is definitely limited. Nonetheless, the ideas of Weber and Troeltsch enable us to widen the frame of analysis so that the peculiarity of Philippine crucifixion and its bizarre, exotic aura dissolve, at least partially. It has become evident, so I hope, that ritual crucifixion as a localised form of Christianity inherits social forces unfolded on three communal levels.

Fieldwork among Catholics in Kapitangan showed that the Christian message is socially realised not so much through the church's teachings, but through the literal interpretation of the 'founding myth' or master narrative of Christianity, namely the passion story of Christ. This myth allows for different modes of identification. Identification with the Christian religion is established and 'acted out' through the passional discourse, including the image of Sto. Cristo, Christ on the cross.

References

Aguilar, F. V., Jr. (1998) *Clash of Spirits. The History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Assmann, A. (1999) *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München: C. H. Beck.

Assmann, J. (1992) *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München: C. H. Beck.

Barker, E. (1982) *New Religious Movements: Perspective for understanding society*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.

—— (1999) "New Religious Movements: their incidence and significance", in B. Wilson and J. Cresswell (eds.), *New Religious Movements. Challenge and Response*. London: Routledge, Pp. 15–32.

Barker, N. H. (n.d.) *The revival of religious Self-Flagellation in Lowland Christian Philippines.* Available at: www2.hawaii.edu/~millado/flagellationfolder/flagellation.html [accessed on: 30 September 2008].

Becker, H. (1932) *Systematic Sociology on the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre of Leopold von Wiese*. New York: Wiley.

Berger, P. (1963) "Charisma and religious innovation: The social location of Israelite prophecy". *American Sociological Review* 28(6): 940–950.

—— (1973) *The Social Reality of Religion*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

—— (ed.) (1999) *The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids: Erdmans.

Bräunlein, P. J. (2003) "Pasyon. Religionswissenschaftliche und ethnologische Untersuchungen zu Selbst-Geißelung und Selbst-Kreuzigung auf den Philippinen und im Abendland". Unpubl. post-doctoral thesis.

—— (2008) "'Passion' als Idiom von Kritik und Widerstand im philippinischen Katholizismus", in M. Hutter (ed.), *Religionsinterne Kritik und religiöser Pluralismus im gegenwärtigen Südostasien*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, Pp. 231–250.

—— (2009) "Image Transmissions as Image Acts. Christian images, emotions and religious conversion in the Philippines", in B. Mersmann and A. Schneider (eds.), *Image Transmission: Christian Images, Emotions and Religious Conversion in the Philippines*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, Pp. 11–37.

Bulatao, J. C. (1992) [1981] "The New Mysticism in the Philippine Church", in J. C. Bulatao, *Phenomena and their Interpretation. Landmark Essays 1957–1989*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, Pp. 54–62.

Cannell, F. (1995) "The Imitation of Christ in Bicol, Philippines". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* N.S. (1): 377–394.

—— (1999) *Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— (2005) "Immaterial Culture. Idolatry in the Relación de las Islas Filipinas. The Philippines in 1600", in A. Willford and K. M. George (eds.), *Spirited Politics. Religion and Public Life in Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Pp. 159–184.

—— (2006) "Reading as Gift and Writing as Theft", in F. Cannell (ed.), *The Anthropology of Christianity*. Durham: Duke University Press, Pp. 134–162.

Chirino, P. S. (1969) [1604] *Relación de las Islas Filipinas I de lo que en ellas an trabajado los padres de la Compañia de Iesvs*. Vol. 15. Manila: Historical Conservation Society.

Chryssides, G. D. (1999) *Exploring New Religions*. London / New York: Cassell.

Dawson, L. L. (1992) "Church/sect theory: Getting it straight". *North American Religion* 1: 5–28.

Ebertz, M. N. (1999) "Die Institutionalisierung von Charisma und Stigma: Herrschaftsbegründung und Herrschaftskritik im frühen Christentum", in M. Krüggeler, K. Gabriel and W. Gebhardt (eds.), *Institution – Organisation – Bewegung. Sozialformen der Religion im Wandel*. Opladen: Leske & Budrich, Pp. 133–150.

Elwood, D. J. (1971) "Popular Filipino Concepts of Christ". *Siliman Journal* 18(2): 154–163.

Emmet, D. (1956) "Prophets and their societies". *Journal of the Royal anthropological Institute* 86: 13–23.

Foucault, M. (1975) *Surveiller et punir. La naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard.

Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On collective memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hall, M. (1987) "Sect", in M. Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. 13. London/New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Pp. 154–159.

Hamilton, M. (1995) *The Sociology of Religion*. London: Routledge.

—— (1998) *Sociology and the World's Religions*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Heelas, P. (1996) *The New Age Movement*. London: Routledge.

Ileto, R. (1979) *Pasyon and revolution: Popular movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press.

Hetkämper, R. (1996) *Kreuzigung unter dem Vulkan: Eine philippinische Passion*. Redaktion: Carl Heinz Ibe. NDR [TV documentary]

Kaut, C. (1960) "Process and Social Structure in a Philippine Lowland Settlement", in R. K. Sakai (ed.), *Studies on Asia*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Pp. 35–50.

—— (1961) "Utang na Loob: A System of Contractual Obligation among Tagalogs". *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 17(3): 256–272.

—— (1965) "The Principle of Contingency in Tagalog Society". *Asian Studies* 3(1): 1–15.

Keller, M. (2002) *The Hammer and the Flute. Women, power, and spirit possession*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Krech, V. and Tyrell, H. (eds) (1995) *Religionssoziologie um 1900*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
Lahiri, S. (2005) "The Priestess and the Politician: Enunciating Filipino Cultural Nationalism through Mt. Banahaw", in A. Willford and K. M. George (eds.), *Spirited Politics. Religion and Public Life in Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Pp. 23–44.
Long, B. O. (1981) "Social dimensions of prophetic conflict". *Semeia* 21: 31–53.
Luckmann, T. (1967) *The Invisible Religion*. New York: Macmillan.
Mödritzer, H. (1994) *Stigma und Charisma im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Zur Soziologie des Urchristentums*. Freiburg/Schweiz: Universitäts-Verlag.
Rafael, V. (1988) *Contracting colonialism: Translation and Christian conversion in Tagalog society under early Spanish rule*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press.
Ribadeneira, M. de (1947) [1599] *Historia de las Islas del archipiélago filipino y reinos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cochinchina, Malaca, Siam, Cambodge y Japón, y de lo sucedido en ellos a los Religiosos Descalcos*. Madrid: Colección España Misionera 3.
Takefumi, T. (1987) "The spirit cult of Santo Nino: An anthropological study of popular religiosity in the Philippines". Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, U.P. Diliman.
Teñazas, R. C. P. (1965) *The Santo Niño of Cebu*. Cebu City: San Carlos Publ.
Tiatco, A. P. and Bonifacio-Ramolete, A. (2008) "Cutud's Ritual of Nailing on the Cross: Performance of Pain and Suffering". *Asian Theater Journal* 25(1): 58–61, 63–76.
Tiongson, N. (1976) "Pasyon: The best known Filipino book". *Archipelago* 4: 1–28.
Trimillos, R. D. (1992) "Pasyon: Lenten Observance of the Philippines as Southeast Asian Theater", in K. Foley (ed.), *Local Manifestations and Cross-Cultural Implications: Essays on Southeast Asian Performing Arts*. Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies / University of California, Pp. 5–22.
Troeltsch, E. (1931) *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. New York: Macmillan.
Turner, B. S. (1974) *Weber and Islam*. London: Routledge.
Turner, V. and Turner, E. (1978) *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia.
van Dülmen, R. (1995) *Theater des Schreckens. Gerichtspraxis und Strafrituale in der frühen Neuzeit*. München: C. H. Beck.
Wach, J. (1944) *Sociology of Religion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Weber, M. (1965) *The Sociology of Religion*. London: Methuen.
Wendt, R. (1997) *Fiesta Filipina. Koloniale Kultur zwischen Imperialismus und neuer Identität.* Freiburg: Rombach Verlag.
Wiegele, K. L. (2004) *Investing in Miracles: El Shaddai and the Transformation of Popular Catholicism in the Philippines*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
—— (2006) "Catholics Rich in Spirit: El Shaddai's Modern Engagements". *Philippine Studies* 54(4): 495–520.
Wilson, B. (1970) *Religious Sects*. London: Weidenfeld Nicolson.
—— (1982) *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Zialcita, F. N. (1986) "Popular Interpretations of the Passion of Christ". *Philippine Sociological Review* 34: 56–62.