PASYON AND REVOLUTION

Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910

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CHAPTER 1

Toward a History from Below

One Sunday morning in May 1967, residents of Manila awoke to find a strange uprising in their midst. A little past midnight, street fighting had erupted along a section of Taft Avenue between the constabulary and hundreds of followers of a religio-political society calling itself Lapiang Malaya, the Freedom Party. Armed only with sacred bolos, anting-anting (amulets) and bullet-defying uniforms, the kapatid (brothers) enthusiastically met the challenge of automatic weapons fire from government troopers, yielding only when scores of their comrades lay dead on the street. When the smoke from the encounter had cleared, only a few, if any, of the country’s politicians and avid newspaper readers really understood what had happened. Who or what would shoulder the blame: depressed rural conditions, trigger-happy police, religious fanaticism, or, as intelligence reports claimed, Communists? After some weeks of public uproar, the incident quickly faded in people’s memories. Except for those who had joined or sympathized with the uprising, the whole event was a momentary disruption of the familiar and explicable pattern of the nation’s history.

The leader, or supremo, of the Lapiang Malaya was a charismatic Bicolano named Valentin de los Santos. Eighty-six years old at the time of the uprising, he had been involved with the militant sect since the late 1940s, building it up to a membership of around forty thousand drawn from the Southern Luzon peasantry. De los Santos’s goals were very basic: true justice, true equality, and true freedom for the country. But it was his style of portraying and attaining...
these goals that made him appear a hero to some and a madman to others. He was, for example, a medium regularly communicating with Babala (supreme god) and past Filipino patriots, above all Rizal. He linked the attainment of freedom with the Second Coming prophesied in the New Testament. And he subscribed to ancient beliefs in the magical potency of sacred weapons, inscribed objects (anting-anting) and formulaic prayers. Thus, when he declared himself a presidential candidate in the 1957 and subsequent elections, his challenge was regarded with amusement by regular politicians. His demand, in early May 1967, for the resignation of President Marcos was his final act of defiance against the political establishment which he believed at least since 1966 to be carrying too much favor with alien powers. The supreme’s demand was summarily dismissed, contributing to the mounting tension that exploded in the infamous “Black Sunday” massacre. In the aftermath, the supreme was, according to an anonymous sect leader,

taken to the Mental Hospital and pronounced insane. He was put in a cell together with a hopelessly violent case. Soon he was mauled and beaten while sleeping. He lost consciousness and was taken to an isolation ward. . . . After more than a week, he died without regaining consciousness. . . . The verdict of the attending physician was that he died of pneumonia. 3

The Lapiang Malaya affair is not an isolated event in Philippine history. It is not an aberration in an otherwise comprehensible past. We should be able to find meaning in it, not resorting to convenient explanations like “fanaticism,” “nativism,” and “millenarianism,” which only alienate us further from the kapitid who lived through it. But what we modern Filipinos need first of all is a set of conceptual tools, a grammar, that would help us understand the world of the kapitid, which is part of our world. Twentieth-century economic and technological developments have produced the modern Filipino culture to which we belong, but as Marx himself often pointed out, cultural transformation proceeds in an uneven, sporadic manner so that in a given historical situation we find cultural modes that reflect previous stages of development. In the interest of social reform we can either further accelerate the demise of “backward” ways of thinking (reflected in the Lapiang Malaya) in order to pave way for the new, or we can graft modern ideas onto traditional modes of thought. Whatever our strategy may be, it is necessary that we first understand how the traditional mind operates, particularly in relation to questions of change. This book aims to help bring about this understanding.

The “Revolt of the Masses”

Anyone familiar with Philippine history will recognize the Lapiang Malaya’s continuity with the Katipunan secret society of 1896. The triangular symbols, the colorful uniforms, the title “supremo” and even the very idea of a radical brotherhood stemmed from the Katipunan experience. In fact, our difficulty in understanding the Lapiang Malaya can be stretched backward in time: do we really understand what the Katipunan uprising was all about? There is no doubt that the post-1872 period up to and including the revolutions of 1896 and 1898 have been overstudied. But the overall framework of interpretation has remained rather constant. Just as pre-1872 accounts tend to focus upon the struggle of the native clergy for equal status with the friars, post-1872 studies usually deal with the activities of the native and mestizo elite that was to lead the nationalist struggle. This strongly evolutionary framework places a premium on the ideas and activities of the Filipino priests and intellectuals who gave form to the aspirations of the masses.

Briefly, the main historical themes are as follows. Economic changes in the nineteenth century, such as the opening of the islands to foreign trade and capital investment, led to the rise of a prosperous class of mestizos and native elites, or principales. For the first time, families could afford to send their sons to universities in Manila and Europe. Influenced by Western liberal ideas, educated Filipinos called ilustrados, or “the enlightened,” were determined to have the radical changes in the mother country applied to the colony itself. In other words, they wanted to be treated equal to the Spaniards, the main obstacles to this end being the powerful religious orders that dominated colonial life. In spite of the ultimately narrow class interests behind their agitation, the ilustrados managed to stir up a nationalist sentiment among the masses by focusing upon friar abuse that was universally felt in varying degrees. And so, even as the reformist or assimilationist movement faltered and died in the early 1890s, the upsurge of nationalism was such that a separatist movement—the Katipunan—was able to take root among the masses. The Katipunan’s uprising in 1896 triggered the revolution. But by 1897 the original secret society was superseded by a revolutionary government with republican aspirations. The culmination of such developments was the republic of 1898, however shortlived it was owing to its weak ilustrado leadership and the success of American military and political campaigns to destroy it. 4

2. During the 1966 summit conference on the Vietnam War, approximately a thousand bolo-armed Lapiang Malaya members assembled in Manila to disrupt the conference proceedings. They were dispersed by the police without incident (Sturtevant, Agrarian Uprising, p. 21). The antiforeign sentiments of the group are fully described in Pastores’s essay (op. cit.).


To return to my original question: have we fully understood the Katipunan within the framework summarized above? I first began to reflect upon this question after rereading Teodoro Agoncillo's *The Revolt of the Masses*, a classic work which not only brought Andres Bonifacio the recognition due him (which had been suppressed during American rule), but also gave succeeding generations of scholars plenty to think about. The title of the book indicates Agoncillo's purpose—to rectify the tendency of historians before him to regard the revolution as the handiwork of upper-class, Hispanized natives. He stresses instead that the Katipunan movement was initiated by petty clerks, laborers, and artisans in Manila, and that it was only later that educated and propertied Filipinos were, with some reluctance, drawn into the struggle.

Although I found the story of the Katipunan and its supreme, Bonifacio, vividly reconstructed by Agoncillo, I remained intrigued by the relationship of the title of the book to its body. The physical involvement of the masses in the revolution is pretty clear, but how did they actually perceive, in terms of their own experience, the ideas of nationalism and revolution brought from the West by the ilustrados? Agoncillo assumes that to all those who engaged in revolution, the meaning of independence was the same: separation from Spain and the building of a sovereign Filipino nation. We can rest assured that this was the revolutionary elite's meaning, which could very well be identical with that of revolutionary elites in Latin America and elsewhere. But the meaning of the revolution to the masses—the largely rural and uneducated Filipinos who constituted the revolution's mass base—remains problematic for us. We cannot assume that their views and aspirations were formless, inchoate, and meaningless apart from their articulation in ilustrado thought.

The dimensions of the problem become apparent in the treatment of the Katipunan's split into *Magdito* and *Magdalo* factions—an internal crisis that was resolved only upon Bonifacio's death. The latter's execution, ordered by the revolutionary government of Emilio Aguinaldo, seems to be rationalized by Agoncillo and other scholars as the predictable outcome of a power struggle between equally patriotic individuals for control of the revolution's leadership. For the sake of unity, perhaps the tragic death of Bonifacio could be justified. Moreover, following an evolutionary perspective on nationalism, the dismantling of Bonifacio's brainchild—the Katipunan secret society—was perhaps necessary in order to preserve the viability of a revolutionary government that aspired to create a republic, certainly a more advanced political entity that articulated the aspirations of a wider community. In the history of the revolution, the Republic of 1898 overshadows everything; it is the central event to which everything else is pinned. Meanwhile, we are left wondering about Bonifacio—his passionate commitment, the vibrant language that inspired thousands to rise, the Katipunan's "strange" initiation rites, and the emblems and symbols that often took on a magical significance to the masses. If we, for the moment, lay aside questions of ultimate patriotism and political sophistication, and simply let Bonifacio and the Katipunan speak to us, perhaps a few controversies may be laid to rest.

Eventually, the problem we face is how to categorize the activities of post-1902 katipunans, religiopolitical societies and other peasant-based groups that waved the banner of independence and plagued the new colonial order up to the 1930s. The bulk of the principals who supported and led the revolution had accepted a revised program for the attainment of independence. Ilustrado politicians like Manuel Quezon, Sergio Osmeña, and Manuel Roxas now proclaimed themselves at the helm of the revolution, pragmatically setting the groundwork for independence as promised by the Americans. How then are the "troublemakers" to be viewed? Were Macario Sakay and his katipunan romantic idealists who failed to adjust to the "realities" of post-1902 colonial politics, just as Bonifacio had stubbornly failed to adjust to the widening scope of the revolution in 1897? Were the various religious leaders—messenahs, popes, supremos, and kings—who with their peasant followers formed their own communities, harrassed landowners and confronted the armed might of the constabulary, simply "religious fanatics" or "frightened peasants" blindly and irrationally reacting to oppressive conditions? Were nationalist Filipino leaders justified in helping the colonialists suppress these "disturbances"? Even well-meaning historians tend to answer these questions affirmatively. Others regard these movements as curious, interesting but nevertheless minor sidehights compared to the politics of the metropolis. Still others sympathize to a great extent with their anticolonial and anti-elite aspects but fail to understand them in their own light. "Blind reaction" theories prevail; intentions and hopes are left unexamined. This leads to the foregone conclusion that early popular movements were largely failures, and continued to be so until they turned more "rational" and "secular."

"No uprising fails. Each one is a step in the right direction." These were the most memorable statements of Salud Alagbre, a female organizer in the Sakdal peasant uprising of 1935, to her interviewer in 1968. Her words may seem perfectly clear to us. The first thing that comes to mind is the notion that each movement learns from the experience, particularly the mistakes, of its predecessors. Though an uprising may be unsuccessful, it paves the way for future

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5. This was a prize-winning entry in the Bonifacio biography contest of 1948, but was published only in 1956 because of its then-controversial interpretation of the revolution.


7. In narrating the power struggle, Agoncillo is sympathetic to the plight of Bonifacio but accepts Aguinaldo's rationalization of it. Carlos Quinto, however, has gone to the extent of being hostile to Bonifacio (see his introduction to The Trial of Andres Bonifacio (Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 1963)). The recent work by Jesuit Pedro de Achitegui and Miguel A. Bernad, *Aguinaldo and the Revolution of 1896: A Documentary History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila, 1972) is useful for its documents but does cast new light on the "power struggle."

unity against colonial rule. It would have been a logical step for Sturtevant to apply his classification to the events of 1896-1897 and define the "Little Tradition" aspects of the Katipunan (which, after all, had a wide rural base). However, he avoids any discussion of the revolution itself largely because he accepts the Filipino elite's definitions of nationalism, independence, and revolution. By not looking for alternative, valid meanings of these terms within the "Little Tradition," he is led to conclude that the peasant-based, religious-oriented challenges to the republic were antinationalist, irrational, and doomed to fail. Because of his inability to decode the language and gestures of peasant rebels, Sturtevant could at best interpret them in the light of psychological stress-strain theories. He says, for example, that they were "blind" responses to social breakdown. In contrast, he ascribes "rational" and "realistic" goals to elite-led movements. In his effort to classify each peasant movement according to its proportionate ingredients of the religious or secular, rational or irrational, progressive or retrogressive, nationalist or anarchist, he explains away whatever creative impulse lies in them rather than properly bring these to light.

The "revolt of the masses" thesis continues to fascinate scholars. Recently, Renato Constantino, in _The Philippines: A Past Revisited_, interpreted the Bonifacio-Aguinaldo conflict as a cooptation of the Katipunan mass movement by the Caviteño elite whose narrow class interests made them vacillate and compromise with the enemy. Bonifacio, of lower middle-class origins and with a smattering of education, had been able to articulate the aspirations of the masses for primitive democracy and freedom from alien rule. Previous revolts had been "instinctual reactions to the social order," spontaneous but lacking ideology, fragmented because only the economic developments of the nineteenth century would provide the material basis for a truly national uprising. It was the Katipunan that forged the centuries-long tradition of unrest with the liberal ideas that the ilustrados had introduced. But because Bonifacio "had the instincts of the masses" whose desires were inchoate, his own declarations were "primitive," inchoate, and needed ilustrado articulation. Constantino, in effect, puts Bonifacio and the Katipunan at the head of "Little Tradition" politics.

The general contours of Sturtevant's study appear in the later chapters of Constantino's book on the mystical, millenial revolts that subsequently turned

9. David Sturtevant, "Philippine Social Structure and Its Relation to Agrarian Unrest" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1969). This dissertation has been extensively revised and published as _Popular Uprisings in the Philippines_ (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1976). In discussing Sturtevant's ideas, I have relied on his dissertation and articles, the only works of his available when I started writing this book in 1973. Upon reading _Popular Uprisings_, however, I find that his analytical framework has remained unchanged.


11. The terminology, originally coined by Robert Redfield, was applied to Southeast Asian history in the late Harry Vande's "Peasant Movements in Southeast Asia," _Asian Studies_ 3 (1965): 420-34.
into more secular, class-conscious movements in the late 1930s. But an important difference exists: whereas Sturtevant practically ignores the patriotic or nationalist dimension of postrevolution mystical movements, Constantino views these movements as "genuine vehicles for the expression of the people's dream of national liberation and economic amelioration." Despite the absence of ilustrado leadership, the masses during the American colonial period kept alive the spirit of 1896 in their own primitive and fragmented style.

In a way, Constantino provides a touchstone for the present work. He presents a systematic and clear analysis of popular movements before, during, and after the revolution. The present volume deals with practically the same events during 1840-1910 but tries to look at them from within, that is, from the perspective of the masses themselves insofar as the data allow it. How, for example, did the masses actually perceive their condition; how did they put their feelings and aspirations into words? How precisely did Bonifacio and the Katipunan affect a connection between tradition and national revolution? How could the post-1902 mystical and millennial movements have taken the form they did and still be extremely radical? Instead of using preconceived or reified categories of nationalism and revolution as the matrix through which events are viewed, I have tried to bring to light the masses' own categories of meaning that shaped their perceptions of events and their participation in them. As Sturtevant tried to show, the conditions of rural life greatly influenced the masses' style of action. But the relationship was not deterministic, nor was their culture (i.e., the "superstructure") without some autonomy relative to their material life. In early revolts, as we shall see, certain types of behavior often regarded as fanatical, irrational, or even "feudal" can be interpreted as peasant attempts to restructure the world in terms of ideal social forms and modes of behavior.

Understanding Philippine Society

The issues that this book is concerned with go beyond the subject of the masses and their participation in the revolution. All around us we hear of the need to define the Filipino personality, style of politics, and social system. Yet the masses are hardly encouraged to participate in this effort. They make their statements in idealized portraits of rural life or, to take the other extreme, social realist representations of clerchified toiling peasants. Either way it is the elite, particularly the middle class, that puts its imprint on everything—from culture to national development and revolution. The standard interpretation of the revolution against Spain as the working out of ideas and goals stemming from the ilustrados is symptomatic of the widespread acceptance among scholars that the educated elite functions to articulate Filipino values and aspirations.

The model of Philippine society as patron-client oriented, wherein the patrons or elites are the source not only of money and favors but of "culture" as well, exemplifies the dominant view in current scholarship. The masses of poor and uneducated taos are indeed linked, through various forms of debt relationship and social conditioning to the rural elite, who in turn are indebted to patrons in the urban centers. In actual fact, the shape of present Philippine society is triangular, with a wealthy and educated fraction of the population at the apex. But problems arise when "normal" society is defined in terms of such a triangular structure with built-in mechanisms of self-preservation. When behavioral scientists today speak of social values like utang na loob (lifelong debt to another for some favor bestowed), bijay (shame), SIR (smooth interpersonal relations) and pakikisama (mutual cooperation), they give the impression that these values make Philippine society naturally tend toward stasis and equilibrium. Since debtors are obliged to repay their benefactors, vertical loyalties to landlords and local politicians override horizontal relationships. The society is reduced to sets of rules and patterns of behavior that leave no room for "atypical" challenges to the social order. Conflicts and strains are smoothed out, defused with a minimum of disruption, instead of being resolved. Social change, when it unavoidably occurs, is attributed less to some inner dynamism of Philippine society than to external stresses and ideological influences.

If we accept most current definitions of the Filipino, we come up with something like the image of the smiling, peace-loving, religious, deferential, hard-working, family-bound and hospitable native. The masses, in particular, are regarded as passive acceptors of change on which the modern mass media can effectively train its guns. "Politics" for them is but a game they can allegedly do without or at least simply pay lip service to in lieu of direct participation.

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15. Constantino, Past Revisited, p. 369. (My italics.)
16. It is well known that Marx, in the preface to the Critique of Political Economy of 1859, totally eliminates the force of the "superstructure" (i.e., politics, law, religion, philosophy, and art) in history. But in his political-historical writings like The Civil War in France and especially The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx respects the autonomy and complexity of politics, the reciprocal interaction of various levels of society. The relative autonomy of the superstructure is recognized in Engel's letter to Joseph Bloch, where the former states that only "ultimately" or "in the last instance" did the economy determine the superstructure (Lewis Feuer, ed., Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959), pp. 397-98).
There is a lot of validity in this image. Social mechanisms do tend to preserve the existing socio-economic structure. The struggle for survival often relegates politics to the sidelines, particularly when the masses perceive that politics has generated into nothing more than pulitika—the bargaining and jockeying for power among politicians. There is a lot of truth in Remigio Appalo's conclusion that "the tao, thinking first and foremost of the survival of himself and his family, is little interested in high-sounding policies, ideologies, or principles of good government and administration. What interests him is which party, group or person will give him a job." 18 However, we should guard against reducing Philippine society to this image. We should take into account the innumerable instances in the past when popular movements threatened to upset or overturn the prevailing social structure. Social scientists unable to view society in other than equilibrium terms are bound to conclude that these movements are aberrations or the handiwork of crazed minds, alienated individuals, or external agitators. On the other hand, many scholars sympathetic to these movements tend to fit them into a tight, evolutionary framework that leads to a disparagement altogether of cultural values and traditions as just a lot of baggage from our feudal and colonial past. The present study points out precisely the possibility that folk religious traditions and such cultural values as utang na loob and hiya, which usually promote passivity and reconciliation rather than conflict, have latent meanings that can be revolutionary. This possibility emerges only by regarding popular movements not as aberrations, but occasions in which hidden or unarticulated features of society reveal themselves to the contemporary inquirer.

To write history "from below" requires the proper use of documents and other sources "from below." Anyone who plows through the range of materials available, say, in Tagalog, soon realizes why a history from the viewpoint of the masses has been long in coming. Although most of the sources used in this work—poems, songs, scattered autobiographies, confessions, prayers and folk sayings—have been published or were known to previous scholars, they were utilized only insofar as they lent themselves to the culling of facts or the reconstruction of events. For these purposes, Tagalog sources have proven to be of limited value. That is why, in studies of popular movements, Spanish and English-language sources constitute the bulk of the documentation. No doubt the data in these sources are generally reliable and enable the narrative to be told. But since a language carries with it the history of its speakers and expresses a unique way of relating to the world, the exclusive use of, say, ilustrado Spanish documents in writing about the revolution, is bound to result in an ilustrado bias on issues and events which offer multiple perspectives. If we are to arrive at the Tagalog masses' perceptions of events, we have to utilize their documents in ways that extend beyond the search for "cold facts."


One characteristic of such Tagalog sources as narrative poems and songs is their apparent disregard for accurate description of past events. But factual errors, especially when a pattern in their appearance is discerned, can be a blessing in disguise. I can do no better than quote the pioneering social historian Marc Bloch on this matter:

Nearly always, the nature of the error is determined in advance. More particularly, it does not spread, it does not take on life, unless it harmonizes with the prejudices of public opinion. It then becomes as a mirror in which the collective consciousness surveys its own features. 19

When errors proliferate in a patterned manner, when rumors spread "like wildfire," when sources are biased in a consistent way, we are in fact offered the opportunity to study the workings of the popular mind. This is applicable not only to "folk" sources like riddles and epics but to works whose authors are known. The latter are usually analyzed as products or expressions of individual creative minds, despite the fact that poetry or history can only be written within the context of a system of conventions which delimit the text. As long as a writer intends to communicate, he has to imagine the reactions of his readers who have assimilated the system of conventions used. Knowing something of this underlying system enables us to transcend questions of authorship, which is problematic in many Tagalog sources. Once we have gained some idea of the structure of the popular mind, data from conventional sources like official reports and outsider accounts can be fruitfully used. For example, we can get at the full significance of the observation that Katipuneros went after their initiation, only after we have analyzed and understood the complex of meanings behind acts of compassion, weeping, and empathy, which are abundantly illustrated in literature. In other words, "weeping" acquires meaning only if it is integrated into a system of unconscious thought.

The _Pasyon_ and the Masses

One of the principal ideas developed in this study is that the masses' experience of Holy Week fundamentally shaped the style of peasant brotherhoods and uprisings during the Spanish and early American colonial periods. Instead of glorifying the ancient rituals of the _babaylanes_ (native priests) as evocative of the true nature of Tagalog Catholicism, the fact has to be accepted that the majority of the lowland Filipinos were converted to Spanish Catholicism. But like other regions of Southeast Asia which "domesticated" Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Islamic influences, the Philippines, despite the fact that Catholicism was more often than not imposed on it by Spanish missionaries, creatively evolved...

its own brand of folk Christianity from which was drawn much of the language of anticolonialism in the late nineteenth century. The various rituals of Holy Week, particularly the reading and dramatization of the story of Jesus Christ, had in fact two quite contradictory functions in society. First, as Nicanor Tiangson has argued in his book on the passion play, or sinakulo, they were used by the Spanish colonizers to inculcate among the Indios loyalty to Spain and Church; moreover, they encouraged resignation to things as they were and insisted preoccupation with morality and the afterlife rather than with conditions in this world. The second function, which probably was not intended by the missionaries, was to provide lowland Philippine society with a language for articulating its own values, ideals, and even hopes of liberation. After the destruction or decline of native epic traditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Filipinos nevertheless continued to maintain a coherent image of the world and their place in it through their familiarity with the pasyon, an epic that appears to be alien in content, but upon closer examination in a historical context, reveals the vitality of the Filipino mind.

The Casaysayan ng Pasion Mahal ni Jesu Kristo Panginoon Natin (Account of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ), first published in 1814, was the most common text used in nineteenth-century pabasa, or pasyon readings. It is actually the second and the least-polished of three Church-approved pasyons that have seen print, but in this book I quote exclusively from it because of its popularity among rural folk, who refer to it as the Pasyon Pilapil. This popular name for the Casaysayan of 1814 originates from a traditional belief that it was written by a native priest named Mariano Pilapil, but recent scholarship has established that Pilapil merely edited the 1814 text, the author of which remains unknown. The Casaysayan is also known as the Pasyon Henesis because, unlike the first pasyon composed by Gaspar Aquino de Belen in the eighteenth century, it begins with an account of the creation of the world and concludes with a glimpse of the Last Judgment based on the Apocalypse of St. John.

Bienvenido Lumbera has pointed out that the Pasyon Pilapil is, to a large extent, based upon De Belen’s earlier pasyon. In commenting upon the latter, Lumbera stresses that it can in no way be viewed as a mere translation or rehashing of Spanish lives of Christ that its author seems to have been familiar with. A principal from the Tagalog province of Batangas, De Belen knew his audience well and was adept at handling the language in order to communicate Christian doctrines in a meaningful way:

21. In this study, I used a personal copy of the 1925 edition which does not, upon superficial comparison at least, differ from earlier editions. In quoting passages, reference is given to the page and stanza number in the 1925 edition.
inary development of scenes in which Mother Mary plays a dominant role has to be attributed to the society's preoccupation with the bonds between mother and child. Authorship is irrelevant in the case of the *Pasyon Pilapil* because it bears the stamp of popular consciousness. The text itself, approved by the authorities and printed in presses owned by the religious orders, may not seem to contain striking heresies or innovations. A purely textual analysis can reveal only a faint reflection of how the various pasyons shaped, and in turn were shaped by, society. Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt that a text like the *Pasyon Pilapil* was, for all purposes, the social epic of the nineteenth-century Tagalogs and probably other lowland groups as well. This point will be clarified in later chapters as we look into the underlying perceptual frameworks of nineteenth-century popular movements.

Even if we, for the moment, limit our attention to the *Pasyon Pilapil*, as a text, its bearing on popular movements and social unrest can already be seen. For one thing, the inclusion of episodes relating to the Creation of the World, the Fall of Man, and the Last Judgment makes the *Pasyon Pilapil* an image of universal history, the beginning and end of time, rather than a simple gospel story. In its narration of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, and of the Day of Judgment it provides powerful images of transition from one state or era to another, e.g., darkness to light, despair to hope, misery to salvation, death to life, ignorance to knowledge, dishonor to purity, and so forth. During the Spanish and American colonial eras, these images nurtured an undercurrent of millenial beliefs which, in times of economic and political crisis, enabled the peasantry to take action under the leadership of individuals or groups promising deliverance from oppression. One of these groups, as we shall see, heralded the country's passage from the dark, miserable, dishonorable age of Spanish rule to a glowering era of freedom (*kalayaan*).

The *pasyon* text also contains specific themes which, far from encouraging docility and acceptance of the status quo, actually probe the limits of prevailing social values and relationships. Take the extensive treatment of Jesus Christ's preparation to depart from home. This is a classic exposition—found in common soap operas and novels—of the role of utang na loob in defining an adult's response to his mother's care in the past. For all the comfort and love (*layaw*) that she gave her son, Mary asks, why must she lose him? Jesus, despite his attachment to his mother, can only reply that he has a higher mission to fulfill—to suffer and die in order to save mankind:

Ngayon po ay nagpapal na
ang garao ang aking pita
ang pagasacon ko sa sala,
I'm, I, ito ang mula na
ang di nating pagquiita.

(78:7)

There comes a time in a man's life when he has to heed a call "from above."

In the *pasyon* it is God's wish that is carried out, but what was to prevent the Indio from actualizing this "myth" by joining a rebel leader who was often a religious figure himself? To pave the way for this experience, the *pasyon* posits the possibility of separation from one's family under certain conditions. In a society that regards the family as its basic unit even in the economic and political spheres, this certainly goes "against the grain."

An even more significant idea found in the *pasyon* is that social status based on wealth and education has no real value. Traditional Tagalog society has, of course, been stratified according to wealth and education. The principalia class needed wealth to attract and maintain followers, using debt relationships to this end; education perpetuated this class and enabled a select few from below to enter it. The *pasyon*, again, contradicts this model by stressing the damage caused by "over-education" and wealth on the individual loob (inner self), which is where the true worth of a person lies. It is all right to be maginoo (the Tagalog equivalent of datt) as long as the external signs of power are matched by an equally beautiful loob. In actual fact, the loob and labas (exterior) of the social elite in the *pasyon* tend to be out of fit, as the following metaphor signifies:

hino, mabuti sa tingin
hilo, kung pagmalasasin
nacathirin, cung canin
(156:9)

From the Spanish perspective, what could be a more effective tool than the *pasyon* to discourage Indios from enriching and educating themselves to the point where they might constitute a threat to colonial rule. But from the perspective of the mass audience, the identification of the wealthy, educated pharisées, maginoo and pinunong bayan (local leaders) with Christ's tormentors could not fail to have radical implications in actual life. Take the following *pasyon* stanzas in which the priests and gentry demand that Pilate sentence Jesus to death:

At coming nagcapisahan
ito sa iyong harapan
guinoo, t, pinunong bayan,
di mo pa panuwaan
sa mga sumbong ng tanan.

Caming naghabla rito
di sinungaling na tao
mayayama, t, maginoo
(80:1)

And we gathered here
before your excellency
are aristocrats and town chiefs
so you have no reason to doubt
all our accusations.

We plaintiffs here
are truthful people
gentlemen of rank and wealth

Such terms as maginoo, pinungong bayan, mayayaman (wealthy) and even di sinungaling (honest) are used in an unflattering context. In a society without freedom of speech and legitimate channels of protest, the pasyon made available a language for venting ill feelings against oppressive friars, principals, and agents of the state. This point will be clarified in later chapters of this book.

The most provocative aspect of the pasyon text is the way it speaks about the appearance of a “subversive” figure, Jesus Christ, who attracts mainly the lowly, common people (taong bayan), draws them away from their families and their relations of subservience to the maginoo, and forms a brotherhood (catipinan) that will proclaim a new era of mankind. The friars must have been bothered occasionally by the political implications of the lowly Christ-figure, but the story could not be altered. The following passages illustrate how the masses could identify with Christ—poor, unlettered, and of humble origins:

Tanto rin namin labat na hayang tinubuan niya ito ay taga Galilee, taong duc-ha at hamac na naququisusanong talaga.

We all know, too
the town he hailed from
he is from Galilee,
a man poor and lowly
who shelters in others’ roofs.

Ano pa at ang magulang isang Anloague lamang ulang puri, ulang yaman, mahirap ang pamumuhay ulang aring iningatan

Furthermore, his father
is just a simple carpenter
devoid of fame and wealth
living in poverty
without property of his own.

Ulang iba cundi ito asal niya, ito pagcatuo ngunit, cun itunong mo, na cun may pagcuquinoo? ay ulang ulang tayo.

His behavior and character
are just as we described
but, you ask, can he claim
to be a gentleman of rank?
No, absolutely not.

The way that Christ’s following multiplies presents quite a contrast to the traditional patterns of Philippine politics. This leader does not offer weapons, money, and security in exchange for loyalty. In fact, his followers must leave all these behind as the apostle Matthew did to his tax office and cash collections (48: 2). The kind of commitment to the cause that this leader evokes transcends personal considerations to the extent that his followers are willing to sacrifice their lives. The much-beloved story of Longinus, the soldier who pierced the side of Jesus, illustrates this. Having witnessed (and been transformed by) the blinding light of the resurrected Christ, Longinus informs the local authorities who, fearing the consequences, entice the other witnesses not to spread the news around:

Cami aniling napipisan dito, paasang punong bayan aming pangagong matibay, guinzo, pilac cayamanan oficio at catungculan.

They said, we gathered here are all town chiefs
we guarantee our promises of gold, silver, wealth jobs and high positions.

Tantong ibibigay namin ano man iryong hingin ito lamang ay ilihin houng nang sabi sabihin sa taung sino ma, alin.

Best assured that we will grant anything you ask
just keep this matter secret
don’t spread the news
to any person whatsoever.

As might be expected, particularly in a Philippine setting, the soldiers succumb to the bribes. Longinus, however, continues to announce the resurrection of Christ all over town until he is captured. Before he is stabbed to death, he confesses that in the past he was blind, but recent events enlightened (luminang) him, showed him the right path (daang catuiran), so that he is willing to die as his way of participating in Christ’s passion.

According to Tiongson, Christ and the faithful in the sinakulo exhibit stylized forms of behavior. They are always timid (bini), modest (mabini), gentle, sad, and lowly of behavior. What better image than that of a Christ who wouldn’t disturb a fly (di-makabugaw-langaw), to keep the Indians in a subservient, colonial state? But can we be sure that the meaning of this image to us today was the same to Tagalog peasants in the nineteenth century? Longinus may look sad and act lowly in the sinakulo but his story, known to the audience, is one of defiance toward the authorities out of commitment to an ideal. Jesus Christ in the pasyon text appears as a rather harmless leader of humble origins but he manages to attract a huge following mainly from the “poor and ignorant” class. His twelve lieutenants are said to be neither principales nor ilustrados, nor the leader’s relatives. They are simply

ducible at hamac na tauo ulang halaga sa mundo manga mangmang na tauo ulang dumong cahit ano.

poor and lowly people
without worth on earth
ignorant people
without any education.

Yet, the pasyon account continues, these lowly men are charged by Christ with a mission and given special powers to carry it out:

Ito ang siyang hinirang
ni Jesus na Poong Mahal
magpasalayang aral
gagawin nang cababilaaghan
diri sa Sangsiculuban.

(49: 8)

These were the ones selected
by Jesus the beloved master
to popularize his teachings
here in the universe.

The pasyon abounds with passages like the above, suggesting the potential power of the pobres y ignorantes, the “poor and ignorant,” to use the common illustrado term for the masses. Whether the pasyon encouraged subservience or defiance, resignation or hope, will always be open to argument. The fact is that its meanings were not fixed, but rather depended on social context. Thus a historical approach is necessary.

A problem in dealing with early peasant movements in the Philippines is figuring out the extent to which they were religious, social, or political. Reflecting upon the pasyon text alone, I cannot see how the above categories can be strictly separated. It is true that many parts of the text, particularly the aral (lessons), exhort the audience to cleanse their souls in anticipation of a heavenly reward; it is equally true that the pasyon as a whole is about salvation. But the most dramatic and memorable parts of the pasyon are those whose meanings overflow into the sociopolitical situation of the audience. As the Jewish leaders complain to Pilate, Christ’s teachings not only diverge from Moses’ but also threaten the colonial state and its Jewish supporters:

Ang isa pang catacaplan
nitong tuong tampilasan
sasapacat ang tanan,
na hong mousig Cesar
Imalaqueing calalahi!

Camil, mayayaman lahat
sumusunod umutupad
sa hari namit mataaks,
saca buced iyang tungac
magtataas na mangus.

Siya rao ay haring tambing
sa boong bayang Israel
ano pat, hinuhuhul
nitong ililo, sinungaling
manga taumo, hinaulaing.

Isa pang cabalubahan
na sinasabi sa tanan

Another treacherous act
of this troublemaker
is his plot with the people,
not to pay taxes to Caesar,
such great arrogance.

We are all men of wealth
who obediently follow
our exalted king,
in contrast to that blockhead
who talks like a traitor.

He says he is presently king
of all Israel
this traitor and liar even
puts the people in turmoil
and turns them into fanatics.

Here is another wild lie
that he tells everyone—

di umano ay siya rao
Mesias na hinumtan
illaquing casunungalingan!
(115: 14-16, 116: 1)

out of nowhere he claims
to be the awaited Messiah,
what a preposterous lie!

In the above passages, the gentry (i.e., the mayayaman) perceive Jesus Christ to be the leader of a popular movement not only against the Roman empire which exacts tribute from the Jews, but also against the traditional Jewish leadership. The “people” are flocking to a new king, a liberator (i.e., Mesias na hinumtan) who will usher in a new order. Could it be purely coincidental that the “religious” movements discussed in this book were led by “kings” and “liberators,” that they turned against landlords and principales as well as the colonial regimes? I am not suggesting that the masses drew a one-to-one correspondence between pasyon images and their oppressed condition, although this may in some instances have been the case. What can be safely concluded is that because of their familiarity with such images, the peasant masses were culturally prepared to enact analogous scenarios in real life in response to economic pressure and the appearance of charismatic leaders.

Before the abolition of friar censorship by the republican and American colonial governments, the pasyon was one of the few literary works available to the rural population, and therefore could not fail to shape the folk mind. Its impact derived from the fact that, in the course of time, it coopted most of the functions of traditional social epics. Fray Diego de Bobadilla’s seventeenth-century account tells us what these functions were:

All the religion of those Indians is founded on tradition … . That tradition is preserved by the songs that they learn by heart in their childhood, by hearing them sung in their sailing, in their work, in their amusements, and in their festivals, and, better, yet, when they bewail their dead. In those barbarous songs, they recount the fabulous genealogies and deeds of their gods, of whom they have one who is chief and head of all the others. The Tagals call that god Bathala net Capal, which signifies “God the Creator.” … They are not far from our belief on the point of the creation of the world. They believe in a first man, the flood, and paradise, and the punishment of the future life. ...

Compare the above with the following observations made in the early twentieth century. According to one account, during Holy Week “the old people forbid their children to sing or read a book other than the [pasyon] awit. … Another says that “everyone is obliged to read Jesus book [sic] about his life. People sing every phrase about his life. You can hardly find a boy or

complementing the sinakulo was the estacion, a Good Friday reenactment of the via dolorosa of Christ. Through the town streets and the surrounding fields, a penitent carried a heavy cross, periodically jeered and tortured by others dressed in Jewish or Roman garb. There were other public rituals that taught or reminded the people of the basic themes of the pasyon: the buling bapunyan (Mass of the Last Supper), the salubong (meeting) of Christ and the Virgin Mary, the sermons of the parish priest, and the many processions. Having described the various statues of Christ, Mary and the saints borne in procession, a student in 1916 concluded that "they are generally dressed in such a way as to suggest what they represent. The whole scene means much to the people especially to ignorant ones who need to have knowledge of religion not only by words and principles but by demonstration."

The point of all the rituals—would take a separate volume to describe them all—was not merely to entertain or dazzle the masses. Undoubtedly there were lively moments, particularly in the sinakulo, with its many episodes sprinkled with folk humor. But even these can be interpreted in the general context of narrowing the gap between "biblical time" and human or "everyday time." In traditional Tagalog society, at least, Holy Week was that time of the year when the spiritual and material planes of existence coincided; when, to put it in another way, the people themselves participated in Christ's passion. Take the following account of how Lent was observed in Bulacan in 1917:

People care little about eating any kind of meat, because the priest told them not to eat. . . . So they eat only fruits and all vegetable food. The priest orders them to do this so that their love for Christ may not be false. They say that if you eat the meat you are exactly [sic] eating the dead body of Christ. If you are cutting wood for fuel, you are cutting the head of Jesus, and if you are riding on a vehicle your vehicle travels along the body of Christ, etc. Hence every movement you make is always referred to Christ."

"On Good Fridays," observed another student of 1916, "the people do not take a bath for they believe that the water contains Jesus' blood." We can draw up a long list of the rules and obligations observed by most members of the community during Holy Week: when to cease work or the kinds of manual work allowed, what social activities to engage in, what to wear, what to eat, even when to bathe. Even if one did not go to the extent of becoming a

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32. Maximo Penson, "Superstitious Beliefs in Our Town (San Miguel, Bulacan)" (1917), BCTE, vol. 3, no. 147.
34. Tarcella Malabanan, "Social Functions among the Peasants of Lipa, Batangas" (1917), BCTE, vol. 2, no. 59.
36. Anunciacion Arriola, "How 'Holy Week' is Celebrated in Gasan, Marinduque" (1916), BCTE, vol. 1, no. 6. See Thomsen’s description (Sinakulo, pp. 172-73) of Holy Week rituals around the 1920s, the “golden age” of the sinakulo and related dramas.
37. Penson, "Superstitious Beliefs."
38. Morente, "Social Customs."
flagellant or being crucified, his personal behavior during Holy Week was geared toward a wider social drama.\textsuperscript{39}

The pasyon, then, was not simply sung, heard, or celebrated by the masses in the nineteenth century. It was lived, both individually and socially, during Holy Week and oftentimes beyond it. Furthermore, its meaning went beyond the doctrine of Christ’s redemption of man by his passion, death, and resurrection. For traditional Tagalog society, Holy Week was an annual occasion for its own renewal, a time for ridding the loób of impurities (shed like the blood and sweat of flagellants), for dying to the old self and being reborn anew, and, through its many social events, for renewing or restoring ties between members of the community. Even the world of nature was affected: it was believed that at the point of Christ’s death the elements signified their participation in the pasyon through the sudden covering of the sun by passing clouds, the falling of droplets of rain, or even thunder and lightning.

Power and Anting-Anting

Holy Week was also the time when anting-anting were obtained or tested for their efficacy. In view of the fact that these amulets or special powers played a significant role in the thinking and motivation of peasant rebels, bandits, soldiers and even generals of the revolutionary army, more than a passing mention must be made of them.

One method—which has many variations—of obtaining anting-anting was to exhume the body of an unchristened child, or an aborted fetus, placing this inside a bamboo tube pierced at the bottom. The liquid that slowly oozed out was collected in a bottle and saved for Holy Week, during which time it was sipped by an aspirant until Good Friday. Initiation rites were held on Holy Saturday or Easter Sunday to test the anting-anting powers of the individual.\textsuperscript{40}

A different way of obtaining anting-anting, this time in the form of an object, was to go to the cemetery on midnight of Holy Wednesday or Thursday and place bowls of food, a glass of wine and two lighted candles on a tomb. Before the candles burned out, the food and drink would have been consumed by spirits who would leave a white stone in one of the empty vessels. A struggle for possession of this anting-anting would then ensue between the aspirant and earth-spirit called lamang lupa.\textsuperscript{41} Only extraordinarily brave or daring men used this method; these were the ones, it is said, who usually became rebel or bandit chiefs. The more common, and less risky, way of obtaining anting-anting was simply to get hold of objects used in or associated with Holy Week rituals. The immense Lenten candle called cirio pascual, the candles used in the ceremony of total darkness (particularly the last one to be extinguished), the monstrance, the communion table, and even the bell that rang at 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday, were broken into fragments to serve as anting-anting. In some towns, pieces of paper inscribed with magical incantations were immersed in holy water on Easter Sunday and thereby became anting-anting.\textsuperscript{42} We can add many more details, which are mentioned casually in sources of a “folkloric” nature, such as the following from Paete, Laguna:

Our great revolutionists and rebels used various forms of anting-anting. The one possessed by Asedillo, Ronquillo and even our common “beteranos” were in the form of medallions made of copper or bronze, wherein images of the Sacred Family were engraved together with Latin scriptures . . . The only time these “anteing-anting” medals were acquired was during the ceremony of the church on Good Friday.\textsuperscript{43}

Despite the frequent mention of anting-anting in documents and in interviews of Katipunan veterans—who are sometimes referred to as “men of anting-anting”—the subject has not been given the scholarly attention it deserves.\textsuperscript{44} The problem, perhaps, originates from the refusal of the “modern, rational and scientific” mind to study, much less accept the reality of, other conceptual systems. This results in a severe limitation on what can be studied about the past since much of it is simply incomprehensible to the present; the temptation to adopt reductionist approaches is irresistible. In the case of anting-anting and early popular movements, we have to suspend temporarily our common-sense notions of what power is all about in order to understand such phenomena.


\textsuperscript{43} Historical Data Papers (on Paete, Laguna Province, PNL).

\textsuperscript{44} Hermenegides Calun, “Some Tagalog Beliefs and Maxims” (1915) BCET, vol. 1, no. 156. Anyone examining the Beyer Papers and the Historical Data Papers—both largely based on folk interviews—will notice how stories of revolutionary beteranos inevitably bring up the subject of their anting-anting.

\textsuperscript{39} It is perhaps useful to draw a parallel here with the conception of reality in late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages as described by Erich Auerbach: “In this conception, an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms, without prejudice to the power of its concrete reality here and now. The connection between occurrences is not regarded as primarily a chronological or causal development but as a oneness within the divine plane, of which all occurrences are parts and reflections” (Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1953), p. 555).

According to Benedict Anderson, 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. In traditional Javanese culture, however, power is “not a theoretical postulate but an existential reality.” Anderson describes it as “that intangible, mysterious, and divine energy which animates the universe . . . [and] is manifested in every aspect of the natural world, in stones, trees, clouds, and fire.” The Javanese idea of power derives basically from the animistic conception of a “formless, constantly creative energy” permeating the universe, a conception which amalgamated with Brahmanic, Buddhist, and Islamic elements to produce a uniquely Javanese theory of politics. Particularly significant for our study of Philippine movements is the Javanese mode of accumulating power, which involves such practices as extreme asceticism, meditation, sexual abstinence, ritual purification, and various types of sacrifices in order to “focus” or “concentrate” in oneself some of the energy suffusing the universe. The idea of purity is connected not necessarily with moral questions, but with the idea of concentration of power versus its diffusion. The hermit who deprives himself of earthly comforts paradoxically accumulates power, while an individual who engages in worldly pleasures loses that steadfastness and “tense singleness of purpose” which keep one’s power from dissipating.\(^{46}\)

According to a contemporary Indonesian intellectual, “a central concept in the Javanese traditional view of life is the direct relationship between the state of a person’s inner being and his capacity to control the environment.”\(^{47}\) It is because the state of a leader’s inner being is manifested through certain signs that people flock to him. Among these signs is the tejakat (radiance) which, says Anderson, “was thought to emanate softly from the face or person of the man of power.”\(^{48}\) Another sign, particularly in the case of rulers, is sexual fertility. It is also expected that a man of power surround himself with objects or persons held to have unusual power. A ruler’s palace, for example, would be filled not only with the traditional array of pusaka (heirlooms), such as krisses, spears, sacred musical instruments, carriages, and the like, but also various types of extraordinary human beings, such as albinos, clowns, dwarves, and fortune-tellers.\(^{49}\)

The point is that the proximity of these objects and persons enabled the ruler to absorb some of their power. Their loss was regarded as a disaster. It meant the loss of some of the ruler’s power and signalled the impending collapse of the dynasty. Military defeats and the diminution of the ruler’s wealth and personal following were regarded as mere manifestations of the deteriorating state of the ruler’s inner being.

One of the principal notions that will be developed in later chapters of this book is that of the loob, or inner being. We will see how loob is intimately connected with ideas of leadership and power, nationalism and revolution. It is worth bearing in mind that the Tagalog case is in many respects not unique. For the Javanese, too, the state of the inner being is traditionally perceived as the determinant of overt political phenomena. There is a continuity between a leader or group’s success and its inner concentration of power. Seen in this light, the traditional Filipino attachment to anting-anting makes sense. These are not merely objects that magically protect their wearers. They point to a complex system of beliefs and practices that underlie much of the behavior of peasant rebels and to some extent their leaders. For the power that is concentrated in an amulet to be absorbed by its wearer, the latter’s loob must be properly cultivated through ascetic practices, prayer, controlled bodily movements and other forms of self-discipline.\(^{50}\) For an amulet to take effect, the loob of its possessor must have undergone a renewal and purification. These ideas are common to Javanese and Tagalogs. But historical circumstances have given a unique shape to Filipino beliefs and practices. This is where Holy Week and the pasyon enter the picture.

In his little volume on anting-anting, Retana speculates that during the period of Spanish conquest, the Indios, who had “half a Christian conscience and half pre-Spanish,” wanted to get the best of both worlds. So they came up with the first libritos—prayers to San Agustin, San Pablo and others—which actually were anting-anting. At least, says Retana, the natives had something

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47. Anderson, “Idea of Power,” pp. 16-17. Anderson also speaks about the tejakat (divine radiance), which was seen in different shapes and forms but more often as a star or ball of light streaking through the sky. A sign of a leader’s power, the walih’s movement “typically marked the fall of one dynasty and the transfer of the light-source to another.” I am reminded of my interviews with Jose Bricenoa, the late president of the Watuvat ng Lahif (Flag of the Race) sect based in Calamba and his adjutants, during which it was said that Bricenosa’s choice as successor to the previous leader was confirmed when a ball of bright light landed near him during a ritual.

48. Ibid., p. 12.

49. In his list of restrictions or practices to be observed before an anting-anting takes effect, Magayon ("Kabah") includes the following: "He must not taste vinegar nor cut any kind of sour or salty food; he must not be a coward; he must face it possible any danger... he must not feel proud that he has this cabalistic quality; he must not tell a lie; he must not make use of his human affection and worldly desire for at least one year... he must pray every evening before retiring usually the Our Father, at least three times." For a description of the elaborate rituals associated with anting-anting in battle, see Katherine Mayo, *The Isles of Fear: Truth About the Philippines* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925), pp. 192-93.
"useful" without having to pray to their anitos and other idols. During the later centuries of Spanish rule a further reshaping of indigenous notions of power appears to have taken place. At first glance, the pasyon seems to be about the salvation of men’s souls. The poor, meek, and humble of heart will attain a place in heaven. But in the story itself, the state of people’s loob has an immediate effect in this world. Judas is treacherous because his loob is “disoriented” and “hard as rock” in the end, he hangs himself. On the other hand, those whose loob are pure, serene, and controlled have “special powers” granted to them by Christ. They can control the elements, cure the sick, speak in different tongues, interpret signs, and foretell the future. These are precisely some of the powers one hopes to obtain through anting-anting. Is it any wonder, then, that anting-anting were obtained, tested or “recharged” during Holy Week? Surely the friars did not intend the pasyon themes of self-purification and renewal to amplify indigenous notions of concentrating the “creative energy” of the universe in one’s loob. But in the end, the colonized had their way.

As previously mentioned, once we know how the masses perceived reality in the nineteenth century, documentary sources can be more fruitfully utilized. For example, in February 1897, a news correspondent noted that all those in Aguinaldo’s army wore “scapularies and crucifixes around their collars…and also a band of red cotton cloth having another anting-anting secured inside.” But most curious of all was that among other followers he had two youths appropriately dressed as pages who accompany him everywhere and who seemed to be considered as persons of no little importance by the others. One of the youths in particular has attracted attention which is explained by others of his followers in this way. This interesting youth possesses the supernatural qualities of anting-anting.

It is now obvious that, by keeping a boy of unusual anting-anting by his side, Aguinaldo hoped to absorb some of his power. And if Aguinaldo did not believe in anting-anting (an unlikely fact), he had to conform to what his peasant soldiers believed a man of power should be and have. To the “intelligent officials,” says Miranda, an anting-anting was “a simple stimulant to infuse valor and maintain that serenity and cold-bloodedness which all the armies of the world need.”

Ricarte, in his memoirs, tells us the story of how Eusebio Di-Mabunggo, head of the Filipino defenders of Cacaron de Sili, distributed among his men pieces of round paper with a cross written in the middle and surrounded by Latin words. As he uttered a magical formula, his men swallowed the pieces of paper, believing that this would keep them from harm. By doing this, they absorbed the power concentrated in the hostlike pieces of paper associated with the death and resurrection of Christ. No less important was the fact the Eusebio uttered a magical formula to “activate” the anting-anting. Also, “he told his men that whoever was reached by his gaze (tanaw) at the moment of battle, and was hurled his mysterious blessing (basbas), would be free from any danger and hardship in life.”

Obviously, Eusebio Di-Mabunggo had such a great concentration of power in him that it affected others through his penetrating gaze. This particular episode in Philippine revolutionary history tells us that the Filipino people, led by charismatic leaders, fought doggedly against the Spaniards. But more than that, it points to the conceptual world underlying the struggle of the masses. To the nineteenth-century peasant, Eusebio’s gaze was perfectly intelligible and rather commonplace. After all, the heads of statues and images of Christ and the saints were believed to emit a certain glow, particularly from their wide, staring eyes. What is more, extraordinary individuals like possessors of anting-anting and popular leaders were noted for the radiance about their faces, their ability to cast “compassionate glances” on their followers. But let us move a step further. In documents and emblems, the Katipunan Society is imaged as a brilliant entity suffusing with light a country darkened by its colonial past. Is this somehow related to what has been said about individual pasyon and individual salvation, to ideas of brotherhood and national liberation? The answer hopefully will be found in the ideas and activities of popular movements from the Cofradia de San Jose to the Santa Iglesia, which this book describes and elucidates.

53. Aurelio Ricarte, Himagsikang manga Filipino laban sa manga Kastila (Yokohama, 1927), p. 109; Miranda (Costumbres, p. 61) has a similar description of a whole company of soldiers, prior to battle, eating “breads or wafers on which were written prayers in crude Latin.”
CHAPTER 2

Light and Brotherhood

In October 1841, Spanish government forces battled for ten days an outlawed religious confraternity encamped on the slopes of Mount San Cristobal, in the Tagalog province of Tayabas.1 The story of this revolt is familiar to students of Philippine history. In standard classroom texts, the revolt is regarded as a precursor to the nationalist movement at the turn of the nineteenth century. More recently, it has been treated as one of the string of millenarian revolts, rumbles of the “Little Tradition,” that have punctuated the Philippine rural scene up to the present.2 David Sweet, in the best account of the revolt so far published, looks at the event as the response of the peasantry to “chronic experience of humiliation and of discouragement from the practice of traditional customs, combined with exasperation at having to pay heavy taxes and labor dues to a government which made itself felt principally by imposing economic restrictions.”3 A peasant movement arose when a leader appeared who effectively articulated these problems and proposed a way out of them. This leader was Apolinario de la Cruz, known to his followers as Hermano Pule who, continues Sweet, “was able to attract and mobilize supporters because he preached a convincing message of redemption to the Tagalog peasantry.”4

Sweet states that the religious character of the movement was “a strength rather than a weakness. It was its very other-worldliness which gave it

1. Tayabas has been renamed Quezon province.
4. Ibid.
organizational and revolutionary potential. He does not, however, dwell upon the nature of this religious character, being content with the view that some sort of syncretism of pre-Spanish and Christian beliefs was the basis of the brotherhood’s ritual and ideology. The aim of this chapter is precisely to demonstrate how the revolt’s religious character was a “strength rather than a weakness.” It is not enough to say, as previous writers have, that the revolt was the outcome of conflicts between social groups or a peasant reaction to the frustrations of life. All peasant-based revolts are of such a nature to some extent. Our concern is how Apolinario de la Cruz and his fellow cofrades perceived the meaning of their actions and the revolt itself.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the religious life of the peasantry, dominated as it was by the themes of the pasyon, offered to them an image of reality that was potentially disruptive to settled forms of existence. While religion as impressed by the friars upon the people encouraged resignation to “things as they are” as being part of God’s design, there was also the possibility that individuals might respond to certain themes, particularly those connected with Christ’s passion, death and resurrection, that have “subversive” implications. After all, biblical history proceeds in terms of cataclysmic events. Beneath the flux of everyday life operates a divine plan that is known to the faithful only through certain signs, or tanda. The divine plan can also be known by reflecting upon certain mysteries or metaphors, called talinbaga, with which the pasyon abounds.

Reflecting upon talinbaga, a prime activity of Hermano Pule’s confraternity, was not simply a process of thinking. As the leader implies in his letters, it was part of a lifestyle of prayer and devotion, involving the total orientation of one’s being toward an order of reality in which the disruption of one’s “normal” role in society, including death itself, was a distinct possibility. The events that culminated in the bloody revolt of 1841 was not simply a blind reaction to oppressive forces in colonial society; it was a conscious act of realizing certain possibilities of existence that the members were made conscious of through reflection upon certain mysteries and signs. Furthermore, since what we are talking about is part of the world view of a class of people with a more or less common religious experience, the connection between the events of 1840-1841 and later upheavals in the Tagalog region can be posited. Sweet has pointed out correctly the danger of making a causal connection between this revolt and the Cavite Mutiny of 1872, the Katipunan Revolt of 1896, and the Colorum revolts of the early twentieth century. But certain common features of these upheavals, or the way these events were perceived, indicate that connections do exist. These lie perhaps, not in a certain chain of events, but in the common features through time of a consciousness that constantly seeks to define the world in its own terms.

Apolinario de la Cruz was born around 1814 of relatively well-to-do peasant parents in the town of Lucban, Tayabas province. Having received primary religious instruction, he decided, at the age of fifteen, to enter the monastic life for which purpose he came to Manila in 1830. Being an indio, however, frustrated his plans of entering the religious orders. Eventually he took a job as lay brother, or donado, at the San Juan de Dios Hospital, a charitable institution. Sinibaldo de Mas, who claims to have known Apolinario when he was confined for a time at the hospital, describes him as a “quiet, sober, unobtrusive young man, exhibiting nothing of the hero or the adventurer.” At this time, Apolinario was also a member of the Cofradia de San Juan de Dios, a brotherhood open to indios and affiliated with the hospital. He seems to have been attracted to mystical theology, picking up scraps of knowledge either by reading or listening to sermons in church. Eventually he became an accomplished lay preacher with an ability to move the hearts of the faithful that caused concern among some Spaniards who also witnessed the ease with which he solicited monetary contributions from his audiences.

In 1832, Apolinario helped organize a group of nineteen provinciates, who had settled in the poor suburbs of Manila, into a confraternity, the Hermanal de la Arzhi-Cofradia del Glorioso Señor San Jose y de la Virgen del Rosario (Brotherhood of the Great Sociaty of the Glorious Lord Saint Joseph and of the Virgin of the Rosary). There was nothing unusual then about this association. Like many others of the same type scattered throughout the islands, the Cofradia de San Jose was an offshoot of a medieval Spanish institution “whose religious function was the practice of piety and the performance of works of charity.” Phelan notes that the Jesuits had introduced sodalities in the Philippines as instruments to consolidate Christianization. He describes the duties of members as the performance of two acts of charity:

The first was to visit the sick and the dying to urge them to receive the sacraments and to persuade the infidels to request baptism. The purpose of these visits was to discourage the ill from appealing to clandestine pagan priests for consolation. The other act of charity was for members to attend funerals. The presence of sodality members, it was hoped, might discourage ritual drinking, a custom which the clergy was anxious to suppress.

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5. Ibid., p. 115.
6. Ibid., pp. 112-13. Sweet, however, goes to the opposite extreme of attributing “specific ideologies and purposes” to each Colorum outbreak. R.G. Woods, in his “The Strange Story of the Colorum Sect” (Afr. 32 [1932]: 450-53), detects some continuity which is rejected, for lack of documentation, by Sweet.
7. The bulk of my narrative treatment of the Cofradía is based on Sweet’s article, “Pre-Political Peasant Movement.” Sweet’s source is Sir John Bowring, The Philippine Islands (London, 1859), p. 70.
8. Sweet, pp. 100-1; also in more detail, Promoverones, origen y progreso de la Cofradia, March 1842 (manuscript, unpaged, PNA).
leaders and members. Fleeing the towns, the cofrades congregated on the slopes of Mount San Cristobal led by Apolinario, whom they now hailed as "king." In October 1841, government forces attacked and overran the Cofradia encampment at Aritao, killing hundreds of Apolinario’s followers. Their leader was captured and executed soon after.

Cofradia Rituals and Prayers

What the Spaniards found most striking about the rebels was the state of excitement or frenzy in which they fought and their almost "irrational" disregard for personal safety as they confronted a vastly superior government force. This "irrational" quality has often been ascribed to other peasant-backed revolts in the archipelago as well. 11 Katipuneros, Colorums, and Sakdalistas are described as having fought with a seeming disregard for death, thus resulting in appalling casualties on their side. The psychological explanation, which also finds its way into analyses of the Muslim *jarnamentado* phenomenon, not only fails to account for the elaborate ritual that accompanies such acts but also reduces the people involved to the status of "passive reactors," a convenient way of ignoring their creative historical role. This impasse will be avoided only when these ostensibly "irrational" acts are placed in the context of a coherent world view. Fortunately, it is possible to reconstruct an "inner history" of the Cofradia from pieces of devotional literature and Apolinario’s correspondence in Tagalog that have been preserved in the Philippine National Archives.

How would an ordinary Tayabas peasant have perceived his act of joining the Cofradia? As soon as he made his intentions known to a cabecilla, he was made to undergo some simple rituals. First, he and other neophytes were brought by a hermano mayor, or "elder brother," to the town church to attend a *Misa de Gracia* (Thanksgiving Mass). According to Dolendo, who seems to have interviewed ex-cofrades in his native Tayabas province, the neophytes prostrated themselves on the dusty pavement of the church, "asking for divine light, supernatural grace in order that at that precise moment they may be strengthened in their new state of being." 12 They whispered "ancient prayers." It was not an occasion for fanfare; no choir singing was heard. There was "nothing but total, sepulchral silence, and hardly is heard the monotonous murmur of their prayers, which reach up toward the infinite." 13


13. Ibid.
The key element in the simple ritual was the recitation by memory of certain prayers. These were repeated a certain number of times and in a given order, Apolinario himself insisting upon memorization and proper form. The most frequent prayer, judging from Apolinario's letters, was the Holy Rosary, which was recited in full (i.e., the fifteen mysteries). No less important, and perhaps more so in terms of our analysis, are a prayer and a hymn (dalit) which appear among the documents captured during the various raids on Cofradia reunions. The prayer referred to is the Salit na paquitiqui-alipin sa mahal na Poong San Josef (Declaration of submission to the beloved Lord St. Joseph). The fact that it was printed in great numbers is an almost certain indication of ecclesiastical approval. But this does not prevent us from viewing it in terms of the Cofradia, for whom the document served as a proof of membership when signed by the individual.

The declaration begins this way:

O Casantosantosang Josef, Ama, at Panginoocon ko: Aong si ... ay nag papatirapa sa iyong manga pan, alipin ni Jesus Sacramento, at nang Casantosantosang Virgen Maria.

O Most Holy Joseph, Father and Lord, I (signature) prostrate myself before your feet, a servant of Jesus of the Sacrament and of the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

Clearly, the enslavement or submission is not to St. Joseph alone but to the Holy Family, which in the pasyon and other religious manuals of the time, is set forth as the model of unity and solidarity. St. Joseph holds a special place in Cofradia prayers simply because he is their patron and special intermediary. The lines that follow make this dedication to the Holy Family more pronounced:

Homahain aco at napa: aalipin sa iyo, at nang caiko bagang tabong manga Panginoocon cong si Jesus, Maria, y Josef, ay sumacquing pusog.

I come before you, humbly submitting myself, so that you three Lords of mine—
Jesus, Mary and Joseph—may be in my heart.

14. Apolinario de la Cruz (AC) to Octavio San Jorge (OSJ), Manila, 18 May 1840 (PNA).
15. Ibid.
16. Several copies, some containing signatures, were found among the papers in the Apolinario de la Cruz bundle, PNA. A copy was also found among religious documents captured from the Santa Iglesia (PIR, Box 1-25, PNA), a proindependence “millenarian” movement of the early twentieth century (see chapter 6).
It was most likely in the spirit of the above prayer that 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, after the reading of Apolinario's letters and the recitation of prayers, the cofrados would sit together at a cena fraternal, a fraternal supper, without distinction as to age or sex. "There reigned an atmosphere of intimate cordiality and happiness; contentment seized their hearts. They considered themselves siblings (kapatid) and for this reason served each other." 17

At this time, too, the neophyte was required to recite the mysteries of the Holy Rosary. These encapsulate the basic themes of the pasyon, from the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary, to Christ's resurrection. What other significance could this have had but to remind the cofrade of the true path of life which is revealed to the multitude during Holy Week when the pasyon is sung or recanted?

The third Cofradia prayer or hymn we shall examine is the Dalit sa carungkanan ng mga halikan (Hymn to the peace in heaven that will be attained by the faithful), a poem of forty-two stanzas found among the Cofradia papers in the form of a little handwritten prayerbook. Essentially, the Dalit describes a vision of the state of perfection that reigned in Eden and that will be recovered in heaven. It appears to have been one of the pieces of mystical literature that Apolinario de la Cruz picked up while in Manila. It was first published in 1645, along with a translation of a Jesuit retreat manual, by an Augustinian friar, Pedro de Herrera, one of the earliest missionary poets in the Tagalog language. 18 The original poem of forty-seven stanzas was trimmed to forty-two stanzas probably by Apolinario himself, who may have found the last five stanzas too didactic and out of keeping with the powerful vision in the main body. 19 That Apolinario appropriated the poem for the Cofradia's use is indicated by a note at the end of the manuscript version that states: "This is what will be seen by those who ascend beginning 19 February 1840." The Dalit is thus associated with the period in which the Cofradia was undergoing rapid expansion; one wonders if it was one of the reasons for the Cofradia's attractiveness.

The Dalit begins with the statement that its contents are to be understood as a special vision of the future:

Arao na capas na ipa
lalong caligalaya
cum an macaguiquin hua
matingna ng aing mata.

That day most eagerly awaited
becomes even more joyful
should be the source of fulfillment
be seen with our eyes.

18. The manual bore the title "Meditaciones, cum manga mubal ng paghamay ni bayan sa Sana sa Santong Pag-exercises" (Meditations, when one ponders holiness during holy retreats).
19. The complete text of the Dalit appears in appendix 1. Stanzas numbers are given after direct quotations from the Dalit.

The contents, therefore, if properly understood, will ease the cofrade's present trials. For such knowledge gives him an external standpoint from which to view his earthly existence. Heaven is a state of perfection:

Ang magaling at ang totoo
na sundin sundin ng tauo
ang yamang dimacabuyo
sa langit matotoo. (25)

All goodness and truth
that men strive toward
but never quite attain on earth
will be fulfilled in heaven.

The Dalit describes this condition of perfection as an image of possibilities of being, a horizon in view of which the members of the Cofradia could direct their daily activities. It would be difficult, if not possible, to understand many of Apolinario's statements and various accounts of the Cofradia's activities if we failed to grasp the image of the future that colored and shaped them.

The Dalit is easily dominated by the image of liwanag. This can be explained by the fact that the idiom of darkness and light can be used to describe the world as well as the individual self. Liwanag is the horizon of being in terms of which everything can be explained; there is presence or absence, degrees of intensity, purity, permanence and concentration, of liwanag. In the Dalit, heaven is the state of pure and permanent liwanag. It contrasts with the union of men on earth which, Apolinario says, is also a state of liwanag but a fragile one, since its liwanag is impermanent. 20 Perhaps that is why Apolinario states elsewhere that liwanag's source is beyond the world, and that union is liwanag because it receives its energy from this ultimate source, heaven. 21 Extraordinary men, like Apolinario himself, could be regarded as sources of light, though in general the ordinary cofrade was more a recipient rather than a source of light. In heaven, according to the Dalit, every person will be a source of light. No one will cower before God, but rather will

Titingnan pagcaranian
siyang mata't titigan
uulang humpay uulang hoyang
(22)

Look at the eye himself as an
everyday sight, will stare at it
intensely, and without end.

The radiance of men in heaven cannot be looked at by earthly beings because it is blinding:

Ang sa arno na liwanag
at ang sa bouang banag
culang liwanag, at hamac
con sa canila'y harap. (26)

The light of the sun
and the rays of the moon
will be poor and dim
beside them.

20. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, 1 September 1840 (PNA).
21. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, November 1840 (PNA).
The reason, according to the Dalit, that heaven is pure liwanag is because its inhabitants live in a condition of perfect unity. This contrasts with the impermanence of unity among men on earth and the consequent threat of darkness, or diliin. There are many ways in which the idea of perfect unity is presented in the hymn. Unity, in one sense, is exemplified by the dissolution of individual differences in appearance. That is why, in heaven, all bodies will be “under one roof” (isa ring pisan) and will uniformly take on the appearance of Christ:

Baguntaa ma’t dalaga  Young men and women
manga tawo mang naona  and their predecessors
magulang caya’t bata pa  parents and even children
mag cacaing parepara. (14)  all will look alike.

And the scars that reveal one’s personal history—wounds, blindness, lameness, etc.—will not be present in the bodies of the heavenly (29-30). In a way, however, this absence of outward blemishes is only a reflection of the purity of liob that has been cultivated while on earth:

Dilima cocotya coyta  There will be no mockery
hobo mang sa hihilata  though one be naked and on his back
con ualanam sala’s sama  if he has no sin or evil doing
ulaan sucat yahiya. (28)  there is no shame.

In other words, appearance is irrelevant if the soul is clean; one can stand naked before others and not be mocked because in essence (liob) they are the same.

Perfect unity means that the social positions that differentiate men on earth will be dissolved:

Ang mahal ma’t ang mababa  High-born or low,
ang mayaman ma’t ang ducha  rich or poor,
mag sising musing mucha  all will look alike
ang Dios din ang may panata.  this is God’s vow.

Furthermore, the elements that threaten the fragile bonds defining human associations will be eradicated. Envy, arrogance, anger, and selfishness will no longer exist; only love will remain to bind men to each other:

Ulanan capanaghilian  There is no envy
ulaaman capalaloan  there is no arrogance
ang silang lahat n’ay balan  they are all devout
nag ca ca ybig ybigan. (18)  they all love one another.

Perfect unity also means the dissolution of kinship ties on earth. This is implied in the following stanza:

Cun ang Ama mo’t ang Uma   If your father and mother
sa inferno’y maquita  in hell you see
di mabaaasang ligaya  still undiminished joy you’ll have
asal dina ngongolila.  you won’t behave like an orphan.
(33)

The community in heaven is, in fact, a new family of which God is the father. There one finds the perfection of the concept of supranaliship unity which the Cofradia sought to realize on earth. Kinship ties were, in fact, often obstacles to the smooth operation of the brotherhood. Conflicts between children and parents, and between husband and wife, often erupted in connection with membership in or withdrawal from the Cofradia. Related to this matter is the idea that human vacillation, perhaps the greatest threat to the Cofradia, no longer exists in heaven. Apolinario constantly encouraged the cofrades to have control of their liob, to guard against the temptation to submit to family pressures, and finally to remain steadfast in the face of hardships being experienced by the brotherhood. Many cofrades failed to attain such control of self, and left the brotherhood. In heaven however,

Ulanan sala sauluan  There is no fickle-mindedness
budhi ualan calabahun  consciences are not tormented
di macapag bagong lagay  there is no changing of states
mag pa sa ualan mang arao.  forever and ever.
(327)

The intimate association with Joseph, Mary, and all other saintly beings that is hoped for in the concluding lines of the Declaration of Submission is attained in heaven. Love bridges the gap between all beings, whether they be saints or ordinary devotees. Even

Ang Dios namang maycapal  God the Supreme Creator
pinagcapaybigan
ang silang lahat ay banal  is treated as a loved one [or friend]
nag caca big ybigan. (19)  they are all devout
they all love one another.

Furthermore,

Ang cacasa casahin  Their companions will be
Angeles namainingning  the brilliant angels
sila’y cacapanamamin  with whom there will be
at cacao caosapin.  dialogue and plain talk.

Marteres cacabatikn  Martyrs will be acquaintances
Virgenes cacatothikn  virgins will be friends.
of liwanag is related to anting-anting in that the more efficacious of the latter are said to radiate light, and certain persons with powerful anting-anting also radiate light. One gets the strong impression that the little prayerbook which contains the Dalit was regarded by the cofrades as a powerful object, perhaps an anting-anting. From descriptions of anting-anting gathered from various sources, it may be concluded that its efficacy depends upon the proper execution of certain rituals and the following of strict rules. That is why, when tragedy strikes, the anting-anting is not blamed inadvertently; this object really is a sign that points to a different order of reality to which the wearer attunes his existence. Rebirth is its fundamental theme; one in possession of anting-anting often fights to the end because he anticipates suffering and death. In 1840, a critical year, the prayerbook would have been the cofrade’s anting-anting. Images of heaven are meaningless unless the individual accepts the idea of dying to the world in order to attain the perfect state.

A thin line separates anting-anting and the prayers of the Cofradía; all are intimately connected with action. Time and time again, Apolinario exhorted the cofrades to pray; in critical times, prayer was the only recourse to give strength and direction to the individual. It must be emphasized that prayer was not a form of escaping from present reality, but of enabling the loób to enter it with serenity. In a letter written during the interrogation of members by the governor, Apolinario reminds the brethren that prayers to God should be “true” prayers and not the outpouring of fears. “True prayer” lies in the relationship between prayer and control of self, the total orientation of one’s loób in a certain direction. With “true prayer” as in certain forms of anting-anting, the individual can face death calmly because his existence is “situated” in a frame of reference that makes death the door to perfection.

Apolinaro’s Teachings

Apolinario de la Cruz’s letters to the Cofradía were addressed either directly to the brethren or to the hermano mayor, Octavio San Jorge. They were read to the assembled cofrades as part of the activities of their monthly reunions. Apolinario instructed Octavio on the mode in which his letters were to be read, in order that everyone would be entirely informed of their contents. The Spanish authorities were particularly disturbed by the “spirit of sedition” that they allegedly found in letters confiscated during a raid on 19 October 1840.

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23. AC to OSJ, Manila, 4 January 1841 (PNA).
25. Ibid.
The only message of a “seditious” (because of its racial connotations) nature that can be found in the letters is the stipulation that mestizos were not to be allowed into the brotherhood without Apolinario’s consent. According to Dolendo, the cofrades relied heavily on Apolinario’s letters in organizing their activities. The reference here, it seems, is to the myriad of details in the letters concerning preparations for coming reunions, the collection of dues, dispatching of messengers, and the like. Dolendo further says that the cofrades listened “with reverence and also some curiosity to Hermano Pule’s letters, from which the multitude gained profound insight.” Does Dolendo mean that the cofrades became conscious of certain ideas that were new and, therefore, subversive to Spanish eyes? Or were these ideas already there, implicit in the society’s values and religious experience, merely given form by a creative and articulate leader?

The ideas in the letters are expressed through images. Phenomena occurring in the Cofradia, or in the world for that matter, are not allowed to remain situated in the context of everyday life but are charged with meaning through juxtaposition with transcendental ideas. Thus, when Apolinario wants to refer to the fact that a few cofrades have changed their minds and are leaving the brotherhood, he says that thin, high clouds are covering the rays of the sun. The opposition of darkness and light seems to be the most frequent and powerful image utilized in the letters. When he wants to encourage his brothers to behave in a certain way, or when he wants to express his relationship with them, Apolinario invokes images from the pasyon and other familiar texts. At times, the continuous stream of images that he brings up to emphasize a point leads to a blurring of distinctions between the “everyday world” and the “pasyon world.” The letters had a compelling hold over their audience precisely because of their form. The cofrades were not merely told what to think; rather, the images used by Apolinario enabled the cofrades to organize their experience. In sum, the leader’s advice, encouragement, scoldings, and interpretations of events raised everyday life to a level that was both transcendental and coherent—transcendental in the sense that the present was viewed in relation to the time of the pasyon (e.g., the Day of Judgment being the focus of present action); coherent in the sense that everything—conflict, suffering, and death included—had meaning.

The most vexing problem that Apolinario addresses himself to in the letters is the wavering of losb. The test of a cofrade’s commitment to the brotherhood and to the Holy Family was his ability to withstand persecution by outsiders and to resist the temptation to live an easier life by withdrawing. Apolinario became particularly concerned about the problem after September 1840. That month Manuel Sancho, the curate of Lucban, refused to perform the monthly Mass financed by the group after discovering the potentially “subversive” organization flourishing in his parish. On the night of 19 October, Father Sancho set out with the gobernadorcillo and several principales to raid a reunion of the Cofradia. This resulted in the arrest of 243 people and the confiscation of the cash box, the correspondence of Apolinario and two large portraits of the leader done in the style of popular images of saints. About a month after this incident, Apolinario wrote specifically to advise his brothers not to let their losb retreat (urong) in those trying times. Apparently, a few had already turned their backs on the Cofradia, for Apolinario was firm in stating that these people were no longer to be regarded as casama (companions, comrades). What was happening to the cofrades

ay para lamang ysgang panganoring tomaquip sa cicat ng anio, anopa at sa aua ng Dios ay maglipusang din tayo at ang anamong carouguinan ay tiisin at nasa panahon, sapagcat Dios ang may bigai at cia rin naman ang bigih is sa atin.

is merely as if thin high clouds were covering the rays of sun, but through God’s mercy there will be liwanag in us, and any oppression should be endured as it is part of the times, for God has willed it and He, too, will bathe us in glory.

He reminded the cofrades of the Masses they should attend during the following month; that they should not neglect these, in spite of dangers and threats by the curate, because eventually they would profit from their sad plight (“macababai rin tayo sa cahibisan”). Apolinario concluded by exhorting the cofrades to carry on with their activities, particularly the raising of funds to pay for further Masses and reunions. They should “let their hearts go forward” (solong naman ang losb).

Early in 1841, the situation of the Cofradia turned from bad to worse when the provincial governor, Ortega, acceded to Father Sancho’s insistent requests for civil intervention by ordering the gobernadorcillo of Lucban to cooperate in stamping out the Cofradia. This may have been the background to Apolinario’s letter of 4 January advising Hermano Mayor Octabio San Jorge of disruption he expected on the Cofradia’s forthcoming “clay of unity.” In such an event, the cofrades should not be “perplexed” (icabacia). If they are called upon by the governor to render testimony, they must tell him about the hardships inflicted upon the Cofradia; they must not be afraid to state that they have been truly maltreated. The important thing, according to Apolinario, is to face the suffering squarely, not to turn their backs on it. In their prayers to

27. Ibid.
28. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, November 1840 (PNA).
30. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, November 1840 (PNA).
God, they should “revel in the dignity of being human beings” (humagay sa kasaysayan pagkatotoo) rather than pour out to Him their fears and uncertainties. On 10 February 1841, Apolinario, in a similar but more strongly worded letter, urged the members of the Cofradia to be resolute (pacatitibanin ang loób) in calling out to God the Father, the beloved Virgin, and Saint Joseph. Echoing the “Declaration of Enslavement,” he reminds the cofradies that suffering is necessary and that it will bear fruit in eternal peace. But there are some “loób waver in their commitment to our union” (loób na nag tiraong sulong ng pagqueyesama sa ating Kaisaban). These individuals ought to think, because “perhaps darkness is beginning to overcome them” (baca nadilindigan lamang) or perhaps because they have “become forgetful in these times” (nakalimut sa panahon ito). They should remember what their fate will be when the oras na tadbana (the fated hour) arrives. Indeed, continues Apolinario, a few have already benefited the cause, but the fundadores cannot be blamed for this, for they are merely the eyes that enable the blind to see, and when you have become aware yet do not continue to follow the path of liwanag, it is fitting that God let you waste away, for in the words of God’s disciples these ought to be likened to pigs so filthy that when seen by anyone brings great disgust.

Vacillation of loób was not a phenomenon among the ordinary cofradies alone. The hermano mayor himself, Octavio San Jorge, seemed to have been troubled at one point. Not only did he suffer some conflict with his parents, but he also was subjected to unusually intense interrogation by the governor. These may have been some of the “punishments” Apolinario refers to in an undated letter to him, in which he tells his trusted casama Octavio not to seem as if darkness were falling upon him (nabitilon) and not to do things “that do not stem from the loób.” Think about better things to do in these times, Apolinario continues, and bear in mind that whatever has passed is bestowed by Heaven, that the punishments you endured are not really punishments but rather an outpouring of grace that brings liwanag to the Cofradia inasmuch as they have been made to perceive the five joyful mysteries.

This letter differs from the previous ones examined in that it is addressed specifically to the hermano mayor. Apolinario reminds Octavio that, as one of the leaders of the confraternity, he should have exemplary control of himself or “a genuinely transformed loób” (sumay na napag cumbering loób). Only then can he serve as a beacon (ilao), which means, among other things, caring wholeheartedly for the parishioners under his wing and not giving them “a posture of being upset about things that get them nowhere” (postura sa mga pagea aburidong uulang kasasapitan). The connection between ideas of liwanag and self-control is evident here: Liwanag is radiated by the union of men, by heavenly beings, and by extraordinary human beings who possess powerful anting-anting. But, as in the case of Octavio, a leader has liwanag to the extent that he has a “genuinely transformed loób”; his “charisma” rests not necessarily upon wealth, status or education but upon a “beautiful” loób that attracts others. According to Apolinario, “upright leadership is properly bringing to awareness those of restless loób who are being swayed by temptations rising from the earth” (ang tapat ding pag amo sa camalang pagpapa na ala at sa mga balinong loób na napada-dala lamang sa ticsong singau ng Lupa). Having the right qualities, Octavio San Jorge can thus be regarded by Apolinario as his camay sa camilang boong cadabunan (right hand in the community).

How do men control or steady the wavering of their loób? On one occasion, Apolinario urged the cofrades “not to change what is in the loób” in the face of prolonged suffering: Pilitin ninyong tabanan, “force yourselves to remain steady,” he said. Taban, here, literally means “to grasp in order to maintain equilibrium, so as not to fall.” This is the correct attitude to take, and will be a sign to God and St. Joseph who will not abandon them. In other writings of Apolinario, it is evident that the visible sign of the extent of self-equilibrium among the cofrades is the degree of liwanag that suffuses the community. But still, what does the cofrada do to maintain this state? The answer is found in what Apolinario means by having a good mind (matuting isp). In a passage cited earlier, he implies that “thinking” is a state of being aware of the liwanag.

35. Ilao (lamp, beacon) and liwanag (light) can both be translated as “light.” Liwanag, however, implies more of a condition of light; “brightness” and “illumination” are other possible translations. Ilao refers to pinpoint sources of light, such as a candle or a light bulb. 36. AC to OSJ, Antipolo, Rizal, undated (PNA). 37. AC to the Cofradia (PNA). This letter is unfinished and unsigned. Place of writing is not indicated.
panahon, the age or times in which events are situated. They efforts, their tribulations, have meaning in a wider context which should be reflected upon. In another letter, Apolinario specifically encourages reflection upon his teachings so that “with the mercy of St. Joseph, those who are falling into darkness may learn to have constant clarity of mind” (con aura ni S. Josef ay ipaquiñala sa nadidilimang sinabina ang isang mabuting palagi ang isip). Briefly stated, the doctrine he stresses is that they ought to be in a position wherein “the loób expects the experience of bitterness before attaining the happiness sought” (binibiñg na ating loób na ipagsaloób ang kapataan bago ang ligaya’y paratingin sa bumihinging camocha nanga natinit). But if one who asks for life tires of lowly suffering and oppression (caruaguanan), he will not reach his goal. This person “will not be within the fence” (wala naman sa baco ng isang nangbaco), a reference to the parable of the lost sheep. Obviously perturbed by the incidence of vacillation and weakness of loób among the cofradies, Apolinario cries out: “If that is the cooperation we have in this good union, then it is worthless” (Cung ganoon ang paquiñasana sa mabuting caisenan ay uulanug cabulubihan). In the end these erring individuals, these cofradies who do not “think,” are compared to bad seeds that sprout only to be devoured by beasts.

A good or clear mind, then, sees the connection between suffering and the attainment of a “good union of men.” The significance of Apolinario’s reminder that, after all, Octabio’s endurance of his trials made the brethren perceive the five joyful mysteries and brought liwanag to the Cofradia, is that the brethren were made to understand, by his example, the need for keeping their loób whole in the face of hardship, for the sake of the confraternity’s wholeness.

“Seeing,” being in liwanag, demanded constant prayer. By declaring his enshlament to the Holy Family, by constantly reciting the mysteries of the Rosary or singing the Dalit to Heaven, the cofrade was able to discipline himself, maintain himself in a condition of awareness. In this way, every threatening event, rather than cause doubts and fears, was situated in a meaningful context. As a sign that liwanag permeated their prayer sessions, the cofradies carried lighted candles. In fact, among Apolinario’s orders was that the candle before St. Joseph’s image should not be extinguished until after the completion of prayers.

The case of Octabio mentioned earlier reveals that the leaders of the Cofradia were extraordinary individuals because they had exemplary control of their loób; consequently they could be, like Octabio, lamps that guided others who faltered or, as Apolinario said of the fondadores, eyes that gave sight to the blind. In Octabio all the requirements of a good leader were fulfilled. He had suffered persecution both from his family and from the authorities as a result of his activities with the Cofradia. After some apparent wavering at the beginning, he managed to stand firm, and this experience was put at the service of others. A particularly clear statement of Octabio’s function is found in a letter from Apolinario during the height of persecution by the authorities. Octabio is urged to intensify his caring for the brethren, “so they won’t be scattered about” (namabog):

Ang namamali ay aralan, at yuro sa capatagan, at huag paraig sa mga tocso.

Teach those who are in error, and show them the straight path, so that they will not be overcome by temptation.

Octabio’s ability to lead was acknowledged by the Spanish authorities in a report of March 1842, pointing out that he had certain qualities “not common among Indios, and he could establish among them a regimen of order where previously there was a tangled confusion.” This image of confusion turning into order is consistent with the image of Octabio as the lamp that revealed to men the straight path. Without the light of the lamp, men would lose their way, wandering in all directions.

The image of the lamp or beacon that guides men through the thorny path of life is a familiar one in Tagalog literature. In the poems they wrote as introductions to published religious texts such as manuals and lives of saints, early Tagalog poets referred to these writings as beacons at sea, guiding those ships set out to find God. For example, one of the earliest Tagalog poems, composed in 1605, has precisely this theme:

May bagyo mat, may rilim ang ola'y, niliguisin. Thought it is stormy and dark
aco'y, magsipilit din I'll strain my tearful plaints
aquing paglabacayin and struggle on—
tuluyan cong hanapin I'll set out on a voyage
Ditos na ama namin... and persist in my search
for God our father...

Cun dati mang nabulag Though blinded in the past,
aco'y, pasasalamat I'll give thanks

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38. AC to OSJ, Manila, 1 February 1841 (PNA).
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. AC to OSJ, Manila, 12 May 1840 (PNA).
42. AC to OSJ, Manila, 23 February 1841 (PNA).
43. Promovedores, origen y progreso (PNA).
No doubt, the Spanish friars found the image of a ship at sea a powerful vehicle to convey Christian ideas to the predominantly riverine and sea-faring inhabitants of the lowlands. In the pasyon, we find this well-known—to Filipinos at least—reference to the Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea:

_Yaong Mariang pamagat_

_buting sacdal rong dilag_

_ay dya ng naglilaulanay,

_sa tanang nagpishayog,

_sa calalan rang dagat._ (12:9)

_This woman named Mary_

_is a star unequalled in brightness_

_to all who set sail_

_far out at sea._

The image of a ship crossing stormy seas, guided by light, perfectly fits conceptions of passage from one state of life to another, a transition that, for example, each cofrade had to make from the very moment he signed his intention to become a member. Not surprisingly, then, do we find Apolinario using this very image in an undated letter that must have been written sometime in mid-1841 when, dismissed from the hospital, he was hiding out in Manila prior to his return to Tayabas. Most of the contents of the letter are illegible, and there are passages which hint at the difficult situation of the writer, such as his wearing “tattered clothes.” One passage, however, stands out clearly: _Cayo ay mga uacauac at cami natuhalag sa laot ng dagat_(You are abandoned to the mercy of the elements [as in a shipwreck] and we were separated in the middle of the sea). We clearly find here an image of the Cofradia as a ship, a body moving as one toward some destination. At this particular point, however, a shipwreck has occurred. _Mga uacauac_ also means “isolated”; the cofraderes seem to have lost their point of reference and are groping in a state of semidarkness. This is a result of separation from their leader, who is a guiding lamp, or, as he says in other letters, their steersman (may manebo). Perhaps it is more accurate to say that they are separated from Apolinario’s teachings, for at the end of the above letter he says that it deeply saddens him to recall the teachings which the cofraders seem to have forgotten.

A Tagalog Christ

Apolinario’s relationship to the Cofradia can be gleaned from occasional passages in his letters. There are, in general, two seemingly contradictory images of himself. On one hand, as in the passage below, he appears as a poor and lowly person:

_Canlang alalahanin acoy isang Pobre, naunlalang pinagcuconan ng yaman, at
daque sa cahirapan ang aquing pulangan._

Let them bear in mind that I am a pauper, without personal source of wealth, and that my following [or army] was raised in poverty.

On the other hand, Apolinario never leaves a doubt that he was a source of authority, knowledge, and compassion. He gives the impression at times that the cofraders were dependent upon him for support as children are to their mothers. Once, when the authorities banned their reunions, he scolded the cofraders:

_Cayo rin ang may cagagauan, caya tayo nag caganiyo ay mga uulang pag ysep at
al a la, sa gagaling galing ay mga ng pa casera cayo sa mga pagsonod ng mga
cartesan sa atin, sa sinun yonigat tatawag Panginon ngayon, sino ang
tatahothan ngayon ninyo, sa aquin ay uulang mayadaing sa aquin ngayon
aco ay uulang calacasan nan paang date._

It’s all your doing, that’s why we have become like this. You did not think nor care. You have destroyed us all by your failure to follow my orders correctly. So now whom shall you call ‘master’; whom shall you turn to? You can no longer turn to me for help for I have lost my former strength.

At one point, he warned those who had brought ill will to the Cofradia: “Even if I am young, I still have the power to punish” (Cabit acoy bata ay mayroon
din namang yacpag paparusa).  

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45. From “May bagyo mat may reili.” (Though it is stormy and dark) by an anonymous poet, Manila, 1605. Text and translation are from Lumbera, ibid., appendix, p. 1A.
46. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, undated (PNA).
47. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, 1 September 1840 (PNA); AC to OSJ, Manila, 1 February 1840 (PNA).
48. Ibid. The letter is signed “The Pauper Apolinario de la Cruz.”
49. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, 1 October 1840 (PNA). Although signed by Apolinario de la Cruz, the script of this letter differs somewhat from the rest.
50. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, 1 September 1840 (PNA). A Spanish source (Promovadores, origen y progreso) claims that Apolinario inflicted corporal punishment upon erring cofraders, but this is not corroborated elsewhere.
Manila. In spite of his exhaustion, Apolinario reflected that "if San Juan de Dios is poor, even more abject is the situation of the country."

Driven by these thoughts he reached, in his journeys, the towns bordering the lake of Bae, and from there headed for his hometown in Tayabas. He made himself even more lowly (mamakababa). He attended Mass every day and he not only went around bearing a pious mien but also invited the common people to form a brotherhood.51

This account contains many details which are charged with meaning. Apolinario's descent to extreme "lowliness" parallels Christ's experience on earth. Francisco's informants, probably left with only bits and pieces of "facts" about the man, put them together in a collectively meaningful portrait modelled upon Christ whom they knew from the pasyon:

Asal ay caaua-aua
bagoi, Dios na daquita
itquis nagpakababa
nang may curung halimbawa
ang taong hamac sa lupa.
(66:13)

The act of journeying around the countryside, culminating in the formation of a group of men presumably attracted to Apolinario's way of life, is reminiscent of Christ's wanderings in search of disciples. The gesture of carrying a heavy alms box, to the point of exhaustion, invokes the image of Christ bearing his Cross. The black cloak (sapot) he wore as a sign of piety is itself a sign to Tagalogs of the individual's readiness to face death.52

It is not enough to say that, in folk memories, Apolinario de la Cruz's life was interpreted in pasyon terms. In his time, as today, Lucban and its neighboring towns were known for the intensity of their religious festivals. We can be sure that their inhabitants were familiar with the life of Christ, even to the extent of singing pasyon passages at work; the intensity of their faith affected their daily lives. This the Cofradia thrived on. We can understand the phenomenon better through the notion of damay, which sums up the individual's relationship to the pasyon. Damay, which today usually means sympathy and/or endurance for another's misfortune, has a much older meaning of "participation in another's work."53 The whole point of the singing of the pasyon is the

52. Gabriel Beato Francisco, Kasaysayan ni Apolinario de la Cruz na may pamagat na Hermano Pule (n.p., 1915), pp. 31-32.

53. Cf. Teodoro Kalaw, Cinco Reglas, pp. 6-7, for a description of the black-coated tirong, or man of adventure.

evocation of damay with Christ; the text itself is filled with examples that suggest this mode of behavior: expressions of sorrow and compassion, tearful weeping, individuals helping Jesus carry his Cross, changing their state of loöb to lead a pure life and follow Christ’s example. The various details of Apolinario de la Cruz’s life should be regarded as his expressions of damay with Christ.

In one of his letters, Apolinario speaks about having done some form of begging prior to the founding of the Cofradía. Referring, for example, to the amount of 5,000 pesos in the organization’s coffers, he says that he devoted eight years of “toil and exhaustion, day and night” (pajoel at puyat, arao gabî) toward building up this fund without which the Masses and rituals of the Cofradía cannot be held.55 This is just one of the ways, he adds, through which he has expressed his “cure” for the Cofradía. He uses the phrase ysan nang paggay (one who has pursued) in reference to himself, an obvious parallel to the image of the Good Shepherd tending the flock night and day.56

In other letters, this image of the humble leader of men is extended to include the fondadores as a group. In February 1841, Apolinario wrote that the fondadores are the marahita, the lowly people, who attract others to their way of life. To the cofrados the fondadores offer love and compassionate care, day and night.57 There is no indication here of the role of status, gained through wealth and higher education, in defining relations between leaders and followers. Rather, the powerful image of Christ in the pasyon has served to overturn a “traditional” situation in which the principaldia is the only group of people “deserving” respect and deference. To the cofrados, at least, an individual who was marahita could be a leader because he was a sign that Christ was once again among men.

Apolinario’s letters are replete with other images that point to his Christ-like relationship to the Cofradía. Added to the image of the Good Shepherd is the image of the Gardener caring for plants that are about to blossom. In late 1840, Apolinario, advising the Cofradía to desist from holding reunions in order to allow the tense situation to subside, remarked: “and we shall be separated, so what shall be done since I, the gardener, can no longer water you?” (at nagbistualay na i tayo, ay anong gagutin acoy ang nag balambang di maca-pagdilig sa iyo?)58 In this connection, Apolinario speaks about the “bad seeds” (masama na binhi) that sprout into weeds, referring to certain individuals who join the Cofradía with bad intentions.59 But even if seeds do sprout into leafy plants, they are unfulfilled beings until they blossom and bear fruit. This common folk saying is best summed up in the following passage from the pasyon:

Sapagcâ, i ang tayo pala
ay catampunan mamununga
ang manga gauang maganda
at cugì dili, mapapara
sa sinunpa ngangua higuerna.

This is because man has the potential to bear fruit in good works and if this isn’t so, he is like the cursed fig tree.

(72:2)

Apolinario’s tending the garden—the Cofradía—is a labor of love aimed at helping men realize the full potential of their beings. It is in terms of the image of the gardener sprinkling the water of life that Apolinario says he showers upon Octabio the sacred blessing of his care and compassion, which is plentiful in his inborn love for the whole community:

Sabogay cana uari ng mahal na gusay at Santong Vendicion ng Calinga co at auang lagunap sa aquing cututubong pag-bibig sa hoong comonidad.60

The fondadores were, in a sense, a mirror of certain possibilities of existence to which the ordinary individual could respond. Their leadership implied leading others to view their own lives from an external standpoint and from then on to decide whether they should make that “leap of faith” in commitment to the brotherhood. The “function,” then, of leadership in the Cofradía was analogous to the singing of the pasyon narrative: to evoke damay and the development of potentialities of loöb.

In a letter of March 1841, Apolinario emphatically states that the fondadores have never “squeezed anybody’s neck” (pinisa sa lig) or threatened anyone with a dagger to join their union; it was all done out of “willingness” (bolontad) of loöb and nothing was accomplished with the whip. That is why, he concludes in the letter, the only action that can be taken against those who definitely intend to back out is to strike their names off the list.61 In another passage quoted previously, he reminds the cofrados that the fondadores enable the blind to see, but when they have become conscious and yet do not follow the path of light, it is but fitting that God will let them waste away.62 Here we get the sense that the individual is fully aware of his actions; the decision is his whether or not to undertake that passage from one state to the other that is illuminated by light. Indirectly, Apolinario expresses the same idea

55. Referring to the task of collecting dues, Apolinario warns Octabio that “this matter brings about a bad union.” Furthermore, there were a few individuals who apparently joined the Cofradía in order to inquire about the 5,000 pesos in its fund. Apolinario was aware of the temptation caused by such a huge sum, and how a few greedy individuals might “wish to give a bad example to our unions” (AC to OSJ, Manila, 1 September 1840 [PNA]).
56. Ibid.
57. AC to OSJ, Manila, 1 February, 1841 [PNA].
58. AC to Cofradia, October 1840 (PNA).
59. AC to OSJ, Manila, 1 February 1841 (PNA).
60. AC to OSJ, Antipolo, Rizal, n.d. (PNA).
61. AC to OSJ, Manila, 15 March 1841 (PNA).
62. AC to OSJ, Manila, 10 February 1841 (PNA).
in telling the cofrades, on 1 February 1841, to reflect upon the Father’s revelation to the Son when the latter was in the garden sweating blood.\textsuperscript{63} This revelation is clearly stated in the pasyon:

\begin{quote}
Sa pagsa Pastor cang tunay
nitong mundong cabiliguan
ang ovejang sino pa man,
cundi masoc sa bacuran
hindi nga masasacupan.
(94:11)
\end{quote}

Implied here is that the sheep have the freedom to choose whether or not to enter the fence. This is the composite image of Apolinario, the Good Shepherd of the Cofradía, pursuing the disoriented sheep, beckoning them to a union which ultimately they can reject.

In a letter of July 1840, Apolinario consoled his brothers:

\begin{quote}
Huwag ang adala ala ay ang na cara na para ng pagdarawan pa yamang cayoi
yinag papabor ng cahiusuyang Gaua na suat ycapagalah ng Sintang tunay cay
S. Josef at sa Amang Dios naysa tato sapag catauo niya.\textsuperscript{64}

Don’t let your minds dwell on the past as if that has to be lived again, for I have favored you with good works which have fed the flame of true love for St. Joseph and God who has three Persons.
\end{quote}

Two facets of the meaning of personal response are revealed in this statement. First, there is a break with the past, “which does not have to be lived again” because the act of commitment to the Cofradía is a total passage from one state of being to another. Second, response is indicated by a “flame of true love,” synonymous with “awakening” or “becoming conscious,” as the sentence following the above passage implies:

\begin{quote}
Munti bagang diquit con an mga batang masunod sa atin ay agad maguisan
nitong ating capisanan at siyang pagcalachang asal, at ano pa tayo ay manga
matay man ay may masasabing ating pamana sa canila.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

It’s as if there is a small but radiant glow (diquit) should our children be immediately awakened by our brotherhood and grow up in the best of behavior, so that even if we shall die we can say that we have left them an inheritance.

In this passage we again encounter the problem of where the glow, a form of liwanag, is really located. A close reading seems to indicate that it is the union of men itself; Apolinario, in fact, often tells his cofrades that they are joined together in light, nag cicionar ng calihanangan. And since diquit also means “kindling” or something used to start a flame, Apolinario seems to be expressing a talinbaga, a metaphor about the Cofradía’s expansion and permanence. The glow is increasing in intensity or spreading over a wider circle. Earlier in the same letter, in fact, Apolinario warns against refusing membership to anyone, except mestizos (dogong mistesta), who need his personal permission. So many have already joined that three towns are fully organized and the respective branches of the Cofradía can now operate autonomously.

If the idiom of liwanag is applicable to both the individual and the group, Apolinario uses still another metaphor with two levels of significance, as in the following invocation in connection with a membership drive:

\begin{quote}
Auing yinatuaug sa mahal na patron ng A. Cofradía na mag cabohos ang mga
loob ng tao, con baga sa caheyo o sa halaman ay mamulaac ng sagana at toley
magbunha nang madlang calihanang.\textsuperscript{66}

I call upon the help of the beloved patron of the Cofradía to make the loob of men
overflow, just as a tree or plant might fully bloom and eventually bear the fruit of
happiness for all.
\end{quote}

This image has been dealt with previously in connection with the individual’s (then compared to a tree) realization of his full potential.\textsuperscript{67} But in this particular passage, the tree seems to stand for the Cofradía itself. As he states elsewhere, the brethren are the leaves (boong cadabunan). This alternation of reference to the individual and the whole is possible because the whole is an organic entity, moving as one. Apolinario himself puts it nicely in the same letter: “To be joined together we must follow like one body” (Nang tayo ay
mag caocompoc ay mag sumuran parang yesang catau-an).\textsuperscript{68} Each member sustains the brotherhood by an outpouring of his own loob.

Apolinario was particularly insistent upon the responsibility of local heads (cabecillas), in particular, to proselytize others: “Those who refuse to seek other people should not hope for my victory” (ang aya o homanaq nang tao ay boaq nang omasa ng aquing Victoria) was his warning to some of the local leaders who apparently had doubts and fears regarding certain persons who wished to join the Cofradía.\textsuperscript{69} Their actions seemed half-hearted to Apolinario, who believed that proselytizing was not a matter to be treated lightly, being a task that deserved the total devotion of body and soul.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{63} AC to OSJ, Manila, 1 February 1841 (PNA).
\textsuperscript{64} AC to Cofradía, 5 July 1840 (PNA).
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} “Listahan,” by AC, Manila, 5 July 1840 (accompanies a letter to the Cofradía bearing the same date; PNA).
\textsuperscript{67} See above, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{68} “Listahan,” op.cit.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} AC to the Cofradía, Manila, 5 July 1840 (PNA).
This importance given to the active seeking out of new members can only
be understood fully through the notion of lakaran (lit., "journey of foot"), a
word used as a proper noun by Apolinario because of its institutional, if not
symbolic, aspect. It refers to the long treks that assigned members of the
Cofradia undertook to spread the word to other localities. The scope of a
lakaran can be inferred from a list, drawn up by Apolinario, of towns that three
female cofradies were to pass through. This particular lakaran embraced four
provinces of southern Luzon. Also listed down were the names of four men
who were to accompany alternately the women in "those dangerous places
not fit for women to pass through alone." In another letter, Apolinario
explains to Octavio that several men now in Octavio's custody were forced to
refrain from sea travel because of depredations by "Moros and Englishmen
who take captives in the sea." Because of these dangers, they are to journey
on foot instead. Evidently, the lakaran was a very dangerous undertaking,
not to mention the physical exhaustion involved. Can we not say, then, that
the importance Apolinario gives to proselytization is related to the experi-
ence of hardship that the lakaran involves? The "straight path" implies the experi-
encing of trials and suffering with serenity that comes from control of the self.
Furthermore, Apolinario could inspire others to undertake the lakaran
because he himself led, in his earlier days, wanderers about the southern
provinces, begging and preaching.

What we have said about the term lakaran will appear again and again in
our discussion of other social movements. Even prior to the appearance of
these movements, the term would have been familiar to the ordinary Filipino.
A pilgrimage, a mission, an ascent—all these were perceived in terms of
Christ's example in the parable: a lakaran from place to place to spread the
word, a lakaran that knows no turning back and ends in Calvary. The
swiftness and vigor of the Cofradia's expansion is difficult to explain unless
lakaran is viewed as part of the individual cofradie's life of damay with Christ.
In this way, liwanag gradually spread its rays over the landscape of southern
Luzon. Spanish officials were understandably alarmed when it dawned on
them that the Cofradia phenomenon was beginning to involve not only the
province of Tayabas but also Laguna, Cavite, Batangas, and Camarines.

The Aritao Commune

When in late 1840 an order of excommunication against the Cofradia failed
dismally to stop its growth and the continued collection of monthly dues from
thousands of people, the curate of Lucban joined forces with the gubernador-
cillo and the provincial governor in attempting to intimidate the members.
These difficulties forced the Cofradia, in early 1841, to transfer its center to
Majayjay, Octavio San Jorge's hometown in nearby Laguna province. Monthly
reunions were continued there. It was during this period that Apolinario's
letters concerning the need for steadfastness of loyob were written. Finally,
sometime in August or September 1841, as a result of pressure from the friars
and growing suspicion in Manila that the Cofradia was anti-Spanish, the
central government ordered the organization suppressed and its leaders
arrested. A reunion was raided on the evening of 19 September, resulting in
the capture of several leaders, Octavio included, and incriminating corre-
respondence from Apolinario. One of the letters revealed Apolinario's hiding
place in Manila, and the government moved to have him arrested.

Most of the leaders of the Cofradia escaped arrest, however, because the
governor of Tayabas decided to return to Manila. The task of rounding up the
leaders was left to the gobernadorcillo of Tayabas, whose wife was a member
of the Cofradia. Having been allowed to escape from the towns, the leaders,
now armed and considered outlaws, established contact with Apolinario,
who had likewise escaped arrest in Manila, in the town of Bay. They
from there, they marched together around the western slopes of Mount San Cristobal,
reaching the barrio of Isabang, which they decided to make their stronghold.
A call was made to cofradies in all regions to assemble at Isabang for a
novena—nine days of prayer and purification. According to the curate of
Lucban, the Cofradia was successful in "communicating this fact with incred-
ible speed, and with the prestige of the founder drawing a large number of
people of all sexes, ages, and conditions, converging that solitary place within
a few hours into a large and bustling encampment." Responding to the call
in the first couple of days were about three thousand people, including about
two thousand armed with lances and a few rifles. Within a week, the number
seems to have doubled. One estimate gives the total figure as eight to nine
thousand, including women and children. The Cofradia in Isabang contin-
ued as it had begun in the towns, "with the difference that from that time it
formed a group or society apart, the members considered themselves pro-
scribed." They lived an "orderly and regular life. Each worked for his
maintenance without abandoning his religious ideals and duties."

75. These are the figures given by Juan Manuel de la Mata in the official report of the rebellion
76. Fr. Antonio Mathews, curate of Tayabas, to Governor-General, Tayabas, 21 October 1841
(PNA).
428-29. Woods says he relied upon certain Tagalog manuscripts for his information about the
Cofradia.
Apolinario’s alleged objective was to occupy the nearby town of Tayabas and hold the novena in the parish church. Having opened negotiations with the gobernadorcillo and the acting governor, Apolinario might have achieved his goal peacefully had it not been for the vigorous opposition of the principals, who were afraid of looting, and the parish priest, who correctly anticipated that the central government would take military action. The gobernadorcillo managed to delay the Cofradia’s attack until the town’s defenses could be set up.

When Governor Ortega returned to Tayabas from Manila on 22 October, he hastily formed a contingent of ill-prepared constables, headmen, and polo laborers. He offered amnesty to Apolinario, who promptly rejected it. On 23 October, a force of 300 led by Ortega attacked the Cofradia camp, but had to make a terrified retreat before a much larger force of cofrades, who were in state of battle excitement. The governor, abandoned by his own men in the field, was captured and killed. Refused a Christian burial by the cofrades, his body was left in the care of a party of pagan Aetas who had come down from the Sierra Madre to join the rebels. The killing of a Spanish governor was looked upon by the Cofradia as a “transcendental occurrence,” further increasing their determination.

The Cofradia next transferred its stronghold to a higher and more strategic location—Aritao—an open field between two rivers, protected in the rear by the slopes of Mount San Cristobal. A double palisade was built in which the cannon captured from Ortega’s party was installed. Occupying the center of the camp was “a large palm-thatched chapel of bamboo, the inside walls of which were hung with colorful tapestries and religious paintings, where Manong Pule presided over the ‘mysterious prayer sessions and ceremonies’ of the novenario.”

It is during this period of armed revolt that a different picture of Apolinario emerges. According to Spanish sources, the leader spent his time secluded in a small house beside the chapel, surrounded by trusted men prepared to die for his protection and devout women who attended to his every need. The cofrades were allowed to see him only at certain times of the day and with great ceremony. He was now called by his followers “king of the Tagalogs.”

During this time, too, the leader made many predictions and promised which are absent from his letters. The cofrades were made to believe that, at the time of battle, invisible soldiers would be summoned and the angels would swing the tide of battle in the Cofradia’s favor. Also, as soon as the battle started a big lake would open up and swallow the advancing enemy troops. Another belief was that the cofrades would fight “without fear and contrary to the respect which these natives have for the Spaniards.” They believed that their hearts would be as firm as the mysterious sword with which Apolinario baptized them, and they would be invulnerable to Spanish bullets. Finally, during the battle two voices would emanate from Tayabas and be answered by two rumbles from Mount Anaymog. The mountain would open and the Iglesia (lit., “Church”) would appear, uniting all the brethren. Manila would be inundated; the waters from the sea would drown all who were not cofrades, the latter being aided by a great armada.

Previous scholars and writers who have examined the Cofradia have had to rely almost exclusively upon Spanish sources. Spanish accounts, however, date from 1840 and concentrate heavily on the armed revolt of October 1841. The reports show a fascination with the “superstitious beliefs” of the cofrades and the figure of Apolinario as king. Following the official line that the revolt was purely politically motivated, Spanish reports tend to picture the leader as a demagogue and manipulator of gullible minds. A modern Spanish historian admits that, among the Spanish observers of the time, “there was a tendency to conceal the facts and to emphasize the worst, presenting Apolinario as a monster of vice.”

In the context of the conceptual framework that we have attempted to elucidate, what can be said about the “Aritao phenomenon”? Although the “superstitious” beliefs reported by Spanish accounts were extracted through interrogation and are, therefore, probably inaccurate or incomplete, they nevertheless can be placed in an intelligible context.

Active membership in the Cofradia was a way in which peasants in the region could make ideal social forms and moral values, as imaged in religious rituals such as the pasyon, a permanent condition of their existence. In the Dalit to heaven discussed earlier, they got a glimpse of the perfect state of being, a condition which the Augustinian author of the Dalit would have reserved for the afterlife, but which Apolinario de la Cruz promised as a possibility for the cofrades in this world as well. What are our efforts for, he said, if not “to sustain our souls and bodies?” (sa cabuhayan ng kalololat catan-an.) The very existence of the Cofradia was the realization of a mode

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78. Polo was forced labor performed by every male in the community, except chieftains and their eldest sons, a certain number of days each year.
79. Sweet, “Proto-Political Peasant Movement,” p. 108. This interesting alliance between the Cofradia and a pagan mountain people is discussed in Sweet, p. 110.
80. Salvador de Roda, senior administrator of the government monopoly trade, to superiors (Tayabas, 23 October 1841; PNA). Roda accompanied a contingent of 300 men in the fighting.
82. There were rumors that Apolinario was “surrounded by beautiful, young single women who came in rotation to satisfy his needs and pleasures” (Leandro Torro Sanz, Luchan [A Town the Franciscans Built], trans. from Spanish by Antonio Serrano [Manila: Historical Conservation Society, Vol. 20, 1971] p. 100; see also Sweet, “Proto-Political Peasant Movement,” p. 109).
83. Sanz, Luchan, p. 99.
84. Promovedores, origen y progreso (PNA).
85. Sanz, Luchan, p. 100.
86. AC to the Cofradia, Manila, 5 July 1840 (PNA).
of existence as long as, through various forms of meditation and work, the members' loób were attuned to it. Returning to the "Aritao phenomenon," then, it is logical for the cofrades to have perceived their expulsion from the towns as a further "dying" to a past characterized by hierarchical social patterns and relationships. As long as they continued to live in the towns, the "old" would threaten the "new." On the slopes of Mount San Cristobal were families uprooted from the often closely knit kinship systems of the towns, men and women separated from their spouses, children or parents, and brought together in a new society. Being a "community apart" heightened the bonds of solidarity among the brothers and sisters of the Cofradía, bringing them a step closer to the ideal of perfect unity.

The question of why the cofrades responded en masse to the leader's call for a reunion at Isabang must be posed. One way of approaching this is to regard the "fantastic" prophecies of Apolinario as divine signs, for biblical history to which Apolinario was attuned, is cataclysmic: Beneath the flux of causal events operates a divine plan that, hidden to human eyes, structures history according to a series of abrupt events leading to the final day of judgment. These "abrupt events" can be anticipated by the faithful through certain signs. Apolinario was probably pointing to these when he advised the cofrades always to be aware of the "meaning of these times." Victory is "just behind the curtain of this age" (nasasa cabila nang tabing lanam sa Panabalongyo). Before the curtain is finally drawn, all must trust (panalig) in God, the Virgin, and the Cofradía's patron, St. Joseph. During the actual revolt, Apolinario could be more specific in his interpretation of the signs of the times—thus his prophecy of a great flood and the appearance of the Yglesia from the depths of the mountain. These are, of course, signs of the Apocalypse.

Merely pointing this out, however, does not answer the question of why the cofrades fought to the end. Discounting the "irrationality" explanation, we note, in the pasyon, the repeated warning that the perception of signs of change should lead to a change in loób, so that the individual is attuned to, and participates in, the unfolding event. This is suggested, in the Cofradía's case, by the rebels' belief that, during the battle, they would fight without fear and with hearts of steel, and that they would be invulnerable to Spanish bullets. This is precisely the kind of behavior expected of one who has anting-anting. He can fight well because his acts are situated in a frame of reference in which the attainment of difficult tasks rests upon a pure and serene loób. Divine aid is not forthcoming if the loób wavers; salvation is not in sight if one is not prepared to leave the world behind. According to a Spanish observer, the cofrades "were prepared to die for [Apolinario] and for the sustentation of his brotherhood." Almost a century later, men would look back at these events as the "Golgotha" of Hermano Pule.

It is not clear whether Apolinario in fact designated himself "king of the Tagalogs," for he vehemently denied this in a statement made after his capture. This title, he insisted, was used in jest by his lieutenant, Apolonia Purgatorio. Spanish reports, however, are unanimous in claiming that the cofrades used the title in referring to their leader, at least during the armed revolt. While it is doubtful that Apolinario arrogated to himself the title "king," it is perfectly understandable for the cofrades to have spontaneously perceived him as a kingly figure. If Apolinario, in his letters, could effectively invoke images of the Gardener and the Good Shepherd—i.e., the Tagalog Christ—surely the idea that Apolinario was their Christ the King would have suggested itself to his followers. To the authorities, however, a Tagalog king could be regarded as a political threat to Spanish rule. Although there is no evidence that Apolinario ever incited the cofrades to revolt against Spain, the Cofradía had to be suppressed because of the social implications of its "heretical" practices, particularly the way it upset the traditional relationship between the parish priest and his Indio congregation—that of a superior to an inferior. According to Robert Woods, who claims to have used old Tagalog papers in his 1929 research,

Many persons asserted that there was no resistance on the part of those of the Brotherhood. Those defenseless persons, following the principals of a sect whose aim was ennobling, were put to the sword without mercy, for the sole crime of having disobeyed the vicar, and if anyone did resist, it was in self-defense at the moment of danger.

The commune at Aritao was, within a short time, surrounded by troops from Manila and peasant volunteers from the surrounding provinces. A second amnesty offer was promptly spurned by Apolinario. The cofrades, say the Spanish sources, were in a high state of excitement, spoiling for a fight. On 31 October, an advance party of government troops was attacked by the cofrades, waving a red flag, fighting "with more vigor and enthusiasm than

87. Examples of the break-up of families are given by Sweet, "Proto-Political Peasant Movement," p. 107. He points out that many of the faithful at Isabang were women, "the most fainaial" of Apolinario's followers, of whom it was said later that they had been given the task of crucifying all the Spaniards who fell into their hands when the rebellion was victorious" (ibid.).
88. AC to OSJ, Manila, 10 February 1841 (PNA).
89. AC to OSJ, Manila, 2 March 1841 (PNA).
90. Salvador de Roda to superiors, Tayabas, 23 October 1841 (PNA).
92. Promovedores, origen y progreso (PNA). The author of this report concludes that Apolinario was motivated by ambition.
93. According to E. Arosno Manuel, the title Apolinario himself assumed was "supreme pontiff" but his followers crowned him king (Dictionary of Philippine Biography, vol. 2 [Quezon City: Filipinoana Research Society, 1970], p. 159).
military know-how and prudence." Sinibaldo de Mas comments that the cofrades "came for the battle dancing," implying controlled and ritualistic movements.

In a short while, however, the military superiority of the government force pushed the rebels back behind their palisades. Fortunately at this moment their Aeta allies released a shower of spears and arrows, which delayed the Spanish advance.

Eventually, the palisades were breached. Government soldiers and peasant volunteers poured into the encampment, followed by Spanish cavalry. The cofrades defended their position house by house. Those guarding Apolinario's headquarters died to a man while their leader managed to escape into the forest. After some four hours of battle, it was all over. Three to five hundred rebels lay dead. Some five hundred cofrades, including about three hundred women, were taken prisoner. The rest managed to flee to the dense forest of Mount Banahaw, where they were not pursued. On the government side, there were only eleven wounded.

Apolinar was captured the day after the battle as he tried to seek refuge among ex-cofrades in Sariaya. After a summary trial he was shot, his body cut up into pieces, his head put in a cage and displayed atop a pole stuck along the roadside leading to Majayjay. Among the witnesses at the execution was Father Sancho, the curate primarily responsible for the suppression of the Cofradia in Luzon, who reported that Apolinario de la Cruz "died serenely and showed unusual greatness of spirit." On the same day, two hundred of the prisoners, comprising most of the males, were executed. Questioned, before their death, about their purpose in rebelling, their answer was: "To pray."

Apolinar de la Cruz, and probably his followers as well, died with serenity and "greatness of spirit" because death was the fulfillment of their hopes, the final passage to a condition of pure liwanag where they would be face to face with God and other beings in paradise. Death at the hands of the "establishment" was, after all, an event familiar to them through the story of Christ; it would have been but one more act of damnation for them to die for their cause. Apolinario taught the cofrades to accept suffering, even death, for the sake of their union. Perhaps he was right; perhaps those hundreds of deaths contributed to the survival of an ideal. For the inhabitants of the region continued to remember Apolinario de la Cruz, believing that he was alive in the land of paradise and would return someday to help his people. But even more than the memory of a specific man and a specific movement, it was the vitality of the pasyon tradition that made it possible for ordinary folks to recognize the appearance of other Christ-like figures, each bringing the same message of hope that Apolinario brought. In this way did he live on in those that came after him.

The New Jerusalem

According to Spanish records of 1870, Apolinario de la Cruz, together with his disciple Apolonia Purgatorio (who was killed in 1841) and the Virgin Mary, appeared to several persons and revealed to them the path that must be taken toward the attainment of liwanag: the Cofradia must be rebuilt and people taught the proper modes of prayer and devotion. Spanish authorities were once more alarmed upon learning that reunions were being held regularly, one of such reunions in fact taking place in the house of Apolonia Purgatorio’s widow. The new cofradia, they discovered, was called “Cofradia of St. Joseph, St. Apolinario and St. Apolonia.” As the magistrate Salvador Elio put it, “this is to say that they sanctify . . . the event of 1841 and those two criminals are recognized as martyrs.”

At the time (1870) Spanish authorities discovered the revived Cofradia, its leader was Januario Labios, who was linked in a way to the old Cofradia by virtue of the fact that his father-in-law, Andres Labios, was considered by the inhabitants of the locality to have been involved in the 1841 revolt. The old man Andres used to walk about the barrios in the vicinity of the mountain, telling the inhabitants of his communications with the Virgin and Apolinario and how they had taught him prayers and rituals which gave him powers of invisibility and invulnerability to certain types of physical harm. As a result of his teachings, his son-in-law Januario “underwent a transformation” and himself took to wandering in the mountain and the surrounding barrios, praying and proselytizing. He “seduced the imagination of the inhabitants” by telling them of his talks with Apolinario, Apolonia and the Virgin, of how they had revealed to him the form of the Cofradia to be revived and the new religious practices to be instituted. In return for the perseverance of the

96. In San, Luzon, p. 99. This is most likely accurate, for when the Colorsun met the Katipunan revolt in 1896 they walked to battle as in a church procession, dressed in white garb (Artemio Risore, Memoirs [Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1963], p. 84).
97. The number killed in battle varies widely. Sinibaldo de Mas puts it at 240 (Luzon, p. 99); Woods ("Colomun," p. 429), puts it at 800, according to his information; Barrows (in Manuel, Dictionary, vol. 2, p. 159) puts it at "about a thousand."
98. San, Luzon, p. 100.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
102. Informe del Sr. Magistrado D. Salvador Elio, Manila, 27 July 1870 (PNA); Interrogation and statements of Fr. Francisco Rosas, parish priest of Tayabas, 16 June 1870 (PNA). Information about the resurgence of the Cofradia in 1870 comes from documents in the Apolinario de la Cruz bundle in the Philippine National Archives.
103. Emilio Martin, alcaldar mayor of Tayabas, to the Governor-General, Sobre reorganización de la Cofradía de San José, Tayabas, 19 June 1870 (PNA).
cofrades, they would be granted "eternal felicity for their souls in the afterlife, and in this life the abolition of tribute and above all, independence."

The writer of the above report, Alcalde Mayor Emilio Martin, says that independence was the ultimate goal of Labios's Cofradia. If this information is accurate and not merely a product of Spanish paranoia about the event, the use of the term independencia may reflect changes taking place in Manila.

After the successful revolution of 1868 in Spain and the establishment there of a liberal government, a new governor-general, Carlos Maria de la Torre, was sent to the Philippines in 1869 to introduce liberal reforms. De la Torre's liberal ideology as well as behavior was appreciated by the native elite. During his short-lived administration (1869-71), he encouraged freedom of speech, abolished censorship of the press, and in general stimulated the reformist spirit among various segments of the educated elite. It is possible that news, however distorted, of these "sensational" events in the capital filtered out to the rural areas. Could this have been regarded as one of the signs of impending cataclysmic change, that thus led Labios to promise independencia? As we shall see, during and after the revolution at the turn of the century, similar leaders appropriated the word independencia (kalayaan), giving it meanings often unintended by the elite who introduced the term.

Alarmied civil and ecclesiastical authorities in Tayabas certainly suspected a link between Manila liberal politics and the reorganization of the Cofradia, for its "subversive" nature was evident in the members' refusal to pay tribute or perform the annual personal service. But the authorities found it hard to believe that a simple peasant like Januario Labios could be behind the whole affair. They also could not imagine that a man of no education was able to devise the unusual prayers and rituals of the Cofradia. In the interrogation of some captured members, an attempt was made to secure statements to the effect that Januario received inspiration, counsel or orders from other persons presumably higher up in the social scale. But in each case, the respondents "failed to understand the limits of the question," implying that the idea that wealthy or educated people inspired the movement was incomprehensible.

Among the documents captured during a raid on Mount Banahaw were several notebooks of Tagalog writings about the life of Christ and some medicinal prescriptions and prayers. The writings about Christ were probably copied out from a published pasyon, and attests to the importance of the singing of the pasyon in the rituals of the pilgrims and cofrades. Some of the other prayers, however, were utterly incomprehensible to the authorities who examined them. Although containing some Latin and Spanish words, they were "in reality . . . neither Latin nor Castellán, and they are scraps of prayers from some breviary or missal, badly copied." This led some Spanish investigators to the theory that Labios, who recited these prayers, was a madman. But interrogation of Cofradia members always led to the latter's insistence that their leader was not mad. One of them, Gregorio Enríquez, stated emphatically: "He was not mad; in fact his mind functioned in a totally regular and determined manner."

In order to explain the above details, we must regard Januario Labios as a prophet, and therefore a link between the two dimensions of time. His ability to communicate with the Virgin and Apolinario would have been interpreted by those who learned about it as a sign of the "divine" and the "everyday" intersecting. The only response they knew was to listen and participate in the event that was to unfold. Elio described it this way:

Januario says he is in direct communication with God and the Saints and this supernatural assertion is enough for the Yndios to believe in him. No extraordinary event, after the apparition, serves to corroborate his assertion, but this is not important for the Yndios who submit to his orders and over whom he exercised a despotic rule.

In this context, we can understand why some of the prayers recited by Januario were incomprehensible. Their content alone was unimportant; their incomprehensibility indicated the inability of the rational faculty of mind to know the workings of divine time. More important was the mode in which the prayer was recited and the consequent effect on the listener. In order to clarify this, let us quote what a pilgrim says about the "incomprehensibility" of prayers (the writer describes the effect upon the pilgrims of Maestro Mintoiy's recitation of a prayer):

Sabiin pa baga ang tuwa't ligaya
ng lahat ng taong nasagot sa kanya,
dahil sa mahaluyon tumudog ng letra
ang pagkasalita'y na sa punto'y coma.

104. Martin to the Governor-General, Tayabas, 15 June 1870 (PNA).
105. According to the French consul in Manila, the word "independence" was uttered as a "milking cry" in the Philippines at the uprising of the Tayabao soldiers of the Tayabao regiment in Manila in response to the Hermano Pule affair (Horacio de la Costa, Readings in Philippine History, [Manila: Bookmark, 1955], p. 215).
106. Declaración de Gregorio Enríquez, 18 June 1870; Declaración de Tiburcio de Rojas, 18 June 1870; Declaración de Crispina Romero, 18 June 1870; all before the alcalde mayor, Tayabas (PNA). The same inability to produce the wanted statements because of the failure to understand the question is evident in the interrogation reports of other Cofradia members.
107. This is mentioned by Artemio Ricarte, Memoirs, p. 82.
110. Informe, (PNA).
Would you believe the delight and joy of all the people who responded, as he pronounced the letters so well speaking with perfect rhythm?

At gayon din raman itong dinarasal ay matutuwa ka't parang tinatungahan, sa galaw ng dila maliliwanagan ang puso ng taong maya sa kadiliman

The same was true of the prayers how delightful they were as if, by his tongue’s movement came liwanag to the heart of a man in darkness.

Lalo't ang marami latin na salita kung aling pakiking ay aywan kung tama, sapagka't hindi ko napag-uunawa ang gayong termino latin ma’t kasila. 111

Especially since the many Latin words could not be verified when heard, because I am unable to comprehend such Latin or Spanish terms.

To this pilgrim, as well as to the cofradies of 1870, it was the sound of the teacher’s voice reciting the prayers that brought joy and liwanag. The experience of listening was one of the feeling, not of deciphering or understanding. What, to others, might have seemed like noise was, to the pilgrims, similar to music in a key that their religious experience enabled them to respond to.

Labios, through his powerful speeches, enabled his listeners to organize their everyday experience in terms of a divine plan. No longer would the hopes and fears of his peasant followers remain incoherent; change could be looked forward to. There would be a great storm and deluge. Homes and buildings would be destroyed; rivers and streams would overflow their banks. In order to prevent the inundation of their fields and the destruction of their homes, they must deepen the beds of streams and fortify their houses with two posts, in the form of a cross, embracing the extreme southern points of the sides of the house. But more important was that the cofrades must pray. They must make the pilgrimage to the mountain and there undergo “penitence,” which would mark their initial separation from or dying to the world that will be destroyed when the cataclysm finally occurs. And they must form the brotherhood that would herald the kind of relations between man and man that the society of the future would bring. This, plus freedom from taxes and forced labor, was what “independencia,” or whatever the original Tagalog word was, signified.112

In response to Juanario Labios’s call, people from Tayabas, Batangas, and Laguna came to undertake the pilgrimage through the mountain. As one of the cofrades himself noted, it was extremely difficult, especially for young women and the elderly, to approach the mountain retreat. Leeches abound in the forests. And yet people continued to arrive.113 The parish priest and civil authorities panicked upon realizing that the teachings of Labios, without being related directly to the spread of liberal ideas in the metropolis at that time, were leading the pobres y ignorantes to defy the status quo. Contrary to the image of the passive and acquiescent Indio peasant, the members of the Cofradia refused to pay taxes and fulfill the annual personal service. They also disavowed any connections with the priests of the Catholic Church, for their church, they claimed, was in the mountain.114 That is why an armed force was sent to disperse the community. Many were arrested; Labios’s fate, however, could not be ascertained. The invading party also cut down sacred trees and attempted to destroy the sacred rock which formed part of the cult.115

The provincial governor’s account of the punitive expedition to the mountain in 1870, gives us the first description of a cult on the slopes of Mount Banahaw and its sister slope, Mount San Cristobal. There were baths where the pilgrims were baptized. Farther up the slopes were seven trees successively marked “first heaven” to “seventh heaven.” There was also a huge rock called Iglesia Mayor by pilgrims, with a flat top upon which lighted candles were left to burn. Marriage ceremonies were also conducted beside this rock. In conclusion, the governor says: “Those which the inhabitants call temples, hermitages, and holy places, are represented only by rocks, trees, and streams.”116


112. Declaración de Feliciano Yobion y Caballero, Tayabas, 16 June 1870; statements of Fr. Francisco Rosas, parish priest of Tayabas, 16 June 1870, and of Martin to the Governor-General, Tayabas, 19 June 1870 (PNA).

113. Declaración de Feliciano, 16 June 1870 (PNA); Enriqo Martin, who led an expedition to the mountain, says that the lower slopes can be inhabited for two weeks at most, but “the places which the ignorant mind of certain people of this province considers sacred, and which are located in the interior of almost impenetrable forests, cannot be inhabited for three days by even the strongest native without his succumbing, [being filled with insects and always without sunlight]” (Martin to Governor-General, Tayabas, 2 July 1870 [PNA]).

114. Martin to the Governor-General, Tayabas, 19 June 1870 (PNA).

115. Ibid., 2 July 1870 (PNA).

116. Ibid.
Writing in 1887, the French explorer Marche gives a fuller description of the cult. He points out that, to the inhabitants of the region, the holy land is Mount Banahaw. One finds there such spots as the river Jordan, Purgatory and Calvary, all regarded as having been sanctified by Apolinario de la Cruz himself:

The spots that he had sanctified are always, although secretly, very much frequented. One brings sick people there, in order to take a bath in the water of Jordan or at the miraculous springs, which heal all those who have faith.  

The Purgatory, an immense cave in the mount of Calvary, "served for a long time as refuge to the prophet and his disciples. . . . All of these places are the object of veneration by the natives who still secretly gather there." Marche also mentions that a recent gathering of the pilgrims had been raided by the guardia civil at the request of the parish priest of Dolores, the town where the pilgrimage usually starts.

By the time the revolution against Spain began in 1896, the cult was an established center for the Lenten pilgrimage, attracting not only Tagalogs but people from all over the archipelago. An organized priesthood of men and women existed. Branches of the society or brotherhood flourished in other areas, headed by pastors trained at the mountain.

Why were people attracted to make the pilgrimage? Let us quote a few stanzas from a pilgrim's awit. At the beginning, the pilgrim describes the town of Dolores, the starting point of the pilgrimage, and how people from faraway towns journeyed there.

Sa panahong yaon ay kasalukuyan bayan ng Dolores sa kapayapaan, nasasa ligaya tungkol namamayan parang paraiso nitong taong buhay.

In those days the town of Dolores was in a state of peace, the inhabitants were happy it was like paradise to the living.

Ang lugar na ito ay parang bagong langit at kabalitanan bayan ng Dolores,

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118. Ibid.
119. In 1912, the population of Dolores, staging area of the pilgrimage, was 5,000, of which only around 500 were members of the Colorum society. However, "tens of thousands" of members from "other towns and distant provinces" flocked annually to the site (Severino Gala, *Dakot Dala ng Kolorum* [Maynila, 1912], pp. viii-xii).
120. Ricarte, *Memoria*, pp. 82-85.

... kinawiwiliha't ang iba'y naalis sa saniling bayan't doon dumaraing.

The place was like a new heaven news of Dolores spread far and wide, so fascinating it was that some left their hometowns to go there.

Halos balang oras gabi linalamay ng labah ng tao bata't matanda man, purong umaalis sa kasariling at doon sila nagsisipamayan.

For days and nights everyone young and old journeyed there, they all left their own homes and settled down in Dolores.

Dahil sa malaki akay ng ligaya tanang kahirapa'y winanghal halaga, ipinagbilibi ang munting nakaya sa kasariling't doon dinadala.

Because of the joy that led them on they paid no attention to hardships, they sold their meager properties and brought the rest there.

Dolores and the surrounding countryside are described in detail, with a constant repetition of the theme that the beautiful place is like paradise. The people who inhabit it, namely, the members of the brotherhood, are described as pure of heart. The author mentions, in particular, certain elders whose names are Maestro (Teacher) Casinto, Tandang (Elder) Albino, Antoling and Sabelo:

Ito'y purom-puro may honor na tangan puso'y mulinis at may kapuritan, ang una'y sa Dios may pagsintang tunay tapat ang pag-ibig di nadurungisan.

They all hold a position of honor their hearts are pure and upright, for one thing they love God truly a love that is sincere and pure.

Bukod na sa rito'y ang iba't iba pa na natahang tao bata't matanda na, purong mulinis lalo ang dalaga na nagahalaman ng buong ligaya.

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122. Ibid.
The beauty of the natural surroundings is thus matched by the purity and love in the hearts, or loób, of the people.

Dolores, then, is an image of paradise which beckoned pilgrims from all over the archipelago who understood its meaning because of their common religious experience. They understood that Dolores was only a sampling of the liwanag and fulfillment that awaited them at the end of their pilgrimage, which was none other than the lakaran practised by the Cofradía of 1841. According to a 1915 account of customs in Lipa, Batangas, pilgrims used to go either on foot or in carts, never in a carromata for “such a mode of travel is very different from Christ’s journey to Calvary and ‘Do as Christ did on earth’ is always a pilgrim’s motto.”123 The pilgrim’s awit chronicles the week-long experience on Mount Banahaw involving much climbing, crawling through narrow caves, and intense prayer in the heat of the sun. If Dolores was a beckoning paradise, it certainly was no picnic or recreation spot; pilgrims went there to experience hardship and exhaustion so that paradise could be experienced in the loób:

Ang nasá loób ko’y itong kahirapan
ay áng hahalili itong katuwaan,
ka-ko sinapit áng ganitong bugay
rang makitá ko áng kaliwanagan.

I kept to heart that this hardship
would be followed by great joy,
for I underwent this experience
in order to be in liwanag.124

The climax of the pilgrimage was the ascent to Calvary, a hill “in a spot similar to the poetic descriptions in the Pasion Mahal, or rather something resembling the blurred and imperfect woodcuts in the book.”125 The ascent was bloody and difficult, but without it the pilgrimage had no meaning:

Ang tārik ng bundok ay sakdal ng taas
ang tinutumbang’y ang batong matalas,

124. Aranas, Katagalugang Bundok, p. 32.

at may isang batong pasan sa balikat
na may labin-isang kilo ang katumbas.

The mountain was extremely steep
we clambered over sharp stones,
each carrying on his shoulder
an eleven-kilo rock.

Matalas na bato pula kung pagmamadán
nagsugat ang aking buong talampakan,
tinós ko kahít ako’y mahirap
marating ko lamang ang kalatásan.

The sharp stones appeared red
cut and bloody were the soles of my feet,
I endured all this hardship
just to reach the summit.

Sa inutay-utay ng aming paglakad
buong katawan ko sa pawis ay tigmak,
nagtèlás ako kahít anong hirap
makadamay lamang sa kag Kristong hirap.

As we made our way slowly
my body was drenched in sweat,
I was enduring all kinds of hardship
in damay with the hardship of Christ.

Mag-atas siete nang kami magmula
sa puno ng bundok na dakong mababa,
nang a la doce na kataway’ng nanghina
dalawang paa ko’y umuulong yata.

We started at seven in the morning
from the lower base of the mountain
when it was noon my body weakened
my legs seemed to fail.

Sa malaking hirap ako’y nag-utay
pasan ko ang bato na may kabigatan,
dalawa kong paa’y di na madiakbang
na nagkakataho ang gotom at uhaw.

In such great hardship I went slowly
bearing the heavy rock on my shoulder,
my feet could hardly move ahead
hunger and thirst compounded the pain.

Bukod pa sa rito’y ang mga babai
may dala rin naman paris ng lahat,
ka-ko kahít anong hirap ang mangyari
sa mga kasama’y di makapagsabi.
Moreover, our women companions also carried rocks, like the men, thus no matter how trying it was we could not complain to our companions.

Mag-aala una nang kami umabot sa katalukultan ng Kalbariong bundok, sa kalagin na'ay may malaking Krus ang bunton ng bato ay talu-taludtod.

It was almost one o'clock when we reached the peak of Calvary, upon which stood a large Cross with piles of rocks at its foot.

Dala naming bato pusang sa balikat sa puno ng Krus duon inilapag ang aming maestro pagdaka'y nangusap sa amin at ito ang ipinahayag.

The rocks we bore on our shoulders we dropped by the foot of the Cross, and then our teacher spoke and this is what he said:

Mga kapatid ko ang puso'y linisin tayong kalahatan purong magsikain, at kung matatang bago manalingin sa Dios na Amang Panginoon natin.

My brothers let us cleanse our hearts in purity let us share our meal, and when we have come together we shall pray to God the Father our Lord.

Nang nahahanda na ang pagkaing mahal ang aming maestro'y sumuno sa dasal, at nang matapos na'y nangagsabay-sabay sumubo ng kanin kaming kalahatan.

When the holy food was ready our teacher led the prayer, and when it was over we all together partook of the rice.

Matapos kumain ay magpasalamat kami sa Lumikha ng sangmuliwang, bago isinunod ang pamamahayag sa lahat ng mga kapatid na liyag.

Having eaten we all gave thanks to the Creator of the universe,

then the teacher resumed his sermon to all of the beloved kapatid.

Isilib sa inyong puso't alaala na kaya narito'y hindi sa ligaya, kun di sa pagdamay kay Jesus na Ama sa pagsikop nito sa sanglibutan sala.

Implant in your hearts and memories that we are not here for happiness, but in damay with Jesus the Father in his redemption of sinful mankind.

Pagkur't ang ligaya sa mundong ibabaw katulad ng balang nasa karagatan, na di nalala'o't munting oras lamang di paris ng tuwa sa langit na bayan.  
Because happiness in this world is like foam on the ocean, that exists only briefly compared to the joy in the land of heaven.

Then the pilgrims all prayed the rosary and the "seven supplications" kneeling in the heat of the sun, arms outstretched before the Cross. Because of their common experience of damay with Christ's pasyon, now they were truly brothers.

126. Aranus, Kaligaligayang Bundok, p. 32.