

The Hermeneutics of the *Gozos* for Señor Santo Niño de Cebu

Asia Pacific Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research

Vol. 4 No.3, 1-9

August 2016

P-ISSN 2350-7756

E-ISSN 2350-8442

www.apjmr.com

Jamaal Omamalin¹, Jeffrey Gapol², Kristine Carol Lagala³,
Abaigail Lawas⁴, Vernale Rangaysiso⁵, and
Reynaldo B. Inocian⁶

¹⁻⁵Social Science State Scholars, College of Teacher Education, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines, 6000

⁶Full Professor IV, Social Sciences Department, College of Arts and Sciences, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines, 6000

¹jmamalin@gmail.com, ²geoffreygapol@gmail.com,

³kristinelagala@gmail.com, ⁴ybbajuanicz@gmail.com,

⁵kimberlush.ke@gmail.com, ⁶inocian03@yahoo.com

Date Received: March 30, 2016; Date Revised: April 30, 2016

Abstract - This study unveiled the historical roots and interpretations of the *Gozos* for Señor Santo Niño de Cebu. It sought to answer these objectives: identify the history and lyrical interpretation of the *Batobalani*, interpret the *Batobalani* in the perspective of the church and the devotees, and feature the symbolism of the waving of the hands during the singing of the *Batobalani* in the perspective of the church and the devotees. This study used the hermeneutics design of the verses of the *Gozos* of the Santo Niño. The *Gozos* was interpreted using content analysis with historical sociological perspectives. This analysis is deepened with devotees' narratives. The devotees were selected through a convenience sampling, especially those who attended the nine days novena masses. The *Batobalani*, as manifested in its verses, told the story of Christianity and Christianization of the Cebuanos by the Spanish missionaries—from the discovery of image in 1565 to the integralization of the worship and praise of the Holy Child in the lives of the Cebuano devotees. Further, as interpreted by the Church, the *Batobalani* signifies the surrendering of the people to God, the admittance of weakness, an invocation of mercy and protection from God. As interpreted by the devotees, the *Batobalani* signifies praise, offering, gratitude and request, and a manifestation of God's passion and compassion toward His people. Further, the raising and waving of the hands, according to the Church, signifies the need for God, the expression of joy, the reaching out for God. According to the devotees, the raising and waving of the hands signifies joy, thanksgiving, and a gesture of request.

Keywords: *Gozos*, *Batobalani*, Santo Niño, *Sinulog*, interpretation, hermeneutics

INTRODUCTION

Culture is one of the social elements that defines and justifies the establishment of a civilization or the formation of a society. To Damen, culture is a potpourri of learned and shared knowledge, rituals, and practices for living [1]. Dungog rejoins that culture then is a socially transmitted way of living that includes, but does not limit to, beliefs and norms within a particular social group from preceding generations to the next [2]. A more concrete manifestation of culture, particularly within belief, is religion, and religious practices.

Religion is a social institution which provides individuals their need for spiritual quenching—a source of safety, assurance, and guidance in their daily

activities through the grace and worship of a certain corporeal entity, a god or a deity. In religion, there are religious practices—manifestations of the belief—through prayer, observances, holidays, rituals, and actions. This research intends to study a particular religious practice—a song—among Cebuanos especially during the *Sinulog*, the *Batobalani*.

The *Batobalani* (magnet in English) is a song which is sung during the novena (nine days) mass of the *Sinulog* Fiesta—a feast honoring the Holy Child Jesus in a Hispanicized name of Señor Santo Niño. This song is part of the *Gozos* (“joy” in Spanish)—a collection of religious verses. This song, when sung, involves the waving of the hands. Though, it is a common and natural practice among Cebuanos, many

questions and confusions still exist with regard to this song. Despite the high level of education most Cebuanos have achieved, in depth knowledge on philosophies, and the use of scientific process to investigate the truth create a sound and objective judgment, they still are dependent with the powerful celestial being called God, which existentialists call it as a ‘myth’. Call it faith among the Catholic devotees, who believe the existence of the most powerful God; but this becomes a big issue among those who are atheists, who believe that there is no God, responsible for our being and existence; nonetheless, these are dependent with the works of the human mind. Other Christian denominations, like the Born Again Christians consider this Catholic faith a pagan ritual—an act which does not please God. With these issues, the Señor Santo Niño devotees continuously increases in number as obviously observed during the annual fiesta celebration and their unwavering faith remains. While attending the nine novena masses, a somewhat psychedelic—a more relaxing feeling of euphoria is experienced while singing the “Batobalani”, His Gozos. Thus, to find out such bliss, this study is conducted to explore the hermeneutics of the Gozos’ five verses.

This research intends to extract and interpret the history and meaning of the *Batobalani*—its implications, its verses, the actions that accompany it—through the perspectives of varied groups of people, thus, further intending to give light to the questions concerning this religious practice and component. The significance of this study may provide solace to the Catholic believers in the Holy Child as a “Prince of Peace”, that they may continue to have such enduring faith, more than five centuries hence, when their forefathers embrace Him, as a Divine Son of God. For the atheists and the non-Catholics, this study becomes useful in expanding their horizon to religious diversity and tolerance, that conflicts and other forms of violence have no place in the world among open-minded people. For educators, this study becomes a source of essential values that can be modeled or taught in school, a way to challenge the Cebuanos to strengthen their faith to Señor Santo Niño, regardless of their socio-economic status, personal identity, career position, and geographic location.

Review of Related Studies and Literature

To Stajcic, history defines culture where it unlocks and opens the reality of the identity of a

particular group or tribe that includes and incorporates the positioning of values, knowledge, language, rituals, habits, lifestyle, attitudes, beliefs, folklore, rules and customs [3] and narrates the significance of a specific locale but is dependent on the availability of materials and works of the past that reveals the notable series of events of the human civilization.

One of the evidences that culture is substantial, authentic and real is through hermeneutics. To Smits, hermeneutics is mainly a deep-thinking discipline that deals with series of questions and provides answers which enables interpretation and understanding [4]. Historically, Von Zweck states that the roots of using hermeneutics have sprouted in the interpretation of Greek classical literature [5].

Hoffman and Laverty testify that transcribed artifacts, most notably those of religious bearing, can take on a blind and irrational reverence for those without the resources for deconstructing and reconstructing texts, but the feasibility of bewilderment is not only confined and exclusive to written texts which effect hermeneutics’ interpretation as critical as to the process of understanding [6] and [7].

To Heine and Ramussen, hermeneutics considers itself as an art because it views texts, written texts specifically, as a realization of what interpretation becomes from the increasing difficulty of uncertainty through communication [8] and [9]. Unger supports Ramussen’s because the process of deciphering and extraction in this area of concern is totally anchored on the presence of facts, needs additional evidences and variables related to common media of communication (i.e. language, writing systems) depend, and interconnectedness of certain facts are products of controlled or manipulated manifestations of specific knowledge [10]. Moreover, dwelling into the art of deciphering and interpretation is just the ostentatious embodiment of the ordinary endeavor of seeking to bring sense out of certain variables that people do not understand from the assumptions’ nature of experience rejoins Smith [11], which Agrey proves hermeneutics as a result to persistency of searching answers from questions pertaining to its meaning [12].

To Urban, culture is really a meta-culture because it consists of the immediate imposition of the alterations of the beliefs of what a particular culture incorporates that recognizes the diaspora of culture across generations and is in constant changes with

each cycle [13], making hermeneutics not as a mere re-excavation of lost and forgotten meanings but instead the conception of meaning and understanding comprising of both preceding and current meanings [11].

The Santo Niño de Cebu is a Catholic religious vested inanimate representation of the Child Jesus celebrated and worshipped by Filipinos, especially among Cebuanos. Claiming to be the most ancient religious image in the Philippines, the image was primarily given as a gift in 1521 by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan to Queen Humamay, the principal wife of Rajah Humabon (World Heritage Encyclopedia) [14].

The image of the Santo Niño survived and remained on the island of the Philippines after Ferdinand Magellan left-as a gift to the local chieftain's, Rajah Humabon's, wife Queen Humamay or the Hispanicized name Queen Juana. To Bautista, this venerated figure is most obviously taken into the very center of the lives of the Cebuanos [15]. And that in the years between the first arrival of the Spanish in the person of Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 until the second arrival of the Spanish in 1565 in the person of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, according to the 1985 official description of the "Origin of the Holy Image," in the undocumented catalogue of years, the Image becomes an integral component of Cebuano life [15].

The image of the Santo Niño is reproduced and placed in many homes and businesses, with different titles in various areas of the country. The image's feats is celebrated-as organized by the church-every third Sunday of January in Cebu City. The image is one of the most venerated, adored, and known cultural icons in the Philippines, spotted in religious and secular areas based on the accounts of World Heritage Encyclopedia [14].

Because of Cebuano suspicion that the Spaniards would return to bring retribution to Ferdinand Magellan's death, another battle takes place. But heavy artillery forces the native Cebuanos to seek refuge in the mountains leaving their villages to burn. To Siazra, as Spanish soldiers survey the remains of the village, a soldier has found the image of the Santo Nino under the pile of ashes unscathed inside a wooden box [16]. This is known as *kaplag* (finding), which since then, this is annually celebrated in every 28th of April for over 450 years already.

On April 28, 1565 the men of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi strike upon the beaches of Cebu. The

encounter between the native Cebuanos and the Spanish soldiers does not go well, and Legazpi, causes the Augustinian Andres de Urdanetato land with the soldiers in an attempt to prevent a fight between the wary inhabitants. Much of the town is destroyed, and the population takes to the hills behind. The search of the remaining houses ensues, but nothing of value is to be found in any, except for one in which one of the sailors is hit upon a chest binds with a cord which is clearly by them. Inside the chest a second box is found and in it a figure in velvet with a red cap on its head. Two fingers of the right hand of the statue are raised and extended in a blessing, and the left hand is held a gilded globe. According to the Cofradia del Santo Nino de Cebu, the image is obviously well preserved, with "just the tip of the nose rubbed off somewhat and the skin coming off its face", and it is clear that, for whatever reasons, the image has been kept with care as a sacred object-it is an image of the Señor del Santo Niño [17].

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study unveiled the historical roots and interpretations of the Gozos for Señor Santo Niño de Cebu. Specifically, it provided answers on the following objectives: identify the history and lyrical interpretation of the *Batobalani*, interpret the *Batobalani* in the perspective of the church and the devotees, and feature the symbolism of the waving of the hands during the singing of the *Batobalani* based on the perspective of the church and the devotees.

MATERIALS

Research Design

This study used the hermeneutics design of the verses of the Gozos of the Santo Niño novena. The Gozos was interpreted using content analysis with historical and sociological perspectives. This analysis is deepened with devotees' narratives generated through an ambush interview right after every novena mass. There were 20 mature devotees, mostly the elderly, were selected through a convenience sampling, especially to those who regularly attended the nine day novena masses held at the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu.

Research Tools

Aside from the verses in the Novena used as the most important content material in the study, data

mining of pertinent historical information was considered valuable as secondary data. To get the sociological perspectives, unstructured questions were used as interview guide, which was used as the research instrument. The interview was participated by non-other-than, the rector of the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño, after a letter of consent was secured, and the interview was scheduled based on his most convenient time. The ambush interview of the Santo Niño devotees was facilitated after every novena mass at the peripheries of the Basilica during the nine day novena period.

Research Environment

The research was conducted in Basilica Minore del Santo Niño, which is located in the downtown area of Cebu City. The Basilica Minore del Sto Niño was chosen as the research locale since this is the prime venue where devotees flock to worship and venerate the Santo Niño, and attend the major religious activities during the *Sinulog*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Background of the Gozos

According to Fr. Mejares, the current religious song *Batobalani* is consummated in 1985 during the organization of the Diocese of Cebu, Philippines, a Diocesan Synod—a meeting of chosen priests—where policies are discussed on the development and improvement of the Diocese [18]. At such time, the Synod takes place the *Committee on Rights and Rubrics of Liturgy* is formed and becomes responsible for the planning on the improvement of the celebration of the Feast of the Holy Child (*Sinulog*). This committee discusses that when other Dioceses use handkerchiefs in waving while singing the official religious song, why not the singing of the official song of the feast of the Holy Child (*Sinulog*) be made while waving the hands. After defining the religious choreography, the committee now endeavors to look for an official song.

The committee chooses the original text of the *Batobalani* which is composed of five (5) pages reduced to one poetic piece. According to Fr. Mejares, this religious text is sung during the times of the Spanish Regime in the Philippines, and, thus, this is the same song sung during the novena masses during the Feast of the Holy Child (*Sinulog*) [18]. But as to the composer of this text, that can no longer be identified, who might be a Cebuano poet. Further, the

Batobalani is part of the *Gozos* or religious verses which is traditionally recited and sung in honor of the Santo Niño (Holy Child). *Gozos* is a Spanish word which literally means “delights and joys.” Also, literally *Batobalani* means magnet, thus translating the full title *Batobalanisa Gugma* into a magnet of love. The lyrics of the *Batobalani* are illustrated, carefully analyzed verse by verse based on the historical accounts of some known historians regarding the arrival of the Spanish missionaries in Cebu and their ultimate goal of Christianization in the entire Philippine archipelago.

The lyrics of the *Gozos* are composed of five verses with a chorus to be repeated right after every verse is sung. This chorus serves as the devotees’ response while they are waving their hands facing to the altar where the image of Señor Santo Niño is enthroned. Because of the greatest number of crowd attending the novena mass, some of the devotees stay outside of the Basilica; they pay attention religiously with the singing of the *Gozos*. They hold the image of Señor Santo Niño, raise and wave it with their hands, following the instruction of the lector and the melodious voice of the cantors.

Interpretations and Beliefs of the Gozos

Lyrical Interpretation

Under the first (1st) verse, the line expresses the declaration of the Holy Child’s love that magnetizes the devotees’ charm (*Batobalani sa gugma*). The phrase “*Sa daang tawo palangga*” refers to “*mga karaang katigulang ang Sugbu-anon*”, the old Cebuano ancestors of the “*Sugbu sa kanhi-ay’ng panahon*”, Cebu in the olden times, before 1565, who love and embrace incessantly the Santo Niño because He accepts these people His “*palangga*”, endearing love to them. This verse can also be viewed as a declaration of faith on how the devotees love the Holy Child Jesus, as a sign of their humble reciprocation. They dance the *Sinulog*, imitating the “*sug*”, the current of the flowing river of Tabo-an, beside the fertile deltas, where Rajah Humabon’s *bantawan*, a royal hall is traced, now the site of the present Barangay Sawang Calero. To Dr. Romola O. Savellon, former curator of the Cebu Normal University museum recounts that this site stretches the Humabon’s kingdom to the neighboring villages of Pasil and San Nicolas, where his *panting*, royal tower is tied with *banderettas*, little flags, visibly seen from afar.

Batobalani sa Gugma

*I. Bato balani sa gugma,
Sa daang tawo palangga.*

*Tubag:
KANAMO MALOORY KA UNTA
NGA KANIMO NANGGILABA*

*II. Dinhi sa siyudad sa Sugbo
ang matahum mong larawan.
sa unang mga misyonero,
sa usang balay hipalgan.
Kanila ikaw nagpakita
gikan da sa imong gugma.*

*Tubag:
KANAMO MALOORY KA UNTA
NGA KANIMO NANGGILABA*

*III. Giludhan ka ug gisimba
niadtong mga kaparian
sa tanang mga katawhan
sa mga ponoan nila:
kay sa pagtan-aw kanimo
Kristiyanos sila nahimo.*

*Tubag:
KANAMO MALOORY KA UNTA
NGA KANIMO NANGILABA*

*IV. Ang simbahan gipatindog
niadtong mga tawhana,
aron ang larawan nimo
dunay usang puluyanan.
ug didto gihangyo nila
nga kaluy-an nimo sila.*

*Tubag:
KANAMO MALOORY KA UNTA
NGA KANIMO NANGILABA*

*V. Nangayo kami kanimo
nga ang matahum mong larawan,
sa sulud sa kalag namo
makahimog puluyanan,
kay sa tanang kinahanglan
ikaw ang among dalangpan.*

*Tubag:
KANAMO MALOORY KA UNTA
NGA KANIMO NANGILABA*

Under the second (2nd) verse, the lines speak of Cebu City when it becomes the center of Christianity in the Philippines through Spanish missionaries. As stated in the song, “*Dinhi sa siyudad sa Sugbo ang matahum mong larawan. Sa unang mga misyonero, sa usang balay hipalgan. Kanila ikaw nagpakita gikan da sa imong gugma.*” (Here in the city of Cebu Your holy image, to the first missionaries, is found in a native house, You appeared before them because of your love) which speaks of the moment when the image is found in a house by missionaries, during the Urdaneta-Legazpi expedition in 1565. Further, it is historically supported, according to Bautista, after a short period of talks and negotiations with local chieftains and Legazpi the situation worsened, prompting the Spaniards the necessity to level the village [15]. The port city is set to fire by the Cebuanos as they vacated their village with their valuable possessions to the hills. And, of non-negligible importance is an event in which Legazpi iterates how, while conducting inspections on the settlement on April 28, 1565, a crew member named

Juan Camus uncovers an image, which he recognizes as the Santo Niño held in a pine box.

Under the third (3rd) verse, the lines speak of the Christianization of the early Cebuanos, in which the worship of the Santo Niño (Holy Child) starts for these people—kneeling and asking for blessings and protection. As stated in the song, “*Giludhan ka ug gisimba niadtong mga kaparian sa tanang mga katawhan sa mga ponoan nila: kay sa pagtan-aw kanimo Kristiyanos sila nahimo.*” (You were knelt before and praised, the priests, all the people and their leaders, because seeing you made them Christians). Further, the song speaks of the establishment and propagation of Christianity among the people through the Spanish missionaries. In which the Augustinians are tasked to pursue their duty of Christianization, with the Santo Niño as a guiding entity through which this intention would be grasped [15]. Further, according to Joaquin, the Santo Niño’s undying and strong presence in Cebu has exceeded both Spanish and Cebuano expectations, working upon its own desire so that both peoples could be “shown the way”,

in a successful mission [19]. Furthermore, the Santo Niño has remedied the tension of the colonial altercation by enforcing its presence in areas of feasible conflict. In this respect, the missionary *noblesse oblige* (noble obligation) is made easier by people who have “unknowingly been tempered for conversion by the Child”.

Under the fourth (4th) verse, the lines speak of the institution and establishment of churches to serve as the home of the Holy image. As stated in the song, “*Ang simbahan gipatindog niadtong mga tawhana, aron ang larawan nimo dunay usang puluyanan, ug didto gihangyo nila nga kaluy-an nimo sila.*” (A church was built by those people, so that your image can have shelter, and in that shelter they ask you to have mercy on them). Further, historically speaking, this verse lies parallel to the founding of the convent of Santo Niño de Cebu on April 28, 1565 by Fr. Andres de Urdaneta, the same day the Legazpi-Urdaneta expedition arrives on the island. On May 8th of the same year, when Legazpi and his men plan the urbanization of the city of Cebu, they provided a location for the establishment of the church and the convent of San Agustin, where the image of Santo Niño was found. The Basilica Minore del Santo Niño is constructed on the very location where the image was salvaged by Juan de Camus. The parish is initially made out of bamboo and mangrove palm and is claimed to be the oldest parish in the Philippines [14]. Further supported, the settlement (Cebu City) is renamed Nombre de Jesus (Name of Jesus) after the Santo Niño, and Legazpi urges to have a chapel built on the site of the second discovery of the image, again utilizing both a concrete and intangible re-inscription of Cebuano territory [15]. Furthermore, Legazpi announces further that the grounds where it [the image of the Santo Niño] has been found and the area around which would be reserved for a church and monastery in which the Holy Child would be permanently enshrined for the veneration of all the future generations [17].

Under the fifth (5th) verse, the lines speak of the Santo Niño as an integral part of life of the Cebuanos. As stated in the song, “*Nangayo kami kanimo nga ang matahum mong larawan, sa sulud sa kalag namo makahimog puluyanan, kay sa tanang kinahanglan ikaw ang among dalangpan*” (We ask you, your glorious image may find shelter in our souls, because it is you whom we seek for all our needs). Further, this verse speaks of an integral process of worship and

praise of the Santo Niño in the lives of the Cebuanos— as a source of guidance and protection, and spiritual sustenance as repeated in the *tubag* (response), “*Kanamo malooy Ka unta, nga Kanimong nangilaba*” (That You give us mercy, in You we implore). This is a way of showing how Cebuano people are imploring the divine protection of the Holy Child Jesus, with the waving of hands as the most significant gesture of faith and spiritual devotion.

3.2.2 Church Interpretation

According to Fr. Mejares, the grace of the *Batobalani*, which means Magnet of Lord’s Hope, evokes a brief history concerning the discovery of the image of the Santo Niño in Cebu in 1565 [18]. The early conversion of the poor bearer to the Christian Faith to the same image and at the same time is an invocation of mercy, protection and help from God and these are the sacred prayers that one can address to God, to the Santo Niño and this makes the *Batobalani* very appealing and actual even today.

Further, Fr. Mejares reiterates that according to historians and anthropologists before the Spaniards arrive to the Philippines the early Cebuanos already perform dances and rituals [18]. The pioneering missionaries only Christianized these existing rituals from “*anito*” (spirit) worship to the proclamation of the Santo Niño’s Lordship, God’s Lordship over all creation. In support, according to Bautista [15], it is from the inclusion of Cebu in the inviolable discourse of salvation that the events of Spanish arrivals derive significance in Cebu. Among many Filipinos, it is the Story of Christianity that the two events of discovery (in 1521 by Magellan, and 1565 by Legazpi and Urdaneta) are seen as meaningful.

Until this point, the Republic of the Philippines has been distinguished from other Asian nations as having received the divine blessing through the efforts of Western missions. According to Joaquin [19], the Santo Niño is far more than just a metaphor or euphemism for the arrival of Christianity in the archipelago. Its discovery embodied the final installment in a tedious process that was instigated long prior to the arrival of the Spanish missionaries, and that its [Santo Niño] superiority over local idols has functioned to domesticate and mellow-down Cebuano exoticism, establishing the scaffold and foundations for Spanish missionaries to convert the natives into mirror images of the European Christianity. Further, still according to Mejares, the

expression of faith, to the devotion to the Santo Niño that is shown in the Feast of the Holy Child (*Sinulog*), ritual dance and other rituals is beyond words and propositions [18].

3.2.3 Devotees' Interpretation

Based on the interviews conducted, the *Sinulog* devotees when asked as to what the *Batobalani*s meant to them: D2 response is “*Kanang halad*” (Offering). From this statement, D3, D4, D8, D10, and D16 view the *Batobalani* as an expression of praise, an offering, a gratitude to Señor Santo Niño (Holy Child) for the graces and blessings they receive. This rejoins Psalm 116:1, “*I love the Lord, for he has heard my voice in supplication*” [20]. Further, when another D19 is asked the same question, he replies “*Compassion and Passion.*” From this statement, D1, D3, D9, D16 and D18 view the *Batobalani* as a manifestation of the passion of the Santo Niño and His compassion toward His people. From these statements, it infers that these devotees view the *Batobalani* not only as the expression of man toward the Santo Niño—as praise, offering and gratitude, but also as the Santo Niño’s manifestation of His passion and compassion—mercy, guidance, protection—to all people, as revealed in the Gospel of Mark 6:34-44, when Jesus shows compassion by transforming the five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the hundreds of people gathering around Him [21].

Further, when the devotees are asked on the significance of the *Batobalani*, D3, D6, D7, D8, D17 and D19 reply “*Kanang importante siguro na mukanta ka ana kay mao mana siyay pagdayeg Niya ba. Pagdayeg Niya, pagpasalamat Niya.* (May be it is important because it is a gesture of praising Him. Praising Him, and thanking Him.)” And, “*This is for the blessings, for intentions and petitions like studies and success in life.*” From these statements, it is inferred that the singing of the *Batobalani* is significant, because it signifies a gesture of praise and thanksgiving toward the Santo Niño—for His mercy and compassion, and the blessings He has bestowed upon all people. Further, it is inferred that the singing of the *Batobalani* is significant, which enables the stronger realization of intentions and petitions by devotees, such as in work, school, and health, among others.

3.3 Choreographic Interpretation of the Hand Waving

3.3.1 Church Interpretation

According to Fr. Mejares [18], the waving of the hands while singing the *Batobalani* starts way back in 1987. The hands express the condition of the heart—when one is angry, happy, enraged, etc. The raising and waving of the hands is done for the following reasons with scriptural citations: to reach out to God (Psalm 16:1-2a & 5,7-8,9-10,11), to exult Him (1st Samuel 2:1,4-5, 6-7), to reach out to God’s presence (Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4,5,6), to show dependence to God similar to a child lifting his hands to be picked up (Psalm 23:1-3a,4,5,6), to surrender to God (Psalm 91:1-2,14-15b,15c-16), to come into the heart (Psalm 51:12-13,14-15,16-17), to show gratitude to God’s blessing (Psalm 118:1,14-15ab,16-18,19-21), to express joy (Psalm 105:1-2,3-4,6-7,8-9), to make a commitment to God and to get closer to Him (Psalm 40:7-8a,8b-9,10) [20]. Fr. Mejares further emphasizes that the number of hands that one raises and waves is not that important, because it altogether signifies the admittance that one is weak and powerless aside from the power of God, and that all is received from God, and that it is a manifestation of surrender to God. Further, this demonstrates the humble intention for the need for God [19].

3.3.2 Devotees' Interpretation

Based on the interviews conducted on *Sinulog* devotees, when they are asked what the waving of the hands meant, D11 response is “*Nalipayka*” (You are happy), which means that the raising and waving of the hands while singing the *Batobalani* is a manifestation of joy and thanksgiving. Further, when other devotees are asked the same question, D6, D8, D13 and D15 reply are “*We are already a devotee, and it is what we are used to. That is the practice here in Santo Niño [Church],*” and added “*...I ask for some things like prayers, forgiveness, blessings.*” From these statements, it is inferred that these devotees raise and wave their hands not only a common practice, but as well as a gesture of request to Santo Niño for their intentions and petitions, and as a manifestation of joy and thanksgiving.



Photos No. 1 and 2. Thousands of Waving of the hands during the singing of the Batobalani (Provenance by: Acop, J. 2016)

CONCLUSION

The *Batobalani*, as manifested in its verses, told the story of Christianity and Christianization of the Cebuanos by the Spanish missionaries—from the discovery of the image in 1565 to the integralization of the worship and praise of the Santo Niño in the lives of the Cebuano descent and the devotees. Further, as interpreted by the Church, the *Batobalani* signifies the surrendering of the people to God, the admittance of weakness, an invocation of mercy and protection from God. As interpreted by the devotees, the *Batobalani* signifies praise, offering, gratitude and request, and a manifestation of God's passion and compassion towards His people. Further, the raising and waving of the hands, according to the Church, signifies the need for God, the expression of joy, the reaching out for God. According to the devotees, the raising and waving of the hands signifies joy, thanksgiving, and a gesture of request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further investigation, the study is limited to cover the hermeneutics of the Santo Niño Gozos, "Batobalani", in order to strengthen the faith of the Holy Child Jesus and the patronage of his Divine Power. Thus, the following are the needed recommendations for further study: (1) conduct more extensive data collection especially on the various interpretations by other scholars on the Gozos of the Novena for Señor Santo Niño, (2) conduct more intensive interviews on the lived experiences of the Santo Niño devotees, and church authorities like the priests and nuns, and (3) investigate the textual transformations based on the various revisions of the Novena for Señor Santo Niño since 1565.

REFERENCES

- [1] Damen, L. (1987). *Culture Learning: The Fifth Dimension on the Language Classroom*. 21 November 2015 .Retrieved from <http://www.carla.umn.edu/culture/definitions.html>
- [2] Dungog, A.L. (2008). *The Cebuano Fiestas: A Socio-Anthropological Study*. Thesis.Cebu Normal University.Cebu City.
- [3] Stajcic, N. (2013). *Understanding culture: food as a means of communication*. Hemispheres.Studies on Cultures and Societies. Poland
- [4] Smits, H. (2001). *Living within the space of practice: action research inspired by hermeneutics*. In. T. Carson and D. Sumara (Eds.), *Action Research as a Living Practice*. New York. Peter Lang.
- [5] Von Zweck, C. (2008). *The use of hermeneutics in a mixed methods design*. Queen's University. Kingston, Canada.
- [6] Hoffman, K. (2009). *Culture as Text: Hazards and Possibilities of Geertz's Literacy/ Literacy Metaphor*. The Journal of North African Studies.Evanson, IL, USA.
- [7] Laverty, M. (2003). *Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations*. The University of Calgary. Calgary.
- [8] Heine, B. 2004. *Connection: A Hermeneutical Inquiry of an Autobiographical Fragment*. University of Lethbridge. Lethbridge, Alberta.
- [9] Rasmussen, J. (2002). *Textual interpretation and complexity-radical hermeneutics*.The American Educational Research Conference. New Orleans, USA.
- [10] Unger, M.P. (2005). *Intersubjectivity, hermeneutics and the production of knowledge in qualitative mennonite scholarship*. University of Alberta. Canada.

- [11] Smith, D.G. (2002). *The Mission of Scholar Research and Practice*. Peter Lang . New York
- [12] Agrey, L. (2014). *Philosophical hermeneutics: a tradition with promise*. Horizon Research Publishing. Universal Journal of Educational Research.
- [13] Urban, G. (2001). *How culture moves through the world*. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press.
- [14] World Heritage Encyclopedia, (2016). *Santo Niño de Cebu*. Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing Press. 24 March 2016. Retrieved from http://gutenberg.us/articles/santo_ni%C3%B1o_de_ceb%C3%BA
- [15] Bautista, J. (2005). *An archipelago twice "discovered": the Santo Niño in the discourse of discovery*. Asian Studies Review. Asian Studies Association of Australia. Australian National University
- [16] Siarza, N. (2016). *Discovery of the image of the Santo Niño. Santo Niño de cebu international*. 25 March 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.santoninodecebu.org/history.html>
- [17] Cofradiadel Santo Nino de Cebu, (2013). *History of the Santo Niño and the basilica*. San Agustin Center of Studies. 25 March 2016. Retrieved from <http://sacs-stvi.org/history-of-the-sto-nino-and-the-basilica/>
- [18] Mejares, J. (2016). *Sinulog 2016: Faithful wave at heavens to end feast*. The Freeman, 23 January 2016. Cebu City
- [19] Joaquin, N. (1988). *Culture and history: Occasional notes on the process of Philippine becoming*. Solar Publishing, Manila
- [20] Hurault, B. (1993). *The Christian Community Bible*. Claretian Publications, Makati, Metro Manila.
- [21] Guillemette, N. and Chupungco, A. (2016). *Gospel of Mark 6:34-44*. Daily Gospel 2016. Year II – Cycle C., Claretian Communications Foundations, Inc., Quezon City.

Copyrights

Copyright of this article is retained by the author/s, with first publication rights granted to APJMR. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)