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KALIBO STO. NINO ATIATIHAN FESTIVAL AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE ATIS

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ABSTRACT

The province of Aklan in the Philippines, (is packed with interesting places, from scenic beaches, captivating waterfalls, and vast caves), one of the top tourist destination of the Philippines. Boracay island is voted as the best beaches in the world. Aklan comprises 17 municipalities, one of which is known as “Kalibo”.

The month of January is devoted to the various festivals honoring the image of Santo Nino. The most popular celebration is the Kalibo Santo Nino Ati-atihan Festival that is replicated throughout the country since 13th century.

This cultural festival has become a social movement – an expressive behavior pattern where people collectively adapt to change and individuals find emotional release and an expression of their beliefs. It is a movement where people from all walks of life join and unite in traditional ways of celebrating. It is the blending of religious festivities of yesteryears with the present generation’s lifestyle and the manifestation of this in the individual as his way of life, his attitudes and his practices (such as the way he dresses entertains guests or shows friendship and hospitality) developed from childhood to adulthood.

The Ati-atihan is a gladsome confluence of hope and faith, philosophy, religion, enjoyment, prayer and merry-making, charity and generosity, thanksgiving and ritual, atonement and adventure, history and legend, hope and well-wishing, concord and creativity-all happily blended, in the merry sound of beating drums.

The festival will continue to stay among the Aklanons as a most valued tradition, a unique legacy that will be handed on and treasured from generation to generation.

During the 12th to 13th century, the Ati’s trusted the Malays for governance. The Malays, in return, valued their spirit of paternalism, friendship, camaraderie and brotherhood. This is the very reason why their cultural heritage survived for many centuries and has been reknowned worldwide.

Keywords: Heritage, Festival, Ati-atihan, Ati’s, Sto. Nino

1. INTRODUCTION

The province of Aklan in the Philippines is packed with interesting places, from scenic beaches, captivating waterfalls, and vast caves. Located at the northwestern part of Panay island, the province is one of the top tourist



destination of the Philippines. It is also a part of Region 6 where the popular underground river/cave in Palawan is located. In 1990, Boracay island is voted as the best beaches in the world. In 1996, the British publication TV Quick tagged the island as the best tropical beach in the world. Aklan is divided into 17 municipalities, one of which is known as “Kalibo”.

The month of January is devoted to the various festivals honoring the image of Santo Nino or the Holy Infant. They are celebrated in many places throughout the Philippines. The most popular celebration is the Kalibo Santo Nino Ati-atihan Festival that is replicated throughout the country during town fiestas. Its origin goes back to the 13th century. Kalibo has many attractions besides the Santo Nino Ati-atihan Festival. There are many cultural and eco-tourist aspects as well such as the Golden Eagle Award winning, “The Mangrove Reforestation Project” known as the “Green Pearl of the Orient” for being one of the best in Asia, the Museum of Aklan, Aklan Freedom Shrine, Tigayon Hill and Caves, a number of scenic beaches, waterfalls and the famous pina cloth, considered as the finest fabric in the world.

This cultural festival has become a social movement – an expressive behavior pattern where people collectively adapt to change and individuals find emotional release and an expression of their beliefs. It is a movement where people from all walks of life join and unite in traditional ways of celebrating amid modernization and change. It has also demonstrated the blending of religious festivities of yesteryears with the present generation’s lifestyle and the manifestation of this in the individual as his way of life, his attitudes and his practices (such as the way he dresses entertains guests or shows friendship and hospitality) developed from childhood to adulthood. Once a year in January, Aklan Province becomes the place to be with ati-atihan festival.

2. KALIBO STO. NINO ATI-ATIHAN FESTIVAL

The First Ati-Atihan occurred during the first celebration of the barter of Panay. After the first ati-atihan, the Ati’s trekked to the mountains to pursue their nomadic ways. Such Brown settlers from Borneo and their descendants occupied the coastal plains and downstream valley. Datu Bangkaya and his tribe landed in Aklan. The Atis gave way to the new race by moving upstream in search of new settlement areas. They left their homes so that the Malays will have temporarily urgent dwelling place. The Malay’s built their settlements on the vacated lands. They established the first community of the brown race in this country and the first union of States in Southeast Asia – the Confederation of Madyaas. They named the island Madyaas or paradise in contrast to the land they left behind. Borneans loyalty to legends, customs and traditions are somehow reflected today in the lives of Aklanons.¹

Every after harvest, the Ati’s come down to the Malay’s villages and the celebration is renewed. Several hundred years and a new influence came to Panay. The Spanish conquistadores arrives with the sword and the cross, evangelizing, baptizing and introducing the Santo Nino. To celebrate the event, the drums of Aklan were sounded for this beneficial event and coincided with the existing ati-atihan feast. With a Christian character, the Ati-ati festival was transformed into the feast of the Holy Child or Sto. Nino. Thus, the present Ati-Atihan is tinged with religious fervor and is now associated with miracles. Throughout the centuries, culturally, only Kalibonhons have consistently given significance to this historical legacy as they possess the natural love for festivities. Every Kalibonhon’s soul and soaring spirit “has the gift of rhythm and passion for music.” Today, the same Sto. Nino is venerated with great reverence and to its name a great festival is celebrated yearly, The Kalibo Sto. Nino AtiAtihan Festival.

Today, the Kalibo Sto. Nino Ati-Atihan festival is a combination of both a religious celebration and a historical commemoration. It is the Feast of the Sto. Nino and the historical event: the ati-atihan festival. In this one week long festival, everyone participates regardless of age, status or station in life. It is a fusion of historical pageantry, pagan revelry, religiosity, and modern the *Mardi Gras*. It has become a hodge-podge of Catholic ritual, social activity, indigenous drama, and foreign: a tourist attraction over a period of several days. Before the festival day itself, the people attend Novena Masses (Sto. Nino), as well as benefit dances sponsored by civic organizations. The start of the revelry is signaled by thunderous and rhythmic drumbeats, as the streets are filled with dancing people. The second day begins at dawn with a rosary procession, and ends with a community mass. The merrymaking is then resumed. On the last day, the Holy Mass in honor of the Sto. Nino is celebrated at Pastrana Park then groups representing different costumed tribes



compete. The highlight of the day is dance-procession of tribes and devotees carrying bamboo torches and different images of the Sto. Nino.

The Kalibo Sto. Nino Ati-atihan recalling the history of the ten Bornean Datus may be the most ancient recorded history in pre-Spanish times in the whole Philippines (The Maragtas). The festival has been imitated everywhere in the Philippines. It has attracted tourist from every part of the globe. The cultural tradition survived for centuries, has achieved national, even world reknowned because of its inherent character. The character consists of *goodwill*, so that there are practically no unpleasantness despite the tumult; *reverence*, so that in the midst of merry making we do not forget our submission to the Holy Child; *creativity*, so that despite very limited resources we manage to create costumes from seeds, nuts, shells, raw fibers, leaves, thin cans in a wonder to outsiders. Everyone participates, not just as spectators but as dancers in common joy. It is a ballet where everyone has a part [Tirazona, 1998].

Unlike other festivals, the Ati-Atihan festival, a major tourism event, has no choreography, which allows tourists to participate in the street dancing – a feature absent from other festivals. The spontaneity and freewheeling nature of this festivity is the reason why the event is popular with tourists. It allows people, natives and tourists worldwide alike, to articulate their individuality. The festival also acts as a social leveler as people from all walks of life throughout the world converge and interact with one another amidst the celebration. Indeed, the festival has come a long way from its humble origins of pagan lore to become a tourism spectacle of pomp and pageantry.

The ati-atihan festival, the riotous yet organized madness, intoxicating mix of pagan and catholic ritual, social activity and tourist attraction in the frenzied street dancing. The entire affair is turmoil of sounds, sights, the air, conspire to draw everyone into the vortex of the action. Everyone steps then gyrates to the irresistible beat. The discordant twit-twit, hoot-hoot, clang-clang and boom-boom of drums, the stomp-stomp of feet on the street in syncopation, the rustle-rustle of hundreds of costumes. Blackened with soot in the bodies and face, or sometimes paints, and wear bright colorful costumes, ranging from the creatively beautiful to the absurdly amusing, to look like the “ati’s”, a myriad of colors swaying here and there and looks of being from rags to real, from oriental to western, from primitive to spaceman. They render unison and alignment, discipline and coordination, tempo and accord and smile shining in every face. They purported to jog, run or march in dance form and sway to the repetitive beat of drums all day to feel the pulse of the masses and exhibit their colors. Their tendons and hearts are carried along with the movement and a great nameless emotion wells up with a clutch in one’s heart, a catch in one’s throat and a threat of tears in one’s eyes. And one doesn’t feel tired as one moves on and on. Tourists and visitors from all over the globe find the attraction irresistible that they end up smearing their faces and joining the revelry (Cruz, 1963).

The entire town beats to the rhythm for days from dawn to dawn. An uninhibited spirit pervades and display of human antics. It is an eruption of the human spirit; a blare in the ear. Dancing and drinking were unstoppable. So much of preening and prancing from those who dare wear their fantasies – imaginative, bizarre, and outrageous.

The noise and movement become more intense on Sunday or the holiday. The celebration reaches the climax with a torch procession late in the afternoon. The procession starts at around four o’clock from the Roman Catholic Church and passes through the streets that define the perimeter of the town. It’s slow-moving, dancing, prancing, chanting, cheering, clamorous procession. And as night slowly descends upon the world and engulfs the town with darkness, one could see the opaque fantastic figures of a long compact mass of humanity bobbing up and down under torch flames, and one could hear nothing but an endless discordant grating blare of noise accentuated only by the bass of drums. The procession ends at about eight o’clock in the evening back in the church, to end the year’s celebration. Then silence and peace reign as the fagged Atis walk their weary way home and the world recedes into same normalcy again (Cruz, 1963).

“*Panaad*” or *vow or commitment* to a certain religious celebration regarded the festival a religious observance. Tourist view the event as thanksgiving for the blessings and miracles received from the Supreme Being. Some people attributed their pregnancy to their spirited street dancing.

The Ati-Atihan have evolved out of a pagan festival.



But the celebration does not only consist of rumpus and cavorting around the town. It is not complete until the celebrants take time out to enter the church, kiss wooden image of Sto. Nino at the altar and have back breasts and limbs be massaged with it. They believe such ritual; heals the body as well as the spirit (Cruz, 1963).

The veracity of its origin is buried in the penumbra of unrecorded time, and many a conjecture is now given to explain its outlandish character, but whatever it really was in the beginning. Kalibo, Aklan's Santo Nino Ati-atihan festival is a feast in honor of Christ Child the king proves to be annual ablution of the native's soul, a psychotic excursion of his mind, a release of his pent-up emotions and instincts through a world of make-believe, a much needed stirring of his blood thirsty of adventure. The devout celebrant may look foolish in his black nakedness or his pretentious attires but because he goes through this yearly ritual with sincerity, reverence and a strong, simple belief that he is giving the best that he has. He also believes that Christ Child the king comes down to bless him in this moment of wildness.

Because the Ati-Atihan is religious in nature, every Santo Nino devotee always pays homage to the Holy Child inside the Church – veneration to Him is undiminished – even as he or she enjoys the dancing, singing and shouting on the streets. It is in this occasion that folk Catholicism is very clearly manifested and is often misinterpreted as fanaticism.

The same spirit of oneness and revelry that originated in the centuries old celebration of friendship and good harvest between the Atis and Bornean Malays has inspired alike the soul-smearing tradition, the costumes and the ati-ati music, and dance that have survived to this day.

2.1. Prevalent themes in the festival²

The festival presents prevalent themes in the costumes and the issues that they imply tackling the political, social and historical scenes throughout the globe.

2.1.1. *Decade of the warrior Ati's-the 1970's: the years of living dangerously*

The evolution of the themes of the colorful and garish costumes are apparent brought about by cultural, social, political, and even economic forces. The 1970's was one of the tumultuous decades in modern history. On the international scene, the Vietnam war vis-à-vis the U.S. highhanded foreign policy galvanized the protest movement that political statement started in the 1960's. In the Philippines, the imposition of martial law led the activists to go underground to continue their struggle. Despite the incident the ati-atihan celebration proceeded as if everything was normal. There were no trappings of political unrest nor were their statement denouncing the status quo. Some participants in the festival articulated political statements condemning American imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism, and feudalism written on banners or slogans and in the popular medium "paper mache", a huge figure known as the "giants", a popular fixture in the festival. These political statements were transformed into satire written on t-shirts portraying downtrodden clothes so as to illustrate the current state including the Philippines' mounting debts from the International Monetary Fund and other financial institutions. It also depicted the moribund economy aggravated by the global oil crisis in 1979 engendering inflation, massive unemployment and a huge increase in the poverty level [Paraiso, 2004].

Some participants exhibited "warrior-like" designs, inspired by Africa, and tinged with Western elements, which are likely to have been indicative of the country's colonial hangover. It represented African inspired exotic twist concept associated with the black continent. Color is exoticized and foregrounded challenging western concepts of sense and demonstrating that aesthetics is sometimes related to rarity. Others adopted a seahorse inspired motif indicative of their geography based on Poseidon/Neptune, the god of the sea in Greek and Rome mythology indicative of the western style education pervasive in this country as an effect of its long colonization. Other participants depicted a picture with the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps and also reflects the western myth or the American's military might [Paraiso, 2004].

These ati's illustrates the fusion of the elements of the two cultures, the orient and the occident, conqueror and native constitutes the concept of hybridity. Hybridity is a phenomenon studied by Homi Bhabha, defined as the mingling



of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures. Indicative of its tenets are the “series of inclusions and exclusions wherein a dominant culture is proposed are torn down by the entry of the formerly marginalized subjects in the mainstream discourse. The dominant culture is contaminated by the linguistic and social divergence of the native self. The notion of hybridity challenges western superiority. Hybridization possess the way for the blurring of the colonizer’s identity as its culture undergoes an inevitable fusion with that of the natives. It intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence. In effect, merging native elements with that of the colonial overlord demonstrates a passive resistance against the cultural domination of the west [Paraiso, 2004].

2.1.2. *Pop culture: contextualizing the 1980’s*

The 1980’s is well remembered for the EDSA revolt in 1986 ending the Marcos dictatorship, but the chaos in the capital was not reflected in the festival for the local government made a resolution to discourage the intrusion of political elements in the revelry. Some disgruntled individuals who had expected social, economic, and political revolutions – were brazen enough to tell the world what they think through the festival by using placards. The 1980’s ushered in a new era for the festival as modern groups became popular.

Demographics played a key role in the new trend of the younger generation of *Ati-Atihan*. The young, however, has abandoned the old culture and religious significance in their street revelry and has adopted the modern stance of the computer age. They no longer smear their faces and bodies with soot but instead wear grotesque make-ups, paints, lipstick to decorate their faces or none at all and outstanding costumes of their age. Others prefer T-shirt rather than tribal garments of the 12th and 13th centuries. Their ideas facilitated the subtle subversion that is often non-existent among the tribal groups. But the religious belief, the fervor, warmth, fun and gaiety, the pomp and fun fare, historically and culturally identified with the *Ati-Atihan* – an expansion of proud customs and traditions and enduring legacy of peace and reconciliation – have remained untarnished through the passing of time since the year 1212 [Paraiso, 2004].

During the 1980’s, the themes gravitated towards pop culture exported by Hollywood to the rest of the world, as modern groups took their inspiration from Hollywood movies. The popularity of Betamax and vcr gave access to Hollywood films some of which served as inspiration for the costumes. The popularity of movies inspired by the Vietnam war such as Oliver Stone’s “platoon” and “Born on the 4th of July” to Francis Ford Coppola’s “Apocalypse Now” apparently had a creative effort on some of the groups. Other participants preferred Vietnamese costumes. The donning of the Vietnamese costumes could be taken to mean a certain degree of sympathy for the Vietnamese people that could be interpreted as a subversion of American dominance. It foregrounds the marginalized and isolated flights of the Vietnamese especially after the U.S. imposed a trade embargo that severely affected the country’s economy and its population [Paraiso, 2004].

Some participants depicted “Bondying” who fancied drinking out of his baby bottle. It allows off his drinking prowess while surrounded by huge effigies of alcohol beverages. Bondying was the offshoot of the movie that became popular in 1954. It propagates alcoholism which both as a vice and a concept is harmful to the state as it reduces the productivity of the individual rendering him/her a sort of social invalid. But the state loss is definitely a gain to the alcohol industry as his consumption is beneficial to its existence [Paraiso].

Some groups depicted a witch outfit as a result of pop culture often facilitated by the movies and television. The saturation of such elements in a way legitimizes the marginalized witch. Another aspect of culture is the media. Pop culture as part of the media also creates an atmosphere where subversive elements of culture are legitimized such as the Vietnamese costumes. As much as it is ironic that people became conscious of Vietnam through Hollywood, however, has its own agenda and those movies are not exactly done to view Vietnamese sentiments but rather to assert the might of the U.S [Paraiso, 2004].

2.1.3. *The Age of globalization: 1990’s – present*



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And from the 1990s to the present, we notice a confluence of issues that came with globalization such as the prevalence of commercialism, the power of the media to inspire people to protest, i.e., the popular trend of the Arab inspired costumes particularly in 1991 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and ignited the second Persian Gulf war, the media coverage of the war created awareness among the locals about the situation in the middle east, a more tolerant stance towards the debate on sexuality, the global reach of the festival as exemplified by white tourists, and the use of the festival for political purposes, i.e., campaign. The festival, which claims to be immune to the political and social upheavals in the country, has served as a venue where power plays are enacted for all the world to see.³

The 1990's were to usher various transformations worldwide, the new world order, or term coined by U.S. President George Bush. In a speech before a joint session of Congress in 1990 became a catch phrase of the early 1990's. The concept is used to describe such diverse contemporary contentions as the post cold war balance of power (within the U.S. becoming the only superpower), economic interdependence, fragmentation, and the rise of nationalism, technology advancement and integration. Included in this new world order is globalization, realized through the creation of economic blocs such as the world trade organization and the North American Free trade association allowing member states to trade freely. Meanwhile, political integration is achieved through the rise of the European Union. The decade also saw a major war in the Middle East owing to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. As a result, terrorist activities formerly confined within the Middle East began to spread to the West. One such example is the unsuccessful 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center organized by the followers of Osama bin Laden. In Asia, a more evolved form of terrorism was witnessed when a cult calling itself the Aum Shinrikyu (Supreme Truth) conducted biological warfare attack by using a nerve gas called "sarin" in a Tokyo subway in 1995. In the Philippines, terrorist group Abu Sayyap made its presence felt when it ravaged a town in Zamboanga [Paraiso, 2004].

In Kalibo, commercialization became rampant in the *ati-atihan* festival as private agencies sponsored the decoration of the streets by using flaglets or streamers and advertised their company logo by sponsoring the costumes of some participants. Aside from the aesthetics considerations, the choice of colors indicates a latent statement of protest. Some group participants illustrated the blurring of demarcations between parody and advertising per se. In the Foucauldian aspect, the participants appears to have power over the representation of consumerism [Paraiso, 2004].

The phenomena in this category demonstrate the overlapping of the economic domain with the cultural one as both are integral to each other. This is a typical characteristic of the festival where commercial participation is not only condoned, but also greatly encouraged by the organizing agency. It also showed hegemony in action, wherein the capitalist system is channeled through ideologically neutral or safe harbors, where they could come off as natural. By re-channeling the idea of advertising, mass consumerism, is therefore ascribed by the spirit of the festival. This idea, however, works both ways as it could either be absorbed or the creeping commercialism is simply assuming a diverging, more benign form, undergoing a metamorphosis of sorts so as to affirm itself naturally at the expense, and most of all, with the consent of those who deplore their very presence [Paraiso, 2004].

Consumerism, both as practice and ideology has been successful at marginalizing culture. It tries to achieve convergence with culture, as represented by the festivity. Culture has a clearer way of the debunking the capitalist center. The result is a compromise where one grudgingly accommodates one another. This co-existence of convenience serves the interest of both parties. And taking into consideration that capitalism is implicitly evil, culture functions as a conduit that neutralizes it. Therefore, for all its conceit, capitalism cannot flourish without co-opting, even conceding to what it has pushed to the margin [Paraiso, 2004].

The presence of the politician in the festival could be analyzed using the notion of the hyperreal, a domain where the distinction between the simulation - the process wherein the divergence between the original and copy has itself been destroyed and the real continually implodes, the real and the imaginary collapse into each other. This occurrence is frequently exploited by politicians. In displaying themselves, they enter a plane where their presence is fused with the celebration. Their existence no longer represents their motives, they are the *ati-atihan* and when election comes, the voters will probably conjure up images of such and possible write their names in their ballots. The hyperreal facilitates the idea of name recall, the divergence, however is not just the name that the voters will remember but the simulated



experience, which is even better than the real thing. Jean Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreal is essentially anti-Foucauldian [Paraiso, 2004].

3. THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE ATI'S OF BORACAY

Boracay island, a hugely popular tourist destination that exploded in uncontrolled tourism development in the last three decades, is an island of magnificent natural beauty. The physical composition is a truly breathtaking tropical coastal scenery varies from long unspoilt powdery white sand beaches, one of the finest in the world, and the clear blue waters set against a backdrop of rolling hills fringed with trees to ruggedly beautiful limestone cliffs and outcrops covered with lush green vegetation. Matching the natural beauty are the rich marine life and colourful coral formations found in crystal clear coastal waters, sheltered bays, quiet coves, and idyllic places. A lot of colourful and vibrant places presents a whole spectrum of resort styles offering a wide choice of watersports amenities from boating, yachting, windsurfing to parasailing, from waterskiing to deep sea fishing with a wealth of on-land wondrous entertainment, from the classical to the modern, from traditional theatre, cultural shows to jazz music, many bars and cocktail lounges, live bands, excellent range of hotel accommodations, exotic spas, mini safaris, mountain biking, chic euphoria to bustling bazaars and street stalls, delicious dining and shopping treasures etc. Boracay island is a small place, a little paradise, the home of today's semi-nomadic Ati's.

As of 1987, the National Coalition for Indigenous People (NCIP) put their number at around 63,000. In Aklan, 1998 NCIP data indicate their population at 11,863. Most of these Ati's are in the town of Malay, in Aklan where they are provided a settlement by the government in Barangay Cogon, Sitio Corong (Paraiso, 2004),

Both the government and NGOs such as the Magkaisa Foundation looked after their welfare by teaching them livelihood skills that they could make use of in order to fend for themselves. A number of them are also found in Boracay Island, also a part of the town of Malay, but this spot is not part of the area designated to them by the government (Paraiso, 2004).

In 1987, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371) was passed and it expressly recognized the indigenous concept of ownership, which is made the basis for the rights of the Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) or Indigenous Peoples to claim the ancestral domains (Chap. III, sec 7) and ancestral lands (Chap. III, sec. 8). The government can award ancestral domain titles to indigenous communities that can prove continuous habitation and resource use of territory since time immemorial. The native title allows organized indigenous groups to cohabit and control the use of their land, and in some cases, ancestral waters. Under the Act, the indigenes' concept of ownership "sustains the views that ancestral (domains/lands) and all resources found therein shall serve as the material bases of their cultural integrity. The concept generally holds that ancestral domains are the ICCs'/Ips' private but community property which belongs to all generations and therefore cannot be sold, disposed or destroyed" Chap. III, sec. 5 (Ramiscal, 2013).

4. THE BARTER OF PANAY

The Visayas is a string of emerald islands and islets that constitute the middle island grouping of the Philippines. Like all Filipinos, Visayans are a fusion of many races. It is Malay-Polynesian in origin, the most Westernized and an Asian at heart. The oldest group of people in the Philippines were Austroloid, Negritos, Melanesoid and Indonesian.

Long before the coming of the brown settlers, this territory was inhabited by Ati's or Negritos. "Ati" is an indigenous group, a native of Panay island, generically known as Filipino Negritos. It is also the local term for their 'dark brown' or 'sooty black' skin color. They are known as pygmies or aborigines with small, woolly and have wavy to kinky hair, snub or pug nose, thick lips and dark eyes. They wear scanty clothing, usually made of stripped bark or leaves of trees, or none at all. They are happy, peaceful, short in stature and nomadic (Nabor, 1956).⁴



The island of Panay was ruled by a petty King Marikudo. The Ati's were not considered primitive. They lived in airy and livable houses. They raised domestic animals and possessed subsistent economy. They depended much on hunting, fishing and planting limited crops for their food.

During the 13th century, the saga of this great migration started in the court of Brunei under the regime of Sultan Makatunaw whose insecurity and greed for power transformed him into a tyrant after the collapse of the Sri-Visayan or Srivijaya Empire, a powerful maritime kingdom, and the remnants of its vast territory at the mercy of the conquering hordes of Madjapahit warriors.

Under the leadership of Datu Puti, his chief minister, the 10 datos and their descendants, (tribe of adventurous people), stealthily boarded several boats and crossed the seas to escape and decided to leave with their followers and seek for peace in a new land. They faced and dared the high seas for distant unknown destiny. Guided by the stars and favored by tropical winds, they reached the island of Cebu, Palawan, Negros and bound to Romblon when they saw a silhouette of a mountain summit in the horizon. They landed in the island of Panay. The brown settlers preferred this place as suitable to agriculture, their main occupation. The abundance of the natural food resources from the river satisfied their cravings for life near the sea. Right away sought audience with Ati chieftain Marikudo offering them their most cherished possession to own the entire island comprising today of five provinces: Iloilo, Guimaras, Capiz, Antique, and Aklan, the absolute paradise [February 1212 A.D.]. With gifts which included a *sarok* (native headgear) made of gold and a long gold necklace, brass basins, bales of cloth, the Malay's persuaded the Ati's to retreat to the mountains and yield the lowlands to the newcomers. To seal the agreement or treaty known as the barter of Panay, is a symbol of peace and accord between two people who have settled territorial claims through diplomacy and not through aggression, they held a thanksgiving feast with general sharing of food, drink, and dancing. The unending flow of native wine (tuba) and the sumptuous meal motivated the start of merry making. The primitive dancing of Atis, with simple steps and the throbbing and compelling rhythm of their drumbeats thrilled the more sophisticated Malays and they joined the Ati dance. Caught in the excitement of the movement, the Malays playfully tried to imitate the Atis in every way; in their dance, music, dress and even in their skin color. The dark complexion was simulated by smearing the skin with soot scrapped from the pots where the food was cooked (Nabor, Tirazona and Cruz).⁵

Thus, started the first *Ati-Atihan* which was commemorated by Datu Bangkaya, the intellectual among the ten and the chief advisor of Datu Puti, when he first established Madyanos or little paradise now named 'Kalibo' at the bank of the Aklan river on the second Saturday of February 2012 and became the national capital of the pre-Hispanic Philippines in the year 1215 and again in 1226. From then on, the barter of Panay is being commemorated as a feast after every harvest.

The National Historical Commission for Philippines and the National Commission on the culture and the arts indicated that the barter of Panay occurred though no written account and indispensable proof to solidify the claim. I would argue that Marikudo never sold the island to the brown settlers for the following philosophical reasons.

4.1. Language barrier

The ati's spoke "inati" and the brown settlers spoke their own language. Marikudo, out of solidarity, peace and goodwill decided to share the blessings of the earth misinterpreted as barter by the Malays since they also offered as gifts their most cherished possession. Food and gift exchanging is customary in the lives of the Atis. In an aspect of interpersonalism, his word of honor is more binding than a notarized contract. It is also hierarchic described as father-son relationship. Marikudo's decision embodies the entire Atis and all the members make their individual rights subservient to the good of the entire Atis. In his social philosophy, in paternalism, he does not value so much his personal fulfillment.



The fulfillment of the entire Ati is also his own. Holistic thinking is reflected in their language. Thus, adopting the Malays, just like his sons (fulfill the condition of not only being next door [neighbor] but also being trustworthy and faithful), for their own good is generally also the good of the entire Atis and the entire brown settlers. Marikudo's linguistic philosophy of self is rooted from the viewpoint of harmony. The self constitutes body, soul, and spirit and all its properties as extension of one's self. This is synonymous to Buber's I-Thou and I-It relationship. This selfhood exercises itself in its use of personal freedom. He is conscious of oneself and conscious of others. He wants to be in harmony with himself and with his fellowmen. The human self implies the collective self of the Atis, thus repudiating the individualistic notion of privacy. Marikudo valued first the lives of the Malays. Survival counts first then other values becomes secondary such as values related to the extended family, relationships such as economic security, family honor (face), prestige (social standing, influence, solidarity and so forth) and other values such as hospitality, generosity, character, neighbors, the emotion, personal honor and dignity, empathy, pity, gratitude, sensitivity to discourtesy, loyalty, conformism, camaraderie, filial piety etc. As a concrete thinker flowing both from the heart and the head, he interchanged beauty as a preferred transcendental and equated evil with ugliness. Parents prefers the beautiful as the approach to the ethical. Parents forbids their children from doing something unethical because it is ugly, disgusting and shameful. So it was inappropriate to decline the needy Malays.

4.2. Relationship with the land

The land has always been fundamental to Ati identity. The structure of Ati life and the nature of cultural expression were determined, above all, by the timeless natural rhythms of the particular environments in which the Atis lived.

At the core of indigenous beliefs and value systems is the sentient and spiritual affinity with the land. The land is the "unifying force in their lives social, political, spiritual, cultural, economic and to separate the people from their land is to deny their peoplehood" (Hoggan 1981). The land is viewed as the mother, provider, protector, comforter, who is 'constant in a changing world, yet changing in regular cycles. She is a storyteller, a listener, a traveler, yet she is still, and when she suffers we all suffer with her... We cannot stand on her with integrity and respect and claim to love the life she gives and allow her to be ravaged' (Hoggan 1981). This relationship with the land permeates every aspect of indigenous culture. The great language diversity that exists between aboriginal peoples is also considered both the manifestation of an indigenous people's identity with their land and an expression of their differences from other indigenous groups whose lands signify their own ancestors' adventures (World Council of Indigenous Peoples, 1981).⁶

Like all peoples, they dealt closely with the physical world in every waking moment, whether foraging for plants or stalking game, cutting down a tree, working on the soil, or simply walking through a forest or across a field.

4.2.1. Indigenous rights to the land

Indigenes have a "historical continuity" with the land. They are 'descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country, wholly or partially, at the time when the persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation' (Daes 1995). This continuity is the basis for their assertion of having rights over the land which the dominant peoples did not have in the first place ('Indigenous Ideology and Philosophy,' 1995). They reject the "terra nullius" view which colonizers had used to justify the taking of their lands (Dutfield 1999). Their land rights is not determined by 'customary law' as understood 'in the legal terms of industrialized people' (Knudtson and Suzuki 1992, 4) but stem from the fact that they are the "First Peoples" who have always been there.⁷ Since the 13th century, the Atis lived in the town of Malay. Another Ati clan lived in Boracay island, also in the town of Malay, Province of Aklan.



4.2.2. *Collective rights*

The prior rights that indigenous peoples had over the land renewed expressions of the collective right they possess as a group. This collective right that is part of their norm system is balanced by the twin principle of respect for the group as an entity of individuals and respect for the individual as part of a group (Daes 1995). This collective right should by no means be confused with the dominant peoples concept of collective ownership as ‘ownership of the state.’ This latter notion presupposes the existence of ‘areas with private land ownership’ that can be sold. The indigenous peoples believe that *land cannot ‘be speculated, bought, sold, mortgaged, claimed by one state, surrendered or counter-claimed by a king whose grace and favour men must take their fortunes on this earth’* (National Congress of American Indians’ Position Paper 1981). They do not subscribe to the Western notion of private ‘inviolable ownership rights.’ They consider themselves as stewards of the land. Their notion of land rights is more akin to usufructuary rights that ‘give prior right for certain households to use the resources of certain localities’ (Daes 1995). These rights are tempered with the responsibility of reasonably distributing the resources so as not to cause overexploitation and its attendant problems. Indigenous peoples have explored a variety of means to achieve this, including migration, efficient hunting equipment, and taboo rules on the utilization of animals (Daes 1995).⁸

4.2.3. *Respect for life: environmental ethic*

Respect for all life animates indigenous actions with respect to the environment. Indigenous ceremonies reflect and celebrate the bond between humans and other forms of life. Like all peoples, they dealt closely with the physical world in every waking moment, whether foraging for plants or stalking game, cutting down a tree, working on the soil, or simply walking through a forest or across a field.

As stated by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (1981). ‘We did not go out and pick leaves just because we needed tea, nor cut down a tree for firewood. We first gave tribute and thanks to their beings. Our people respect nature and its relationship to all elements of our universe. Our relationship with our environment is obviously, our whole life.’ Rituals for honoring the spirit of a slain animal are a way of bringing people together and regulating their lives.⁹

The original Atis of Panay can be described as:

They had no specific god. Each year, they offered food from a rich harvest to a forest dweller or keeper hoping to be freed from clannish envy and harm. This was done amidst dancing and singing that later on became customary in their lives. There were no special occasion necessary for the Ati to pray. There is a link between prayer and economic activities. The Ati dance before and after the pig hunt. The night before Ati women gather shellfish, they dance which is half an apology to the fish and half a charm to ensure the catch. They sing when they rowed their boats aimed for unison and rhythm for mass action. The men performs a bee dance before and after the expeditions for honey. Whatever activity, they dance. The Atis blends work with leisure. Planting and harvesting is not purely work, for together with it go singing, drinking, eating. Since their notion of time is cyclic, the future enjoyment tends to be anticipated in the present. They expect miracles and blessings to happen. Customs rather than laws ruled their nomadic lives (NCIP, 2000).

An Ati look at himself as a self, as one who feels, as one who wills, as one who thinks, as one who acts; as a total whole as a person, conscious of his freedom, proud of his human dignity, and sensitive to the violation of these two.

4.2.4. *Indigenous epistemology*

Indigenous ecological knowledge had been described as the ‘culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous people relate to their ecosystem (Case Study 1999). It is characterized as holistic, intuitive, qualitative, and derived ‘from cumulative, collective and often spiritual experiences’ (Dutfield 1999) of environmental phenomena. Data is gathered by generations of resource users and the knowledge is transmitted through oral tradition.



Interconnectedness of beings and the elements is recognized and emphasized. The experiential basis of this knowledge permits a “science that is negotiated in the same way that people negotiate social relations with one another” (Knudtson and Suzuki 1992), 16). This knowledge is utilized to seek, reap, store, and sustain natural resources needed for necessities like shelter, food, and clothing and also to recognize, prevent or evade personal and communal perils (Huntington 1998, 66). What emerges is an understanding of what the Ojibway would call “minobimatsiwin” or the “good life (Case Study 1999).⁶

This kind of knowledge has also been termed as “traditional”. However, it is not a static and rigid form of knowledge.

What is traditional about it is

The way it is acquired and used. In other words, the social process of learning and sharing knowledge, which is unique to each indigenous culture, lies at the very heart of its traditionality. Much of this knowledge is actually quite new, but it has a social meaning, and legal character entirely unlike the knowledge indigenous peoples acquire from settlers and industrialized societies. (Third Meeting 1996, par. 79).

The intimacy forged between the Atis and the landscape may be strong, but it can be altered for ex. The urbanization and discovery of Boracay island created new relationships between hunting peoples and the lands which they hunted. Such changes were more gradual than the traumatic dislocation which occurred.

4.2.5. *Patterns and symbols*

The Atis articulated their connection with the sacred earth, plants and animals. Unlike the Atis today, their ancestors articulated the symbols and patterns on everything from pots to footwear, clothes made of shellfish and other materials. It exemplified indigenous artist to reflect on the world around them and to be reminded of the religious and secular relevance. The Atis today, by nature, are creative but their artistic skills are not yet harnessed and discovered unlike their ancestors who traditionally highly prized such crafts. Such crafts were marks of social prestige. Today, it is being exhibited by several non-Ati artists especially during the Kalibo Sto. Nino AtiAtihan Festival. Decorative patterns and symbols can be made from and applied to almost any material. Wood, shells and stone are carved, etched or painted. Clay pottery or figures are also often incised or painted. Plant such as abaca fibers and animal hair are woven into netting and textiles. Motifs are to some degree limited by the medium. Baskets, woven fabrics commonly have geometric patterns, which are the easiest to execute in these media. Where naturalistic figures are utilized, the limits of the material may engender a degree of stylization. Greater naturalism may be viewed in paintings and carving, but truth to nature is not necessarily an artistic or cultural ideal. Individual artists work inside established traditions, but may experiment within acceptable limits. Symbols and patterns often reflect that artists natural environmental or life setting. Other motifs are drawn from people’s cosmology, mythical creatures such as birds, fish and other supernatural beings constituting bright colors and intricate patterns. Others are described as representational i.e., key elements or characteristics of an animal or person may be accentuated, sometimes to the exclusion of other feature. Animal figures are often theopomorphized, a fusion of both animal and human creatures.

4.2.6 . *The Life of the spirit*

The Atis believed that everything that the Creator made, whether animate or not has a spirit. Therefore all beings are related and all things are sacred. Relationships between humans, mother earth, other creatures and ancestors are well defined. The earth is the provider, therefore, expect to respect the earth. The Atis were, determined as always by what people could take from the earth and give in return. His relationship with nature is reflected in his rituals. Before an Ati plants or cuts a tree, he first consults the spirits for blessings. Humans must respect their living kin and must provide and care for each other in order to survive. The complex system of mutual respect is articulated not only in daily life, but also in the people’s ritual and ceremonial practices. Every traditional rite and ceremony celebrates the spirit that unites all things on earth and reaffirm the sacred relationships. For the sake of the survival of the Malay settlers, King Marikudo decided to share his blessings.



4.2.7. *Foundations of the sacred*

For the Ati's the threads for ordinary life and spirituality are so tightly interwoven that the sacred and the secular are indistinguishable. The sacred life of the Ati's extends beyond the communal festivals and ceremonies that punctuate the year and the rituals that accompany puberty and other times of passage. The simple everyday act has spiritual meaning. The sacred life for them is unique and intimately inextricably linked to its own particular environment. It is rooted on the aspect of community that people unfolds with the local landscape and climate, with the beings and spirits that are perceived to dwell around them. Native traditions do share certain common underlying concepts and attitudes. Spirit power – “medicine” – is believed to reside in all things. Every plant and animal, even the soil itself, possess a soul that is mutually dependent on other souls. Unlike other Ati tribes, the Ati's of Boracay today does not focus or practiced traditional medicine. Yet, they still believe on the effect of traditional medicine. Their ancestors also believed on cycles of nature, such as the seasons and the passage of the sun and moon across the sky, are evidence of the eternal circle of existence and the timelessness of creation. Ati's believed that time is cyclic or rather spiral and dynamic. There is progress in spiral motion for the new cycle is not the old cycle. There is always tomorrow. When darkness passes there is still another day. Thus if he does not plant or harvest at a specific time, he will lose his chance for a living. He knows the chances of night fishing. Human time is not oriented to space but to man's consciousness. Some Ati's view the powers that maintain the world as entities revealing themselves in the form of natural phenomena, such as winds, rivers, corn, bees, fish, etc. They are regarded as relatives, and community of life is structured around the rights and obligations due to such kin. For other peoples, the controlling powers are formless, mystic energies. Other Ati tribes has its own ways of conducting its relationship with the cosmic entities, of controlling and harnessing the “medicine”. Some individuals actively seek the power to deal directly with the spirit; others acquire it by accident of birth or through a life crisis. Everyone must pay due heed to the spirits everyday as part of his or her obligations to them just for being alive. In Tagalog words, it is *“utang na loob or gratitude”* The concept of good or evil are articulated largely in terms of whether or not obligations to the spirits are being met. Failure in this regard is a sign of disrespect and upsets the balance and harmony of the world. The Ati wants to be in harmony with nature through equilibrium maintenance. If this balance is upset expect the arrival of suffering and other forms of misfortune. Such notion is deduced from the notion that nature is essentially based on a binary system of relationships: health and illness, hot and cold, male and female, fertile and infertile. Man needs just the right amount of contradicting elements from nature in order to function naturally

Most virtues taught by elders such as wisdom, bravery, generosity and selflessness, aim to ensure proper respect, so that cosmic balance may be maintained or restored and the community's survival guaranteed.

4.2.8. *Nature and spirit*

Nature and spirit are disengageable and mutually dependent. Spirit resides in all things and all things are part of nature. The earth is at the center of the scheme. Most native peoples respect the earth as the source of an endless cycle of generation, destruction and regeneration, through which all things are believed to pass. The view of the earth is a powerful nurturing force is articulated in the common native notion of mother earth. Fundamental to many native narratives is the understanding that the earth acts as a host to human beings. They view humans as spiritually rooted in the earth, which gave them life as the soil gives life to a plant. All beings must share the earth as partners, each responsible to the other.

4.2.9. *Kinship and spirit*

Kinship was the key to the stability, integrity and survival of the community. To be parents or a daughter was to possess a distinct role with well-defined rights and obligations to others. Those strangers were often adopted as cousin or brother making their social position unambiguous and keeping the integrity of the group intact. A specific indispensable role is played by elders. Traditionally, most childrearing was done by grandparents because parents were too busy and did not yet possess enough wisdom to pass on to their children. Elders were the source of nurture and training, and as



storytellers, they are the repository of a people's mythological and spiritual inheritance. They are responsible for handing down the actual traditions of a community. Clans and sacred societies such as other indigenous tribes in Canada often believed that they were the descendants of an animal spirit, or totem, translated as village. Individuals who did not belong to a totem based society or clan could develop their own relationship with their own personal guide. Clans and individuals were often taught to assume the characteristics of their spirit totem.

4.2.10. *The Drum is a heartbeat*

The Ati's move to a drumbeat that symbolizes the human pulse and the fundamental rhythms of all life. For this reason, performance has always played an indispensable part in native expression and both dance and music have undergone an extraordinary renaissance to recent years.

4.3. Solidarity and goodwill

For simple reason Marikudo wanted to share his blessing to these people as he saw the Malays were already plagued by big waves, strong current, diseases, hunger and thirst in the high seas. Man lives and acts together with others. The attitude of solidarity is a constant readiness to accept and to realize one's share in the community and has in his view the benefit of the whole by looking beyond his own share and personal good and contribute to the realization of the common good. Thus, Marikudo's viewpoint of solidarity is in harmony with Wojtyla's principle of participation wherein participation as a property of the action is relational and therefore intersubjective and as relational and intersubjective it has a dual aspect: as sharing in the communal life – the social dimension and as sharing in the humanness of the other – the interpersonal or interhuman dimension. Wojtyla articulated the interpersonal or interhuman dimension in the pattern "I-You" and the social dimension in the pattern "we." It allows the person to find fulfillment in himself and complementing others.

4.4. Bayanihan

Bayanihan is deduced from two tagalog words: bayan (community) and anihan (harvest) in traditional rice farming. It has been a common practice that the entire community participates during the time of harvest. Everybody helps and everybody gives. Bayanihan means to be united on the task, classically depicted as a group of people cheerfully carrying the traditional nipa hut on their shoulders as they move such house from one site to another. Bayanihan is beyond a source of strength conceived to draw a definite pathway to growth. Pulling all their energies to task, these men work together towards a common objective, concretely demonstrating that each man's contribution is important in carrying out a goal. It is best translated in English as "teamwork". It is "any action by a group of people in which each person subordinates his individual interest and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group." It is a paradigm of teamwork and solidarity.

Bayanihan is a strong sense of warm family *togetherness and pakikisama* (going beyond the material considerations) – pervades. Here, mutual understanding and mutual respect are not attributes to be taken for granted. They have to be worked at with patience, and have to be constantly protected. It encourages the attitude and helping and caring, and promotes non-confrontation and peaceful instructions among our people. It is committed to people/service showcasing a true *pagkakaisang lakas (oneness in spirit)*. The original Ati's were nomadic people but desired to continue improving their standard of living by being skillful in their field. It was their natural expression of commitment. Take progress of the family and that of the individual members is inextricably linked. For the Ati's only with real mission of a sense of purpose that comes out of intuitive or spiritual dimensions will capture people's habits – required to realize a vision. The original Ati's left their abode for the Malay settlers to have temporary dwelling place while establishing their settlement. Today, it is customary for the Ati's of Boracay to practice 'Bayanihan' but in addition, they plant coconut trees near the house.

Bayanihan exemplifies oneness in spirit, action and thought. This tradition is the legacy of the Ati's to the community. It bridges to the future sharing not just their very selves but also with a larger segment of society to continue to seek peace, harmony, reconciliation and growth. Thus, continuously promoting and sustaining development and



progress and pursuing its responsibility to the community that will ensure success. It successfully builds up a productivity oriented organization on true Filipino practice of bayanihan could corroborate and evolve on appropriate culture to contribute towards the difficult task of rebuilding an democratic institutions.

Another scenario for bayanihan paradigm is that whenever any job was too big for one person or one family to do, as in moving a house, the neighbors come round to help. The word used for cooperative neighbor was *bayani*, which also means *hero*. Thus several neighbors working together to achieve a common good can be alluded to as heroes. This tradition is indispensable for the nation to recover from serious difficulties.

Reinhold Neibuhr believed that man is capable of the virtue of justice that makes democracy possible; but the fact that he can be unjust makes democracy necessary. In the Philippines, democracy is indeed possible because numerous Filipinos are capable of respecting the rights of others. Contrary to the common observation that the Filipino is extremely individualistic and selfish, the truth is: “The Filipinos are a cooperative people. They value the virtue of helping each other and other people. They cherish their ancestral trait of bayanihan, which means cooperation. The Filipino has a built in spirit of solidarity in his culture. The Ati’s believed in communitarian interpersonalism utilizing bayanihan spirit and pakikisama.

The bayanihan spirit, whether at the corporate or the national level, will not automatically lead to productive work or effective organizational performance unless it is purposely and decisively harnessed by a true leader. A corporate culture or at the national level cannot be a product of spontaneous “people power.” People power in itself cannot be a foundation of participative management or democratic practices. One man – a leader – has to elicit the spirit of cooperation from his followers such as the *Edsa revolution*. What is a true leader? Leaders are people who are able to express themselves fully. By this I mean that they know what they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and, how to fully deploy their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses. They also know what they want, why the want it and how to communicate what they want to others, in order to gain their cooperation and support. Finally, they know how to achieve their goals. The key to full expression is understanding one’s self and the world and the key to understand is learning from one’s own life and experience.

Authentic leaders are not deterred by the weaknesses they saw in their culture. They built on their cultural traits by converting weaknesses into strengths. They used the very hierarchical nature of their society to great effect by imposing authoritarian rule. They realized that they could get away with some curtailment of political freedom as long as they were improving the standards of living of their citizens.

Most Filipinos as a whole are characterized by predominantly Malay traits, with both strong and weak points. Filipino culture is allegedly flawed by the following weaknesses: extreme personalism, extreme family centredness, lack of discipline, passivity and lack of culture, a colonial mentality, lack of self-analysis and self-reflection, and lack of the cooperative spirit.

The strengths are supposed to be sensitivity to people’s feelings: family orientation, joy and humor, flexibility, adaptability, and creativity; hard work and industry; faith and religiosity; and lastly, an ability to survive. If one closely analyzes these strengths and weaknesses, he is bound to agree that love of family is good – but sometimes bad. That is precisely the point. Every culture has both strengths and weaknesses. It depends on society’s leaders to build on the strengths and make the weaknesses irrelevant to the attainment of their goals.

So, the Atis catered to the high value assigned to treat other beings with love and tender care and by fostering a climate of peace and cooperation rather than confrontation. The key is the tagalog concept “*malasakit*.” It means *empathy*. Unless we share the same concern (*malasakit*) and are committed to a common dream, we can achieve nothing. It is teamwork (*sama-sama*, *tulong-tulong*) that gives us strength and lightens our heavy loads especially in times of crisis and adversity. The value of blending of all individual minds and hearts are very important. Each one has its own expertise and must be maximized to the utmost. *Pagmamalasakit* captures the essence of participation and involvement of people. Such value permeates all endeavors.” The typical Ati is always deeply touched by a sincere concern for his welfare and by each member of his family.

Another characteristic is “*enlightened paternalism*.” Giving the best of themselves is analogous to bringing up children to become masterpieces of human personalities when



they become adults. There must be a constant delicate blending between authority and freedom. Too much of one can lead either to repressiveness or license. These two extremes have resulted in destructive forms of parenting: overprotectiveness or permissiveness. To combine a solicitous, fatherly concern for each one and the firmness to demand from each one full utilization of talents and personal initiatives.

The Ati's also showed the Malays their belief in the divine providence, whose love has sustained us, whose blessings give fulfillment to our lives. High moral and ethical qualities must be added as essential ingredient. Intellectual honesty, as instinctive knowledge of right and wrong the courage to do right. Morals are not just a matter of ethics, they have a spiritual basis. The final essential is a deep and abiding faith. As in Kierkegaard's "Leap of Faith". A leader must have a well developed philosophy of life, a philosophy of growth for himself and his associates.

In return, the Malay's or the brown settlers emphasized to the Ati's smooth interpersonal relationship and sensitivity to feelings.

5. CONCLUSION

The Ati-atihan is a gladsome confluence of hope and faith, religion and enjoyment, prayer and merry-making, charity and generosity, thanksgiving and ritual, atonement and adventure, history and legend, hope and well-wishing, concord and creativity-all happily blended, in the merry sound of beating drums.

As long as the people of Kalibo, as well as the rest of Aklan towns in Panay island, are bound together by strong family and religious ties, and a common history and culture, the Ati-atihan festival, also known as the Sto. Nino Fiesta, will continue to stay among the Aklanons as a most valued tradition, a unique legacy that will be handed on and treasured from generation to generation.

Both the local and national government fosters the Ati's cultural heritage through the Kalibo Sto. Nino Ati-Atihan Festival, a worldwide cultural and spiritual phenomenon. The government is after the survival of their cultural identity and the necessary condition to secure it. Concerning cultural survival and economic opportunity. Only the physical features of Boracay are urbanized. The Ati community lost their traditional way of livelihood but has retained much of its traditional ways insofar as the norms, attitudes and dispositions, preferences, values and worldview.

During the 12th to 13th century, the Ati's trusted the Malays for governance. The Malays, in return, valued their spirit of paternalism, friendship, camaraderie and brotherhood. This is the very reason why their cultural heritage survived for many centuries and has been reknowned worldwide.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

¹ Artemio Nabor, MD., "History of Akean" (1956), also in Akan Journal written by the same author, April 16, 1957. See also Atty. Emilio Nabor "Taeamdan Hanungod Nang Mga Akeanon, 1895".

² Paraiso, Julianne Mary. The Politics of Appearances: The Ati in the AtiAtihan Festival of Kalibo, Aklan – A research project submitted to the Division of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines in the Visayas, Miag-ao, Iloilo, 2004).

³Roman de la Cruz, The Famous Ati-Ati of Aklan, The Aklan Report, April 1963.

⁴ Artemio Nabor, MD., "History of Akean" (1956), also in Akan Journal written by the same author, April 16, 1957. See also Atty. Emilio Nabor "Taeamdan Hanungod Nang Mga Akeanon, 1895".

⁵ Dr. Artemio Nabor, Philippine diplomat, was one of the original resource person of Aklan History. See "Mardi Gras in Aklan." Sunday Times Magazine vol; XIV n. 30. Manila: March 8, 1959. See also Dr. Ellis Cruz. Kalibo Ati-Atihan Festival, Historical and Religious Background and Benny Tirazona on Kalibo Ati-Atihan Souvenir Program, 1990.



⁶ Ramiscal, Noel G. "The Quest for Indigenous Self-Determination" on *Pilosophia*, *International Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 14 (2), 2013, 216-232.

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- [1] The Ati's, - My experience with the Ati's, 1973-1978 every Ati-Atihan Festival
- [2] Atty. Emilio Castro Nabor, former Mayor of Madalag and OIC Vice-Governor of Aklan, Interview: 1993

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