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Article

The Table, the Altar, and the Dance: A Comparative Ethnography of Festive Kinship in Cebu, Naga, and Obando within the Sociology of Religion Pillars

Esmeralda F. Sanchez, PhD
Divine Word College of Calapan, Philippines
Correspondence: esmeralda@dwcc.edu.ph

Abstract

This study analyzed different AI policy guidelines reflected in syllabi of faith-based education in higher education in order to come up with recommended policies addressing digital equity and the requirements for ethical disclosure of AI use in an academic instruction setting. The study used a Qualitative Multi-Document Analysis approach on selected faith-based syllabi from a mix of sectarian universities and colleges to extract explicit AI statements, academic integrity clauses, and assignment instructions from the 2025–2026 academic years. Thematic lenses related to regulatory, pedagogical, and theological notions were applied for the study's analytical framework. Drawing on Durkheim's theory of moral regulation, the study emphasized that institutional policies on AI serve not only as technical guidelines but also as collective norms that preserve ethical order, spiritual values, and the integrity of human-centered mentoring. The study concluded that integrating AI into faith-based education syllabi requires a carefully crafted policy approach that balances technological efficiency with the preservation of ethical and spiritual values. This study proposed five research-based public AI policy recommendations for faith-based syllabi in congruence with UNESCO's AI guidelines, frameworks from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and De La Salle University's Policy for Generative AI in Education.

Keywords: *Academic Integrity, AI Policy Guidelines, Faith-based Education, Qualitative Multi-Document Analysis, Theological Framework, Moral Regulation Theory*

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Introduction

In the Philippine National Capital Region (NCR) and its neighboring provinces, the fiesta has often been dismissed by secular modernization theories as a "wasteful" cultural relic. Yet contemporary sociological discourse challenges this view. As Pertierra (2002) explains, Philippine culture is deeply rooted in "the local," where religion serves as the primary language of identity. The fiesta is more than a parish event; it represents the pulse of the "Domestic Church." This research focuses on a "Sacred Trinity" of celebrations: Cebu's Sinulog, representing national identity and kinetic penance; Naga's Peñafrancia, embodying the longitudinal labor of hosting and regional devotion; and Obando's Fertility Rites, symbolizing the sociology of biological and kinship continuity.

The first framework, The "Social Glue" Theory: Beyond Secularization, situates the fiesta against Western sociological narratives. Weber's "Disenchantment of the World" suggests that modernization leads to religious decline. However, in the Philippine context, Cornelio (2016) and Sapitula (2014) argue for a "Pervasive Religiosity." Expanding this, Putnam's (2000) concept of Social Capital distinguishes between bonding capital, which strengthens internal family ties, and bridging capital, which connects different social groups. The fiesta emerges as the ultimate Philippine machine for generating both. In Naga's 12-day cycle, bonding occurs in the domestic kitchen, while bridging unfolds through LGU-led civic activities. This challenges the secularization thesis, demonstrating that urbanization intensifies the need for religious anchors.

The second framework, Somatic Sociology and the "Body as Text," emphasizes embodied participation. The Obando Fertility Dance and the barefoot procession of the Sinulog provide a somatic dataset. Mauss (1934) on "Techniques of the Body" and Bourdieu (1977) on "Habitus" suggest that culture is muscular, not merely cognitive. Thus, when couples dance in Obando, they enact a "Habitus of Hope," while the fatigue of Cebu's barefoot procession becomes "Somatic Penance." The body itself becomes a site of communication with the Divine, where heat and crowding are not discomforts but essential elements of valid sacrifice.

The third framework, Spatial Sociology: The "Production of Sacred Space," draws on Lefebvre (1974). Space is not a neutral container but a social product. In Naga, commercial spaces such as malls and banks are subordinated to sacred spaces like the river and shrine during the fiesta. The 4:00 AM Traslacion radically reclaims the city, asserting that the "Holy Face" owns the streets rather than motorists or the state. This spatial hegemony becomes a powerful tool for community identity.

Methodology

The Methodology adopts a dual-track approach. The lead researcher engaged in high-intensity participation during peak ritual hours in Cebu and Obando, focusing on somatic sociology and kinship chains. Meanwhile, a research assistant undertook a 12-day longitudinal immersion in Naga to capture temporal sociology and the labor of

the fiesta. This design allowed for both macro-level public rituals and micro-level domestic preparations to be documented. The framework integrates somatic sociology, spatial analysis, social capital, and Durkheim's (1912) concept of collective effervescence, treating the fiesta cycle as a "Social Eucharist" that redistributes communal resources to stall urban alienation.

Finally, data triangulation combined field notes, temporal mapping, and narrative accounts of ritual flow. This enabled the study to analyze how sacred time and space reconfigure urban life, demonstrating that fiestas are not cultural relics but dynamic mechanisms of social solidarity and religious resilience.

Results

The results reveal the chronopolitics of devotion across the three sites studied. In Naga, the Peñafrancia festival emerges not as a single event but as a longitudinal social transformation. The 4:00 AM Traslación marks a liminal opening, where the city undergoes a spatial re-orientation. As Mircea Eliade (1957) describes, this "Sacred Time" strips away secular identity, leaving only the sacred path visible. During the novena days, civic and sacred integration becomes evident. Local government units (LGUs) and schools do not merely attend but actively manage the fiesta, embodying a total social integration. The schools provide the "manpower of faith," ensuring continuity through the youth, while the fluvial procession from noon to evening becomes a kinetic metaphor for the Bicolano life cycle. The endurance of heat and humidity is accepted as "Somatic Offerings," reinforcing communal devotion.

In Obando, the fertility rites highlight the sociology of biological continuity. The Pandanggo dance is observed as ritualized labor, a form of "muscular prayer" that reflects the cyclical nature of family life—birth, growth, and return to ancestors. The trinity of saints—San Pascual Baylon, Santa Clara, and Nuestra Señora de Salambao—constitutes a composite social net, mirroring the Filipino reliance on extended kinship networks. This embodied devotion demonstrates how somatic practices sustain hope and continuity across generations.

Cebu's Sinulog festival underscores kinetic national identity. The early morning fluvial procession sanctifies the island's gateway, while the reenactment of Queen Juana's baptism becomes a post-colonial ritual, reclaiming historical conversion as a living family memory. At 2:00 PM, the solemn barefoot procession epitomizes somatic penance. Walking barefoot for hours on asphalt manifests parental sacrifice, while the "Kinship Chain" of families holding onto one another against the crowd symbolizes social cohesion.

Across these sites, civic-religious symbiosis is evident. In Naga, LGUs and schools institutionalize devotion, acting as surrogate kinship units and reinforcing enculturation. Government offices pivot operations toward festival logistics, treating security and sanitation as sacred duties. This bureaucratic devotion demonstrates that legitimacy of the state is reinforced by its ability to facilitate access to the sacred. Spatial

redistribution further shifts the city's center of power from secular institutions to the cathedral and shrine, underscoring the fiesta as a mechanism of social solidarity.

Finally, post-colonial somatics highlight acts of cultural decolonization. In Cebu, the annual reenactment of Rajah Humabon and Queen Juana's baptism functions as an invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), stabilizing communal identity in a globalized world. In Obando, the fertility dance represents somatic resistance, where families choose the labor of devotion over mechanized medical solutions. This prioritization of ancestral continuity through embodied ritual reinforces the family as the ultimate unit of decision-making, independent of secular mandates for development.

Discussion

The findings across the three sites reveal a complex sociology of return and resistance, forming what may be called the Sacred Trinity of Festive Kinship. In Naga, the twelve-day cycle demonstrates a civic-religious symbiosis where LGUs and schools manage the ritual as a sacred duty, reinforcing the extended family structure. In Cebu, the solemn barefoot procession becomes a form of somatic penance, where the kinship chain of families holding onto one another manifests social cohesion. In Obando, the rhythmic Pandanggo dance represents somatic resistance, as families prioritize the labor of the dance and ancestral continuity over secular or clinical mandates. Across all sites, temporal sovereignty is asserted, with families privileging ritual time—such as the 4:00 AM processions—over the productive time of global capitalism. This temporal reordering serves as a buffer against urban alienation and affirms the fiesta as a mechanism of solidarity.

Institutional findings further highlight the inseparability of family and fiesta. Schools function as secondary kinship units, mobilizing thousands of students during novenas and acting as surrogate parents to ensure that the next generation inherits somatic memory. This ritual of enculturation ties student identity not only to academic achievement but also to regional spiritual heritage. Government offices, meanwhile, pivot their operations toward festival logistics, treating security, sanitation, and transport as sacred duties. This bureaucratic devotion demonstrates that the legitimacy of the state is reinforced by its ability to facilitate access to the sacred. During these twelve days, spatial redistribution occurs, shifting the city's center of power from secular institutions such as City Hall to the Cathedral and Old Shrine.

Taken together, these findings underscore that the fiesta is not a cultural relic but a dynamic system of social reproduction. It integrates civic institutions, educational structures, and kinship networks into a unified framework of devotion. The family asserts ritual time over capitalist time, ensuring that the fiesta remains the primary mechanism for social solidarity and resistance in an urbanizing world.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of this study emphasizes that across all sites—Naga, Cebu, and Obando—the Filipino family asserts ritual time over the productive time of global capitalism. This reordering of temporal sovereignty demonstrates that the fiesta is not a cultural relic but the primary mechanism for social solidarity. It ensures that the family remains the ultimate unit of social reproduction and resistance in an urbanizing world. By privileging sacred rhythms over secular schedules, the fiesta sustains resilience, spirituality, values, and sustainability, aligning with the broader socio-religious pillars of the PASR Journal.

From these findings, several recommendations emerge. For sociologists of religion, future research should move beyond purely theological analysis and focus on "kitchen sociology," documenting the domestic labor of women and extended kin who sustain the twelve-day cycles, as observed in the Naga immersion. For urban planners and LGUs, the heavy involvement of civic institutions in the "in-between" days of the Peñafrancia suggests that city planning should treat the fiesta not as a disruption but as a form of social infrastructure that strengthens community resilience. For cultural heritage advocates, there is an urgent need to archive the oral histories of the Obando dance, as personal miracle stories that bring couples back year after year are disappearing forms of intangible heritage.

Educational managers are also encouraged to integrate visual ethnography and somatic sociology into doctoral curricula. Many dissertations in the Philippines rely heavily on quantitative surveys, which often miss the "human hum" and sacred labor of social phenomena. The success of this study demonstrates that visual data provides thick description and informs more empathetic, culturally grounded educational policies. Schools, particularly in Naga, should be recognized as cultural anchors in regional development. Rather than viewing religious festivals as lost instructional time, higher education institutions should formalize student participation as service-learning and community engagement credits. Aligning academic calendars with regional temporal sovereignty reinforces the family-community-academy triad, which is vital for student retention and identity formation.

Finally, the study recommends collaborative research models such as the professor-assistant dyad, where high-intensity observation is paired with long-term immersion. This dual-track approach produces multidimensional data, providing doctoral candidates with hands-on ethnographic training while enabling senior faculty to synthesize theoretical frameworks. By embracing such models, higher education institutions can strengthen both academic rigor and cultural relevance.

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