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Article

Lupi of the Virgin of Turumba: Filipino Fiesta Spirituality and Devotional Culture in pakil, Laguna

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the celebration of Lupi—the Feast of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba in Pakil, Laguna—through descriptive-narrative research employing an ethnographic method. The study focuses on the culture of devotion expressed in the Turumba sa Birhen procession during Lupi, examined through the researcher's immersion, conversations, and participation with the community of Pakil. Concepts of procession, rite, and ritual serve as the analytical framework. The study assumes that Lupi is anchored in the traditional Filipino fiesta, characterized by myth, ritual, and purpose, as well as vivid expressions of color, sound, music, movement, and collective participation. It is understood as a devotional activity where animistic practices of the East and Hispanic Catholic traditions of the West converge, forming a culture of devotion that is distinctly Filipino. Finally, the paper suggests that the celebration of the Seven Lupi should not be labeled a "festival" in order to preserve its meaning and essence as a devotional feast and safeguard the vernacular term Lupi from being forgotten. Likewise, Lupi should not be reduced to a secular or tourism-driven activity. The restoration of traditional dancing in the Turumba sa Birhen is further recommended, as walking alone makes the procession resemble a parade rather than an authentic devotional practice.

Keywords: *Devotional Culture, Feast, Lupi, Pakil, Turumba*

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Introduction

> *The Philippine fiesta is a symbol and venue of Filipino culture and community. It is both ancient and modern being one of the enduring community cultural institutions that survived and, in fact, grew and developed through various colonial occupations of the Philippines.*[1]
>
> **- Florendo H. Hornedo** (2000)

There are many forms or types of feasts or festivals. According to Prof. Felipe De Leon, Jr., these classifications include: *devotional, heritage, historical/commemorative, art, productivity and trade, nature, life-cycle,* and *celebratory*.[2]

The Church festival is one form of a devotional feast considered a traditional celebration in Filipino society. Although introduced by the Church during the Spanish colonial period as part of evangelization, it was embraced, localized, and developed by the people—thus it can be considered people-created and grassroots in origin. This type of festival is characterized by traditional elements*: (1) object of devotion, (2) thematic focus, (3) people's initiative, and (4) simultaneity of events.*[3]

The *Lupi* or Feast of the Virgin of *Turumba* is considered this type of celebration. Clearly, the object of devotion is the revered Virgin of *Turumba*. Each *Lupi* has a thematic focus based on the Seven Sorrows (or swords) that pierced the heart of the Virgin Mary. The celebration is also considered people-initiated and created by the masses, as seen in the reenactment of the discovery of the framed image of the Sorrowful Virgin more than two centuries ago. The simultaneity of events is also evident, especially in the *Turumba* procession, where various rites and rituals occur simultaneously—such as the singing and dancing of the Turumba (*Awit sa Turumba* and *Sayaw sa Turumba*), the throwing of handkerchiefs and cloths to be wiped on the Virgin's *urna* (glass case or enclosure), the scrambling for decorations of the *andas* (processional carriage), the carrying of the *andas*, and others.

While fiestas in the Philippines have been widely studied as cultural, religious, and social phenomena, there remains limited scholarly focus on the *Lupi* of the Virgin of *Turumba* as a distinct devotional feast. Existing literature often treats fiestas as either secularized festivals or generalized religious practices, leaving a gap in understanding how *Lupi* embodies Filipino fiesta spirituality, integrates animistic and Catholic traditions, and sustains both cultural identity and communal devotion in Pakil, Laguna.

This study seeks to analyze the performance of rites and rituals in the *Turumba sa Birhen* during the *Lupi*, examine how these practices express the culture of devotion and collective identity of Pakil, situate *Lupi* within the broader framework of Filipino

[1] Florendo H. Hornedo. *Culture and Community in the Philippine Fiesta and other Celebrations*. Manila: UST Publishing House, 2000.

[2] Felipe M. De Leon, Jr. Comment about the festival during the thesis defense of the *Turumba sa Birhen* by the author.

[3] Ibid.

fiesta spirituality, and highlight its role in preserving vernacular tradition while resisting secular and tourism-oriented interpretations.

Methodology

By design, this research employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary, normative-analytic framework that integrates theological reflection, philosophical inquiry, and This study is descriptive-narrative research using an ethnographic method through the researcher's immersion, conversations, and participation in the *Turumba sa Birhen* with the community of Pakil. The focus of the study is the culture of devotion expressed in the *Turumba* procession during *Lupi*.

Using the diagram below, *Lupi* will be analyzed. The Virgin has Seven *Lupi* or feast days derived from the Seven Sorrows that pierced her heart. Within these seven celebrations, similar sacred events and practices occur. The differences among each *Lupi* lie in the types and numbers of devotees, pilgrims, vow-makers, and ordinary visitors-such as tourists, traders, excursionists to *Panghulo*, and other outsiders-who come to the town during the festival season.

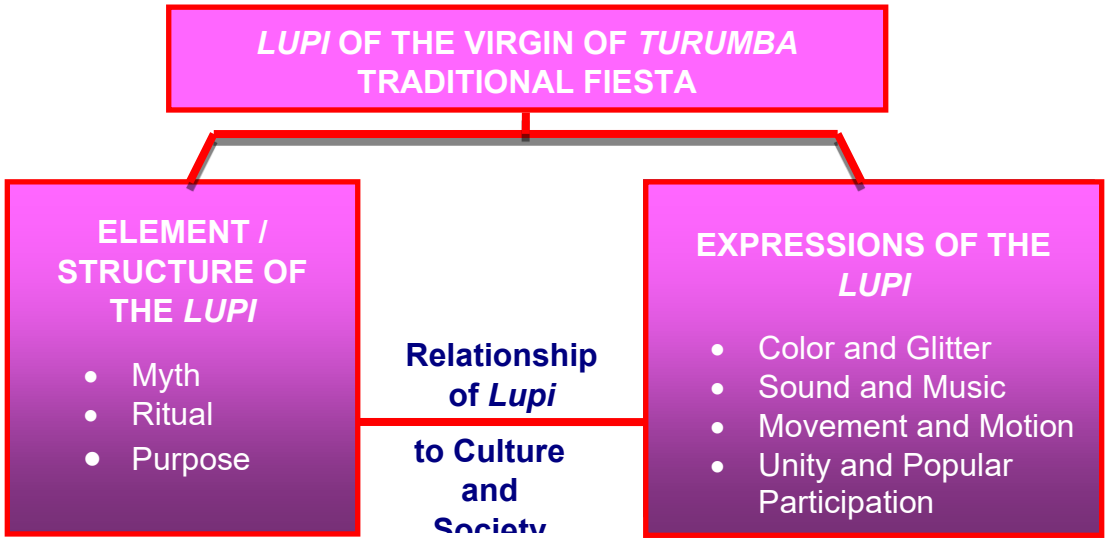


Diagram: Perspective on the *Lupi* of the Virgin of *Turumba* as a Traditional Fiesta.

In analyzing the *Lupi* as a church festival, this study will use the *structure and expressions of the fiesta* according to Dr. Florentino H. Hornedo. First, the meaning of *Lupi* and the Seven *Lupi* will be explained. Second, it will examine whether the structure or elements of the *Lupi* resemble those of Philippine festivals. This section will also analyze the various rites and rituals within the celebration. Third, it will analyze the expressions of the celebration, particularly the *Turumba* procession, which is assumed to reflect common expressions found in most Philippine fiestas.

Findings and Discussion

Lupi, Seven Days of the Sacred Traditional Fiesta

The Virgin of *Turumba* has seven (7) feast days (*Lupi*), based on the Seven Sorrows that pierced the heart of the Virgin Mary. These are: (1) The Prophecy of Simeon (2) The Flight into Egypt (3) The Loss of the Child Jesus (4) The Meeting of Jesus on the Way to Calvary (5) The Crucifixion (6) The Descent from the Cross and (7) The Burial of Jesus.[4]

The Seven *Lupi* begin on the Friday of Sorrows (the Friday before Palm Sunday) and conclude on Pentecost Sunday. According to local historian Iñigo G. Vito ("Ka Iñi"), the Seven *Lupi* are as follows:[5]

First *Lupi* : *"Pistang Biyernes de Dolores"* Friday before the Palm Sunday
Second *Lupi* : *"Pistang Martes"* First Tuesday after Easter Sunday
Third *Lupi* : *"Pistang Biyatiko"* Second Wednesday after Easter (largest celebration with thousands of devotees)
Fourth *Lupi* : *"Pistang Biyernes"* and *"Pistang Lucbanin"* Third Friday after Easter Sunday
Fifth *Lupi* : *"Pistang Linggo"* Fourth Sunday after Easter Sunday
Sixth *Lupi* : *"Pistang Pag-akyat"* Fifth Friday after Easter Sunday
Seventh *Lupi*: *"Pistang Pagpanaog"* Pentecost Sunday

In the expansion of devotion to the *Birhen ng Turumba*, the existence of Seven Fiestas or *Lupi* can be considered an effective system. This is the statement of Ka Iñi regarding this matter:[6] The First *Lupi* is attended by devotees coming from the towns neighboring Pakil. Meanwhile, the Second *Lupi* is visited by vow-keepers and devotees coming from the towns of the province of Rizal (formerly the province of Morong) such as Tanay, Morong, and Pililia. Included among those who come to this fiesta are people from Infanta and Real in the province of Tayabas (now Quezon). The Third *Lupi* is intended for devotees coming from the towns of Quezon (Tayabas), particularly Lucena, Sariaya, Candelaria, Pagbilao, and Mauban. Also joining this fiesta are people from Batangas and other devotees from other provinces. This is regarded the largest *Lupian*, known as the '*Pistang Biyatiko*.' The devotees and vow-keepers from the town of Lucban and its neighboring towns flock to Pakil for the Fourth *Lupi*, which is why this fiesta became known as the "*Pistang Lucbanin*." This is also considered one of the major fiestas of the *Birhen ng Turumba*. The people from Sta. Cruz, Calamba, San Pablo, and Biñan, meanwhile, are the main visitors to Pakil during the Fifth *Lupi*. The Sixth *Lupi* called "*Pistang Pag-akyat*" is visited by devotees from other towns of Laguna, particularly those from Cavinti, Magdalena, Liliw (formerly Lilio), Majayjay, Luisiana,

[4] Alejandro R. Roces. "The Turumba of Pakil Rituals of Healing." *Mabuhay Inflight Magazine of Philippine Airlines*. September 1988.
[5] Inigo G. Vito. *Turumba sa Birhen Maria de los Dolores Mga Kwento, Alamat, Kasaysayan, Himala ng Mahal na Birhen ng Hapis.* Quezon City: Echanis Press, 1997. 8-9.
[6] Inigo G. Vito. Personal interview. Pakil Parish Church. 19 April 2004.

Rizal, and others. The last, or Seventh *Lupi*, the "*Pistang Pagpanaog*," is visited by all devotees from various places. As the people of Pakil say, '*halu-halo na kapag huling Lupi*' (it's a mix during the last *Lupi*). This also includes people from Pakil who reside in other towns and return to join the *Turumba sa Birhen* during the final *Lupi*.

Elements of the *Lupi* of the Virgin of *Turumba*

The fiesta in the Philippines is a symbol and space of Filipino culture and community—both ancient and modern—as one of the most enduring cultural institutions, whose essential elements have remained unchanged up to the present while allowing adaptation and modification through modern acculturation.[7] According to Dr. Florentino H. Hornedo, the celebration of the fiesta has a clear structure, which he calls the "structure of fiesta," composed of three essential and interconnected elements: (1) myth, (2) ritual, and (3) purpose. The first serves as the narrative foundation of the fiesta—such as historical events or stories from the past whose significance is commemorated and ritually renewed in the present. The second is the liturgical dramatization of this narrative and its varied expressions of remembrance. The third refers to the explicit purpose of the celebration and the personal devotional reasons of individuals in fulfilling their vows or prayers.[8]

It cannot be denied that even before the arrival of foreign colonizers, belief in mythology was already widespread among early Filipinos. Although myths today are written, they were originally oral traditions passed down through generations before colonization. These myths played important roles in everyday life, serving as the narrative basis of inherited rites and rituals. Examples of these can still be seen in celebrations among communities in the mountainous regions of Northern Luzon, particularly among the Ifugao and other Cordillera provinces, as well as among ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao.

The rituals associated with these ancient myths were what colonizers sought to suppress by introducing Christianity. However, instead of disappearing, these indigenous rituals merged with and became expressions of Christian religious practices imposed by the Spaniards. This fusion of Filipino animistic traditions and Western Spanish culture resulted in a distinctly Filipino tradition—the fiesta. Thus, as Catholicism spread throughout towns and villages during the colonial period, so too did the proliferation of fiestas. The original animistic mythologies that served as their narrative foundation were replaced by beliefs in miracles attributed to religious images and saints, as well as devotion to them.

Although contemporary rituals still stem from this fusion of animistic and Christian beliefs, their purposes have evolved. While pre-colonial rituals aimed at securing good harvests, health, marriage, thanksgiving, and even victory in war, modern rituals now include more personal intentions, though communal purposes remain present.

[7] Hornedo. 1-3.
[8] Hornedo. 13-14.

The following sections analyze the structure of the *Lupi*—the Feast of the *Birhen ng Turumba*—using Dr. Hornedo's concept of the "structure of fiesta."

1. Myth: The Legend of *Turumba* as the Key to Devotion and Votive Practice

From the legend and history of the *Birhen ng Turumba,* it is evident that Filipinos demonstrate strong affinity and deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and her shrine—the Church of Pakil. This is evident in the influx of pilgrims and devotees to the town of Pakil, Laguna, to pay homage to the *Birhen ng Turumba*. It may also be said that Filipinos regard the Virgin's shrine as a second home and seek to visit it regularly.

The folkloric faith of those who come to Pakil is clearly expressed in their devotion and vows to the *Birhen ng Turumba*. A vow (*panata*) is understood as a force compelling devotees to visit Pakil and participate in the *Lupian* (another term for the *Turumba* season), even under difficult circumstances. Pilgrims and devotees possess a deep awareness of their obligation or promise to perform sacred acts for spiritual benefit and to serve the Virgin and God. These vows may arise from grace or blessings received through the intercession of the *Birhen ng Turumba*, from blessings experienced in everyday life, or from miracles.

The legend or myth of the miraculous discovery of the image of the Sorrowful Virgin is not singular. In fact, there are many versions of it that, even after more than two centuries, continue to be discussed and sometimes debated. However, what cannot be denied is the fact that since the image of the Virgin was discovered at the end of *Daang Estaka* (Estaca Street) on September 15, 1788, and the first *Turumba* procession took place, devotion to the Virgin has spread. The devotional practices associated with the *Turumba* celebration have continued to be performed by the people of Pakil and other devotees up to the present day.

What is remarkable is the continuous increase in the number of pilgrims and devotees visiting Pakil during the *Lupi* season each year. Whereas in earlier times only locals and devotees from nearby towns in Laguna would attend, today there is a noticeable influx of pilgrims, devotees, and vow-makers from provinces such as Quezon, Batangas, Rizal, and Bulacan, as well as from the National Capital Region (NCR). Some even come from the Bicol region and the Visayas, including overseas Filipinos returning home to renew their devotion.

Many of these visitors come to Pakil only during the *Lupi* season to participate in the *Turumba* and immediately leave after fulfilling their vows. Others visit occasionally on ordinary days simply to pay homage to the Virgin. Although these pilgrims and devotees come from various social classes and diverse economic and cultural backgrounds, they may be categorized as folk (*Taganayon*),[9] whose shared object of devotion is the Blessed Virgin Mary—the *Birhen ng Turumba*.

[9] Felipe M. De Leon, Jr. *Living Filipino Subcultures*. Lecture in *AS 210 Sources and Influences*.

2. Ritual: Church Rituals, Rituals of Community Life

Each *Lupi,* consists of various rites and rituals—from the nine days of novena prayers, the adornment of the Virgin and her *andas*, up to the procession (*Turumba*), is marked by numerous folkloric sacred practices.

The rites and rituals performed on the eve of the feast are as follows: (1) the bringing down of the Virgin from her pedestal at the *retablo mayor*, (2) the dressing of the Virgin, and (3) the decoration of the *andas*. On the eve of the feast, various traditional activities are also held, such as performances in the town plaza featuring *comedia*, musical concerts, beauty pageants, and other presentations that provide entertainment for visitors of the town.

Meanwhile, the closing or culmination of the novena is the *Lupi*, which highlights the *Turumba sa Birhen* or the procession, where even more rites and rituals can be observed. The day of the closing or *Lupi* begins with the first Holy Mass at exactly four o'clock in the morning, followed by six more Eucharistic Celebrations, with the last serving as the signal for the start of the *Turumba* or procession of the Blessed Virgin. Included in the *Turumba* (procession) of the Virgin are the wiping of handkerchiefs and towels on the *urna* (glass case or enclosure) of the Virgin, the carrying (*pag-uusong*, as referred to by devotees from Quezon) or lifting and carrying of the *andas* (processional carriage), and the scrambling for the decorations of the *andas*. After the procession, the kissing of the *urna* and of the Virgin is held inside the church, followed by the re-enthronement of the Virgin on her pedestal. Also included among these rites and rituals is the bathing in *Panghulo* after the *Turumba* (procession), based on the belief that the water of *Panghulo* has healing properties (the term refers to the public bathing place also named after the Virgin as the *Turumba Swimming Pool*), and participation in the *Turumba* will not be considered complete unless one bathes or at least wades in it.

The Seven Novenas

Each novena for the Blessed Virgin is held over nine days in the Parish Church of Pakil, together with other rites and prayers. Usually, those who lead and conduct the novena are the "church people" of Pakil, along with Pakileño devotees and those from neighboring towns. Most devotees and vow-makers from other provinces flock to Pakil on the eve or on the very day of the *Lupi* or feast of the closing of the novena, and the beginning again of another nine-day novena cycle.

The Descent of the Virgin

On the eve of the *Lupi*, the Virgin is brought down from her pedestal at the *retablo mayor* of the church. Only selected *Alagad ng Birhen* are allowed to bring the Virgin down from the altar. While the Virgin is being lowered, the people inside the church joyfully "*turumba*"—they sing and dance. They clap, tap one another, jump, and sway while singing the *Awit sa Turumba* and dancing the *Sayaw sa Turumba*, similar to what occurs during the actual *Turumba* procession. Thus, the descent of the Virgin

constitutes its own ritual, just as when she is raised again to her place at the center of the *retablo-mayor* (main altar).

This is usually done around two o'clock in the afternoon on the eve of the *Lupi*, when there are few people inside the church. The Virgin is brought down in order to be dressed and prepared for the procession or *Turumba*.

In the descent of the Virgin from her pedestal, the "small *Turumba*" performed by the *Alagad ng Birhen* and the *Recamadoras*, together with those present in the church, expresses deep veneration and reverence. It is a formal dramatization of the legend of the discovery of the image of the Sorrowful Virgin along the shores of *Laguna de Bay* more than two centuries ago, where the first *Turumba* took place.

The Dressing of the Virgin

The dressing of the Virgin, as well as the decoration of her *andas*, is a sacred act performed only by selected individuals (the *Alagad* and the *Recamadoras*). These are considered traditional and specific rites carried out exclusively by chosen devotees with the blessing of the Church.

After the Virgin is brought down, she is taken to a room on the ground floor of the convent near the atrium. The chosen *Alagad* who vowed to carry out the descent are the ones who bring the Virgin to this room. The Virgin is dressed by two selected *Recamadoras*. Aside from them, only the donor of the dress and a few authorized individuals are allowed to enter. The *Recamadoras* are responsible for sourcing funds or finding donors for the Virgin's attire. They also oversee the design and tailoring of the dress. They recount instances when the dress did not fit, even though the measurements were correct. This is believed to mean that the Virgin does not wish to wear the dress. They recount an incident: a donor used business earnings—originally meant to be shared among siblings—to commission a dress for the Virgin without informing them. The dress would not fit. When the siblings were informed and gave their consent, the dress miraculously fit perfectly and was easily placed on the Virgin.[10]

The newly dressed Virgin remains in the room until she is returned to the church and placed in her *urna* on the *andas* on the evening before the feast.

The Adornment of the *Andas*

On the night before the *Turumba*, the Blessed Virgin is already placed inside the *urna* of the *andas*, and the *andas* is decorated in preparation for the procession. Only selected devotees are allowed to decorate and adorn the *andas* of the Virgin. These individuals are members of an organization called the *Alagad ng Birhen*, which is divided into two: *Alagad* for men, and *Recamadora* for women. The term *Recamadora* is Spanish and means "embroiderer." The *Recamadora* of the *Birhen ng Turumba* are the ones who dress the Virgin; although they do not literally embroider the Virgin's garments during the dressing, they inevitably sew or fold parts of the clothing to ensure that the attire of the Blessed Virgin of *Turumba* is properly arranged.

[10] Matilde Villareal and Justa Ybardolaza, *Recamadoras* of the Virgin. Personal interview. Pakil Parish Church. 22 May 2010.



Figures 1 and 2: Ka Doming Garcia and select Servants (*Alagad*) of the Virgin while adorning the *Andas* of the Virgin of Turumba (Photo by the author, 2010)

Decorating the *andas* is regarded as a vow and a sacrifice by those who undertake it. At times, volunteer devotees who are not from Pakil assist in decorating the *andas*, and they also bring the materials to be used as adornments for the Virgin's *andas*. The amount of time spent decorating the *andas* depends on the number of flowers and the design of the arrangement.

The traditional decoration of the *andas* consists of flowers made from colorful paper and sometimes crepe paper. These are inserted into a base called *herbana*, which is made from interconnected stems of water hyacinth gathered by the *Alagad* from Laguna Lake.[11] However, this traditional form of decoration was replaced in the 1980s when, on one occasion, real flowers were donated to adorn the *andas*. From then on, the decoration of the *andas* became more modern. The *herbana* is still used at the lower portion of the *andas*, but floral foam is now commonly used in the upper sections and on the posts of the *urna*. The flowers used are usually donations, reportedly costing around fifteen thousand pesos. The flowers most commonly used—chosen for their white and yellow hues—include Casablanca, Spider, Fiji, and the white orchid known as Dendro.[12]

The Seven Masses of *Turumba*

It has also become customary to hold seven masses before the *Turumba* procession, especially during the *Pistang Biyatiko* or Third *Lupi* and the *Pistang Pagpanaog* or Seventh *Lupi.* This is said to be in accordance with the seven sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. The first mass is held at 4:00 in the morning, and this is followed by six more holy masses, with the seventh mass usually starting at exactly 10:00 in the morning. After the seventh mass, the *Turumba* procession begins. Alhough the church of Pakil is full for each mass, the seventh attracts the largest attendance. Often, the people who attend the seventh holy mass are those who participate in the *Turumba*, so it can be said that most of them are devotees and vow-keepers who have come from

[11] Jepet Padilla, *Alagad ng Birhen*. Personal interview. Pakil Parish Church. 6 May 2012.
[12] Domingo "Ka Doming" Garcia, *Alagad ng Birhen* assigned to adorn the *Andas*. Personal interview. Pakil Parish Church. 22 May 2010.

other towns or provinces. Aside from the church being full of people, many also wait outside the church and in the town plaza, especially those who had already attended the earlier holy masses. And when the Parish Priest of Pakil gives the signal for the start of the *Turumba* (procession) after the seventh mass, the people inside and outside the church become almost uncontrollably lively.

The Seven Holy Masses held before the *Turumba* are simply proof of the formal recognition of the seven sorrows of the Virgin, which also serves as the basis for having Seven *Lupi* or Fiestas of the *Birhen ng Turumba*. The seven holy masses will be followed by the *Turumba ng Birhen*, or the procession, where the dramatic bearing or carrying of the Virgin's *andas* (processional carriage), as well as the wiping of handkerchiefs and cloths on the *urna* (glass case), performed by the vow-keepers and devotees, can be witnessed. Some devotees even insist on grabbing the *pingka* (the three long wooden poles used to carry the *andas*) to take part in carrying it, or climb onto the *andas* itself to kiss the Virgin's *urna* and obtain some of its decorations**.**

The *Turumba sa Birhen* (Procession)

The most important ritual or traditional custom during the *Lupi* is the *Turumba*, or the participation in the procession of the Blessed Virgin of *Turumba* after the Holy Mass. Groups of people join the procession during each *Lupi*. It is a joyful sight to see the groups of youth or even of the elderly, whether they are from Pakil or devotees from other places, due to the lively, active, and vibrant dancing, singing, jumping, and clapping, as if it were a performance by people who have lost their senses. Thus, it is unsurprising that onlookers are drawn to join and participate, despite the crowded and energetic movement of the procession.



Figure 3: The participants in the *Turumba ng Birhen* while performing the *Sayaw sa Turumba*—jumping, waving their hands in the air, clapping, and tapping each other's shoulders, and singing the *Awit sa Turumba* to the accompaniment of a musical band, and at the end of each stanza of the song, they shout *"Sa Birhen!"* (Photo by the author, 2010).

Awit at Sayaw sa Turumba

Many more customs and rituals can be witnessed in the procession or *Turumba*. These include the *Awit sa Turumba* (Song of *Turumba*), as well as the *Sayaw sa Turumba*

(Dance of *Turumba*), a unique dance and rhythm of worship. Participants in the procession sing the *Awit sa Turumba* to the accompaniment of musical bands, simultaneously swaying, clapping, jumping, tapping each other's shoulders, and waving their hands in the air. Even roadside spectators become participants by responding with "*Sa Birhen*!" (To the Virgin!) to the song of those engaged in the *Turumba*. As they stand by the roadside, they too sway, jump, clap, tap each other, and wave their hands along with the participants in the procession, as if they were mad or out of their senses, and thus they are also participants in the *Turumba*.

In the *Turumba ng Birhen* (procession), one can witness the unique devotion of the Pakileños, the devotees, and the vow-keepers—the unique manner of paying homage and worshipping the *Birhen ng Turumba*. In the ritualistic procession, participants seem to lose themselves; they sway and dance, jump, tap each other, stamp their feet, clap, and wave their hands in the air, joyfully singing the *Awit sa Turumba* to the accompaniment of the bands' music. And as the other participants, including those on the roadside and those inside houses waiting at their windows for the procession to pass, shout with full vigor at the end of each verse or line of the *Awit sa Turumba*, "*Sa Birhen!*," simultaneously joining everyone in a swaying motion that seems frenzied and out of one's senses. This exemplifies what Erving Goffman describes as a 'performance.'

Carrying or Shouldering the *Andas*

Meanwhile, the rhythm of the *andas*'s movement, together with the *Sayaw sa Turumba* of the procession participants, can be compared to the directionless carrying or shouldering by the vow-keepers, which the *Alagad ng Birhen* (Servants of the Virgin), who manage the order of the procession, try to correct. Those who carry or shoulder the *andas* of the Virgin, as well as the *Turumba* participants, seem like people out of their senses, like madmen who have lost themselves. The *andas* frequently tilts due to the restless manner in which it is carried, moving in a zigzag or swaying left and right instead of proceeding straight. At times, the *andas* halts for a long period because many wish to take a turn in carrying it, or because the crowd carrying it prevents movement. At other times, it suddenly surges forward due to the rapidt steps of those carrying it, as if being pushed from behind. The carrying or shouldering of the Virgin's *andas*, even without being discussed among the carriers, is also a ritualistic performance of a vow. As a ritual, the carriers of the *andas* undertake personal preparations. Even the changeover in carrying exhibits a formulaic performance; although it is routine, it is not easy for those wishing to take a turn if they are not knowledgeable about the 'rite' and 'rhythm' of carrying. An untimely changeover can disrupt the rhythm of carrying, which is why some who wish to participate are not accommodated. Here, communication, identity (as a vow-keeping carrier), and being one or united (in the vow of carrying) are extremely important.

Throwing of Handkerchiefs and Cloths

Another folkloric practice in the *Turumba sa Birhen* is the throwing of handkerchiefs, cloths, *lampin* (cloth diapers), and other items to the servants riding on the *andas,* so they can wipe them on the Virgin's *urna*. This ritual begins the moment the Virgin's *andas* leaves the church and continues throughout the procession until it re-enters the church, culminating in the singing of '*Paalam*' (Farewell). Often, there are even devotees who stay behind inside the church to have their handkerchiefs and similar items wiped while the Virgin's *andas* is already stationary and the Virgin is being prepared for the kissing. This event can be compared to what happens during the Procession of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila.

Scrambling for Decorations of the *Andas*

The scrambling for the decorations and ornaments of the *andas* is also part of the procession. Although the church attempts to prevent this to preserve the beauty of the *andas* upon re-entry, some fervent devotees and vow-keepers forcibly grab and pull its decorations at the end of the procession, when the *andas* turns to face *Laguna de Bay* and the Virgin enters the church backwards. At this point, those wishing to grab its ornaments swarm towards the *andas*. As a result, it has become customary to distribute or throw flowers, images of the Virgin, fans bearing her likeness, and other sacramentals--such as pieces of the Virgin's clothing and scapulars--from the church choir loft. The people inside the church become uncontrollably lively, joining in the distribution of flowers, images, fans, and sacramentals.

The Kissing of the *Urna* and the Virgin

The *Turumba* or procession officially ends after "*Paalam*" (Farewell) is sung and the people shout "*Sa Birhen!*" (To the Virgin!). However, several other folkloric events continue after most of the devotees, vow-keepers, and other visitors of the town have left. Some continue to throw their handkerchiefs and wiping cloths to the servants on the *andas*, while the majority line up to kiss the Virgin's *urna* while offering their earnest prayers and petitions. When no more handkerchiefs are being thrown, and the *herbana* and other remaining decorations on the *andas* have been removed or taken—often those inside the *urna* that were intentionally placed there by the servants and *recamadoras*—a ladder is positioned at the back of the *andas* so the devotees can kiss the *urna*. Whether child or adult, with disability or without, they are assisted by the *Alagad ng Birhen* (Servants of the Virgin) to be able to kiss the Virgin's *urna*. After this, the Virgin is taken down or brought out from her *urna* on the *andas*, and temporarily placed in front of the secondary altar to give the devotees who patiently waited for the Virgin's re-ascent to her pedestal on the main altar an opportunity to kiss the Virgin's cape and clothing. Kissing the Virgin's face itself, or even her hands, is forbidden, as it is said that this could cause damage to the image. Care is also taken to ensure that the Virgin's valuable jewelry is not removed or lost while the kissing is

ongoing, so this is strictly monitored by the *recamadoras* and other servants of the Virgin.

The Re-Ascent of the Virgin

After the kissing of the Virgin, she will be carried by a chosen servant, assisted by another servant who will take over for the chosen servant should he no longer be able to perform this task, to re-ascend and enthrone the Virgin on her pedestal at the very center of the main altar or *retablo-mayor*. At this point, the servants (*mga Alagad*), *Recamadoras*, and the devotees who are still inside the church once again joyfully do the "*turumba*." They dance while singing the *Awit sa Turumba* (Song of *Turumba*) and shout "*Sa Birhen*!" (To the Virgin!). With the re-ascent of the Blessed Virgin of Sorrows to her shrine on the *retablo-mayor*, the church rituals come to an end, but not the folkloric events or activities outside the church.

Bathing in *Panghulo*

To make participation in the *Lupi* or *Turumba* complete and whole, it has become customary for devotees and vow-keepers to bathe in *Panghulo*—the public bathing place—where it is said the Blessed Virgin was seen walking on its water one Friday night centuries ago. It has become customary to bathe in *Panghulo* seven times, as a symbolism of the seven sorrows of the Virgin, within a single day (the day of the *Lupi*). Others who are unable to bathe instead take-home water from *Panghulo*, believing that it heals any illness and brings blessings to the one who brings it home. According to the devotees, they also share this with fellow devotees, neighbors, and townsfolk who were unable to attend the *Turumba ng Birhen.*

In these events, one can see the formulaic and routine nature of the rites and rituals, especially since they are performed repeatedly every *Lupi* season. In the rites and rituals contained within the *Turumba ng Birhen*, one can witness the unity of the Pakileños and the devotees; a unity that is clearly seen in the performance of the *Awit sa Turumba* and *Sayaw sa Turumba*; a unity that reflects the daily life of the community centered on devotion to the *Birhen ng Turumba* and her shrine—the church that stands at the center of the townspeople's lives; a unity in devotion that serves as the collective identity of the citizens of the town of Pakil, which is the source of their livelihood, and where they live happily and peacefully.

The collective participation of the citizens, whether from Pakil or visitors to the town, in the rituals contained within the *Turumba* demonstrates the social solidarity that forms during the *Lupi* and within the space of the town of Pakil, which serves as the site of devotional culture or the culture of vow-keeping. Likewise, during the *Lupi*, one can glimpse images of traditional Filipino values and the cultural values of Filipinos. An example of this is that participation in the *Turumba* is participation in Christendom, and interacting with people one does not know expresses a communal orientation rather than an individual or self-centered one. This orientation was called by Professor Felipe M. De Leon, Jr. a "celebration of togetherness—bringing people

together for maximum social interaction and connectedness,"[13] wherein Filipino traits and values such as collective participation, *pakikisama* (getting along with others), *pakikipagkapwa* (treating others as fellow human beings), generosity, sharing, interdependence, cooperation, adaptability, trust, openness or transparency, and expressiveness can be seen**.**

3. Purpose: Vow and Thanksgiving, Invoking the Welfare of the Town

The purpose of each *Lupi* is clear and evident. In the sacred acts associated with the celebration, and even in the customs and events that occur during the *Lupi*, one can perceive the profound devotion to the *Birhen ng Turumba*. However, there are moments during this time when pilgrims, devotees, vow-keepers, and ordinary visitors to the town engage in reflection and the quiet expression of their prayers (petitions and intentions) to Almighty God through the intercession of the Blessed *Birhen ng Turumba*. The rites and rituals contained within the celebration of the *Turumba* serve as a means to convey these prayers and to fulfill the promises and vows of each devotee and vow-keeper. Likewise, the rituals, and indeed the entirety of the *Turumba sa Birhen*, are a form of community celebration to manifest immense gratitude to the Virgin, who nurtures and cares for the devotees and the citizens of the town that is her site.

The *Lupi* of the *Birhen ng Turumba*, as a Church Fiesta, has the objective or purpose of continually fostering devotion to the Virgin Mary, which is embodied in the vows of the devotees. Likewise, it is the maintenance and expansion of the Christian or Catholic faith introduced by the foreign Spaniards during the colonial period, which the Filipino people continue to embrace up to the present time. Therefore, the primary objective of the *Lupi* celebration is to strengthen the spiritual condition of the citizens of Pakil, as well as the visitors to the town during the *Lupian* season. Aside from this, there is also the aspiration to promote the development of the town in its economic and socio-political aspects, which can be seen in activities related to tourism and commerce, such as the use of spaces around the church and in the town plaza for setting up stalls for itinerant trade, as well as the collection of entrance fees for bathing in *Panghulo*. But upon reflection, it can be said that above any other aspiration is the effort of the town and parish of Pakil to convey the importance of the culture of vow-keeping and devotion that prevails in Pakil society, which provides a collective identity for its citizens, and brings about the welfare of the town in its spiritual and cultural aspects, as well as its economic and socio-political dimensions.

Thus, the *Lupi* or Fiesta of the *Birhen ng Turumba*, as a church fiesta in the Philippines introduced by Spanish missionaries during the colonial period of the 17th century, is no different from other fiestas in the country, and therefore it also has a structure similar to that mentioned above, and exhibits the elements of myth, ritual, and objective.

[13] De Leon.

Expressions of the *Lupi* of the *Birhen ng Turumba*

If the celebration of *Lupi* has the structure of a fiesta, then it is similar to other town fiestas prevalent in Filipino society. According to Dr. Hornedo, the Philippine Fiesta, aside from having a structure, also has "expressions" such as color and glitter, vibrant sound, vigorous movement, abundant food, and community and popular participation that can be witnessed in each of its celebrations.[14] The question now is: Can the "expressions" of a Fiesta be witnessed in the celebration of the *Lupi* or *Turumba sa Birhen* during each *Lupi*, so that the *Lupi* of the *Birhen ng Turumba* can be considered a fiesta in the context of the Philippine Fiesta that reflects the culture of the town that is its site?

We shall endeavor to answer the above question by re-examining the *Turumba sa Birhen* from a cultural perspective.

1. Color and Glitter: Procession as a Performance of Culture and Art

The *Turumba sa Birhen* is the procession that takes place during the celebration of the *Lupi*. Therefore, it is the event of an artistic performance in the Fiesta of the Blessed *Birhen ng Turumba*, where the expressive manifestations of the culture of devotion and vow-keeping in the town of Pakil can be witnessed.

One of the expressions of the Fiesta, according to Dr. Hornedo, is the color and glitter of the celebrations and festivities, whether they are sacred acts (church-related) or secular. In the *Turumba sa Birhen*, one can see a colorful and glittering procession that begins and ends at the parish church. The first thing one notices that is colorful and glittering is the very attire of the object of devotion—the *Birhen ng Turumba*, whose dress is made of expensive fabric with shiny thread and ornaments, and whose crown and jewelry are made of high-quality silver, gold, and diamonds. The *urna* and *andas* of the Virgin are also adorned with colorful, expensive flowers, further enhanced by the lights attached to the *andas*. The devotees and vow-keepers are also dressed in colorful clothes as a sign of identity for their organization, and even the ordinary citizens participating in the procession, dressed in various colors, add to the glitter and beauty of the procession, such that when the colors mix together as the procession moves, it displays a unique combination that is pleasant to behold while moving to the rhythm of the movement and energy of the devotees in the lively and vigorous flow of the procession.

The decorations and *banderitas* (small flags/banners) attached to the church facade, as well as in the town plaza and on the streets along the procession route, further intensify the color and glitter of the celebration. The performances on the night before the *Lupi* often end with fireworks and fireworks displays, which are common signs of a glittering fiesta in Filipino society. Aside from the stalls of various colors and sizes, the colorful goods of merchants in the itinerant trade, especially toys, twinkling lights, clothing, and home decorations, add to the glitter and beauty of the

[14] Hornedo. 16.

surroundings, further elevating the prevailing feeling in the area—the atmosphere of the fiesta.

Beyond the physical color and glitter of the fiesta-like celebration of the procession, the *Turumba sa Birhen* can also be examined in terms of the type and form of feeling or emotion displayed in its performance. In the event of the procession, one can witness manifestations of the "colorful and glittering" expressive form of the deep and intense feelings and emotions of the participants, which only proves their fervent and steadfast faith and devotion.



Illustration: Expressive form of emotion and devotion manifested in a fiesta-like or festive procession – the *Turumba sa Birhen* (drawing by the researcher, 2013).

2. Sound and Music: Melody and Song of Faith

The sound or "lively and vibrant sound" is another expression of the fiesta in the community of Pakil. In the celebration of the *Turumba sa Birhen*, the sounds created by wooden clogs (*bakya*), slippers, shoes, and even the feet of the procession participants as they walk, jump, and stamp, as well as the clapping and sounds produced by objects held or carried by the *Turumba* participants, which accompany the music coming from the instruments of the musical bands, bring a unique joy not only to each participant but also to the "spectators" of the *Turumba*. Any noise generated during the *Turumba* event becomes a melody of joy that helps the participants to "enter" into a liminal condition felt and experienced only in the event of the procession, the result of which is the "loss of one's senses," thus, enabling them to produce even more lively and vibrant sounds and noises that are beneficial to the feeling of each participant.

On the other hand, the *Awit sa Turumba* (Song of *Turumba*) is sung loudly and vigorously by the procession participants, accompanied by musical bands and mobile sound systems carried by people or riding on pedicabs or motorized vehicles. The song of the participants in the *Turumba sa Birhen* expresses earnest worship, deep respect, and steadfast faith. This "vibrant sound or noise" becomes even louder and more pronounced with the ringing or pealing of the church bells, which signal the Virgin's exit from the church and the start of the procession, which may go around the church or around town depending on the *Lupi*. The lighting of sky rockets and other firecrackers or fireworks brings even greater vitality to the fiesta atmosphere.

3. Vigorous Movement and Motion: Worship through Rhythm and Dance

The vigorous movement of the participants' bodies witnessed in the performance of the *Sayaw sa Turumba* (Dance of *Turumba*) is another distinctive expression of the *Lupi* observed in the event of the *Turumba sa Birhen*. The *Sayaw sa Turumba* is a dynamic image created by the procession participants in their performance of the culture of devotion to the Virgin. In the performance of the *Sayaw sa Turumba*, one can see the deep feelings, emotions, moods, and spirit of the devotees, which we call *"kaloob-loobang damdamin o kaibuturang-buhay* (innermost feelings or the core of one's being)."

Similar to what Sally Ann Ness presented in her study of the Sinulog Dance, the movements and motions in the *Sayaw sa Turumba* can be considered a healing dance ritual and a cultural exhibition dance.[15] The former is not far from the statement of the renowned writer Alejandro Roces, who said that the *Sayaw sa Turumba* was once considered rituals of healing because the participants in the procession were people with illnesses and serious conditions, which is why they seemed out of their senses when walking (dancing).[16] They would come to Pakil and join the *Turumba* in the hope that the Virgin would heal them from their sicknesses and ailments. In the contemporary period, this sight has disappeared from the *Turumba sa Birhen*—that of participants who are sick and in serious physical condition—yet the movement and motion, the walk and dance of today's *Turumba* participants, even though they are in good health, remain the same as before, as if they are out of their senses. The belief that participating in the *Turumba* will bring about physical or spiritual healing may still be present, but those who commonly participate in the *Turumba sa Birhen* at present are not the frail and physically challenged individuals, but rather those who are strong in body or the family members of those who are ill.

Meanwhile, the second perspective on the *Sayaw sa Turumba* is as a cultural exhibition dance. In examining the aesthetic quality of the *Sayaw sa Turumba*, one notices the absence of specific movements. The devotees and other people participating in the *Turumba sa Birhen* each have their own actions and movements to show their gratitude, deep respect, and fervent devotion to the *Birhen ng Turumba*. But even thought there are no specific steps and movements in the *Sayaw sa Turumba*, one can see the rhythm and unity or oneness of a complex whole in the movements of the participants. It is undeniable that the *Sayaw sa Turumba* is a Hispanic influence, but the movements and motions such as swaying, leaping, clapping, tapping others' shoulders, shouting as if losing one's self, and waving hands in the air may have originated from animistic beliefs and rituals -a mimetic dance or customary behavior of imitating the dances of animals during the time of our ancestors. Therefore, the dance displayed in the *Turumbsa sa Birhen* can be considered an integration or synthesis of Southeast Asian tradition, with its deep animistic essence, and Western

[15] Sally Ann Ness. *Movement, and Culture, Kinesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

[16] Alejandro R. Roces. "Turumba," *Fiesta*. Manila: Vera-Reyes, Inc. 1980.

culture, particularly Hispanic tradition. This is a unique expression of Filipino feeling or sentiment, where Western influences have been renewed and shaped by Filipinos through their own socio-historical experiences, their own behavior, and their own artistic and cultural traditions. In other words, the *Sayaw sa Turumba* is unquestionably a performance of the art and culture of the town of Pakil, as it demonstrates intense respect and worship of the *Birhen ng Turumba.*

4. Popular Participation: Community Solidarity, Identity of the Town

Above all, community and popular participation as one of the expressions of the fiesta is clearly evident in the town of Pakil during the *Lupi*. In fact, it is not only the entire community of Pakil that unites and participates in the celebration of the *Lupi*, but also the other devotees, vow-keepers, pilgrims, tourists, and ordinary visitors or temporary guests of the town who come to the *Lupi* of the *Birhen ng Turumba* on the eve or a day before the fiesta, and unite in the performance of the *Turumba sa Birhen*. Because of this, the *Pakileños* literally open their homes so that the town's visitors may have a place to stay or at least to spend the night. This kind of participation and unity in the spirit of openness (openness/transparency), and trust in people not thoroughly known, due to fervent devotion to the Virgin, is the proud identity of the citizens of the town of Pakil, which according to them was inherited from their ancestors. The barangays, civic organizations, religious and church associations, even the political rivals of the town, unite and come together in expressing expressive forms of worship and devotion to the patroness of the town—the *Birhen ng Turumba*.

Conclusion

In the performance of the *Turumba sa Birhen* during each *Lupi* or fiesta, the deep relationship of the celebration to the culture and society of Pakil is clearly evident. In other words, the *Turumba sa Birhen* is not only a procession but also a performance of the culture of the society in which it is situated and deeply rooted.

First, the structure of the fiesta can be clearly seen in three elements: (1) myth or legend, (2) ritual, and (3) purpose. The myth or legend associated with the *Turumba sa Birhen* is the miraculous finding of the Virgin's image at the fish corral of Daang Estaka on the shore of Laguna de Bay (Bai) within the jurisdiction of Pakil on September 15, 1788. It is believed that on this day, the first *Turumba sa Birhen* procession took place, accompanied by music from wooden clogs (*bakya*), clapping, swaying, jumping, and dancing as if out of one's senses.

According to devotees, vow-keepers, and pilgrims, the *Birhen ng Turumba* is truly miraculous. Many of her miracles have been documented, while countless others remain unwritten. These experiences intensify devotion and strengthen the rituals of the celebration. Similar to other devotions such as the Black Nazarene of Quiapo and the Virgin of Peñafrancia in Bicol, the rituals of *Turumba* are rooted in ancient animistic beliefs yet assimilated into Catholicism. Because of its long history, the rites and rituals of the *Turumba sa Birhen* have become rituals of life for Pakileños and pilgrims from

the Tagalog region, Bicol, and the Visayas. They remain alive and resilient against modern challenges, serving as a means of collective participation and social solidarity.

The objective or purpose of the Lupi as a Church Fiesta has remained unchanged since Spanish missionaries introduced Christianity four centuries ago. As Reinhard Wendt explains, its purpose is "…to promote an impressive image of the grandeur and splendour of the Catholic Church, to anchor the Christian message more strongly in the minds of the population, and to outshine through extravagance and colour the pre-festival culture and customs."[17] The paradox, however, is that instead of erasing animistic practices, the fiesta integrated them, producing a unique Filipino tradition. Thus, the *Turumba sa Birhen* manifests Filipino culture while upholding Catholic devotion. The Parish of San Pedro Alcántara, Shrine of the *Birhen ng Turumba*, continues to expand devotion to the Virgin while fostering spiritual well-being among citizens and visitors.

Beyond the spiritual dimension, the fiesta sustains **economic life**. Stalls and itinerant trade during the *Lupi* season provide livelihood opportunities, enhance commerce, and contribute to Pakil's economy. The influx of pilgrims and visitors adds to local income, while itinerant trade—an ancient form of commerce—remains alive during the *Lupi*. Thus, the celebration is both a site of devotion and a symbol of traditional trade, reflecting material culture alongside spiritual practice.

The expressions of the fiesta—color and glitter, vibrant sound and music, vigorous movement, and collective participation—are vividly embodied in the *Awit sa Turumba* and *Sayaw sa Turumba*. These performances reinforce Pakil's identity as a pilgrimage center in Southern Tagalog. The *Lupi* serves as a medium for showcasing the town's culture of devotion, where vow-keeping, miracle experiences, and communal participation express the innermost faith of the people.

Finally, Arnold M. Azurin, in *Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming*, describes the *Turumba sa Birhen* as a "Dance in the Fiesta, as worship and a shield for traditional culture."[18] He relates the fiesta in Pakil to other devotional practices such as the Cofradia cult in Quezon and Laguna, the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Peñafrancia in Bicol, Sinulog in Cebu, Sanghiyang in Cavite, and the prayer-dance in Obando, Bulacan.[19] His discourse affirms that the Philippine fiesta is a fusion of Eastern and Western culture, where dance as worship preserves ancient beliefs amidst Christian liturgy. Therefore, the *Lupi* of the Virgin of Turumba is both a product of assimilation and a living devotional culture, resilient in Pakil and proudly sustained by its community.

[17] Reinhard Wendt. "Philippine Fiesta and Colonial Culture." Philippine Studies. Volume 46, First Quarter. Editor-in-Chief Joseph
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[18] Arnold M. Azurin. Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being & Becoming. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995.
[19] Ibid. 92.

Recommendations

1. This study concludes that the celebration of the Seven *Lupi* should not be labeled a 'festival,' so as to preserve its meaning and essence as a devotional feast and safeguard the vernacular term *Lupi* from being forgotten. In other words, the Seven *Lupi* should consistently be recognized as a devotional feast rather than a festival, ensuring that its sacred meaning and vernacular identity is preserved.
2. The *Lupi* must be safeguarded against reduction into a tourism-oriented spectacle, thereby maintaining its role as a spiritual and communal practice rooted in Filipino fiesta spirituality
3. Restoring traditional dancing in the *Turumba sa Birhen* is strongly recommended, since walking alone risks making the procession resemble a parade rather than an authentic devotional practice. The traditional dancing should be restored and emphasized in the *Turumba sa Birhen*, reinforcing its devotional character and distinguishing it from secular parades.

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