

Legitimizing Context: The Literary and Theological Function of Mary and Mariology in Aglipay's *Novenario de la Patria*

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Abstract: One of the more striking and, likely, widely-used publications of Gregorio Aglipay, one of the founding fathers of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, is the so-called *Novenario de la Patria* (1926). It contains both a specific kind of – emancipatory – Mariology and a statement in devotional form of Aglipay's religious views at the time of its publication. The Mariology of the work has recently been addressed by Gealogo, Furusawa, and De la Cruz: the first, outlining the general features of the 'Virgin of Balintawak' (*Birhen sa Balintawak*); the second, placing her in the context of other Filipino representations of Mary; and the third, providing a discussion of the representation in the context of Filipino culture and politics; earlier, Iletto also discussed the work. Building on these analyses and going beyond them, this essay focuses on the function of this particular type of Mary-with-child in the *Novenario*. This question as to the role of Mary in the *Novenario* is provoked by the apparent oddity that although the title of the work suggests a Marian novena, Mary is in fact absent from most of the devotional material, only making an appearance in the title of the book, its prefatory (or paratextual) material and briefly as part of the seventh day of the novena. In addressing this question, this paper will move beyond extant scholarly positions in a number of ways.

Keywords: Mary, *Birhen sa Balintawak*, Aglipay, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Mariology, *Novenario de la Patria*, Novena, Katipunan

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Introduction

The question as to the role of Mary in the *Novenario* is provoked by the apparent oddity that although the title of the work suggests a Marian novena, Mary is in fact absent from most of the devotional material, only making an appearance in the title of the book, its prefatory (or paratextual) material and briefly as part of the seventh day of the novena. In addressing this question from a historical perspective, this paper will move beyond extant scholarly positions in a number of ways.

First, the function of the *Birhen sa Balintawak* in the religious thought of Aglipay, creative, emancipatory, and radically modern as it was, will be elucidated, showing how the *Birhen* is illustrative of the Aglipayan program. Second, it will be argued that the function of this *Birhen* consisted of legitimizing an appeal to Filipino religious thought and the Filipino context as a source of theology and religious insight. Third, because of the first two items, the current analysis goes beyond a focus on the (military) revolutionary character of this type of Mary and the Marian apparition underlying it, which is a issue sometimes related to Andres Bonifacio and his context rather than to Aglipay and his post-war theological leadership with its more comprehensive program of emancipation. Fourth, here, the *Birhen* will be positioned more firmly in the ‘tradition’ of other 19th and 20th century Marian apparitions (and representations), in the Philippines and beyond, although usually of a less military character, that sought to highlight and legitimize marginal parts of church (and society) and the religious experiences of people from such contexts. Strikingly, the *Birhen* is not a reactionary (but a revolutionary) representation of Mary. Fifth, the analysis also draws attention to the aspect of maternal love involved in the *Birhen*’s representation. This is an extension of the second point and a neglected dimension of the *Birhen*’s manner of legitimizing the *Katipunero* movement and by that route of Filipino/Aglipayan nationalism (and theological liberalism). Sixth, and more generally, the study contributes to the study of Mary outside of Roman Catholicism, even if the ‘key’ in which the *Novenario de la Patria* is written, is strongly indebted to this tradition and even claiming it for the author and his church, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*.¹

¹ A further way of analyzing the *Birhen sa Balintawak* would be to compare her more extensively with other representations of the Blessed Virgin in the Philippines, such as the *Birhen ng Antipolo* (Antipolo City) or *La Naval de Manila* (Intramuros, Manila), time and space did not permit that exercise here.

In order to do all of this, first the *Novenario de la Patria* will be introduced and placed in the broader context of the work of Aglipay and the emerging tradition of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, while also surveying earlier scholarship on the work. Next, the place of Mary in this work will be discussed, which will, subsequently, be contextualized in the broader setting of 19th century Marian apparitions and their 20th century reception in order to finally draw conclusions as to the role of Mary and Mariology in the *Novenario* as such. Occasional reference will be made to artistic representations of the *Birhen* as well, in particular to the statue that is preserved in the Manila Maria Clara church, as it is closely connected to the *Novenario*. Prior to embarking on these steps, questions of definition will be addressed, in particular pertaining to what Mariology entails, how 'legitimation' is understood, as well as what the relationship between sources of theology (biblical, historical, popular, and artistic).

Terms and Definitions

In order to position this essay conceptually, questions of definition will be addressed, in particular pertaining to what Mariology entails, how 'legitimation' is understood, as well as what the relationship between sources of theology (biblical, historical, popular, and artistic) and the role of inculturation.

A key premise of this paper is that the tradition of the *Birhen sa Balintawak* constitutes a Mariological tradition. One could object that this is not legitimate from a theological perspective, as this kind of Mary does not fit within established biblical, theological, and ecclesial norms. As this paper aims to be historical and descriptive, such objections are only of limited relevance. The historical fact that there are records of an apparition that subsequently led to the veneration of a woman and child that clearly occupy the place of Mary and Jesus and are also identified as such makes it possible to study the *Birhen sa Balintawak* in terms of Mariology – the question as to whether it is also a legitimate form of the same goes beyond the boundaries of historical scholarship.

Yet, when also considering the same questions and objection from a theological perspective, one could also argue that focusing on official norms only ignores that there are also other 'voices' in theology than only the voice of institutionally sanctioned tradition and that, even when focusing on the voice of officially sanctioned tradition, the question is always which institution one takes as one's point of reference. From the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church, one may have to say that the *Birhen sa Balintawak* does not conform to official norms, yet from the perspective of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, this may well be different. In

other words, when talking about norms, one ought also to do so in an ecumenically sensitive manner, in order to avoid projecting the norms of one's own tradition on that of another church and its practices.

Furthermore, when it comes to considering the manner in which theological discourse functions, there is, when following Cameron and her co-authors,² a strong tendency in recent theological reflect not to focus only on the voice of 'normative theology' (Scripture, creeds, official church teaching), but it is also possible to identify other voices of theology, such as 'espoused theology' (the theology embedded within a group's articulation of its beliefs), 'formal theology' (theological reflection by theologians) and 'operant theology' (the theology embedded in the practices of a community). These voices can overlap and also contradict, yet together they are all important for the development of a theological tradition; in fact, they also help to clarify which aspect of a tradition one is focusing on when discussing a subject such as Mariology in relation to an apparition (or dream), as in the case of the Birhen sa Balintawak. In this paper, especially the latter kind of theology, i.e., 'operant theology', is the subject of study: i.e., the apparition and the devotional practices resulting out of it, as well as to some extent the 'formal voice' when it comes to Aglipay's theological meditations on the Birhen, which, if Aglipay also expressed the formal stance of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (not, of course, of another church!), is identical with 'normative theology'.³ Which tradition one focuses on, therefore, as well as which voice of theology one concentrates on matters enormously if one wants to to just describe historically, but also evaluate theologically.

A further aspect concerns the question of fiction and history. One could argue that only the historical, not the fictitious should be the basis for the development of Mariology. Again, this would mean to enter the field of theological norms, rather than that of historical description. What this paper undertakes is to research the content and influence of a particular tradition that interprets Mary in a certain way, not to evaluate whether it actually goes back to an authentic historical experience (one reason for this is also that the sources for such an undertaking are simply lacking). Whether sources are fictitious or not, their influence can be very real. This also means that this contribution has a principled openness to the merging of traditional

² Cf. for this and the following: Cameron, Helen, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, and Clare Watkins, *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010).

³ To be sure, the contemporary *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, states the following about Mary in its *Articles of Religion*: 'The Virgin Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of Jesus Christ. As Jesus Christ is truly God and Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ, she is the Mother of God in His human generation. She whom God honored is to be honored above all.' (Art. 14; cf. <https://sites.google.com/a/ifi.ph/www/articles-of-religion>, accessed 25 October 2019).

imagery of Mary and Jesus with the female representative of the Philippines, i.e. the Inang Bayan, or that of Jesus with a Katipunero. Analyzing such merging shows what sort of significance Mary and Jesus were seen to have within a particular historical and cultural setting, whether one agrees with this theologically or not. In addition to this, it can be remarked that the importance of historical fiction for the development of theology is not to be underestimated, the Proto-evangelium of James (Infancy Gospel of James), for instance, is considered to be legendary by most scholars today, yet it has exercised an enormous influence on normative forms of Mariology.⁴

Finally, the questions of legitimization and inculturation can be addressed.⁵ First, the term legitimization has in this contribution a purely heuristic function: it is used to describe a function of the tradition of the Birhen sa Balintawak. The term does not connote an attempt to legitimize this tradition, but rather describes how this tradition functions to legitimize (revolutionary) Filipino identity. In this sense, the Birhen sa Balintawak is also an example of inculturation: a tradition concerning Mary and Jesus is integrated into and interpreted by means of Filipino culture and begins to function to give this culture legitimacy. This is not dissimilar to, for instance, the inculturation of Mary in appearance at Guadalupe, which highlights the value of (and thereby legitimizes) indigenous Mexican culture – both because Mary appears to a ‘native’ and because she speaks to Juan Diego and his uncle Juan Bernardino in their own language, Nahuatl.

Having thus clarified both the conceptuality used here, the disciplinary position taken, and intentions of this essay, it is now possible to proceed with a review of extant scholarship.

Earlier Research on the *Novenario* and Mariology

The *Novenario* has been addressed by several scholars in the (recent) past; here a representative selection of their insights will be presented and discussed. In particular, the views of Iletto, Gealogo, Furusawa, and De la Cruz will be

⁴ Another example would be the legend of Wilhelm Tell, which has shaped Swiss national conscience in a very real way, yet is entirely legendary. This didn't stop José Rizal from translating Friedrich Schiller's version of the story into Tagalog while living in Germany, no doubt in order to further Filipino national consciousness. This has, in turn, had a very real effect on Swiss-Philippine relations, as recently evidenced by an entire novel on the subject of Rizal's translation project. See: Annette Hug, *Wilhelm Tell in Manila* (Heidelberg: Wunderhorn, 2016; kind reference of Ms. Stefanie Arnold, Bern).

⁵ On the paradigm of inculturation, see, e.g., Brian Stanley, 'Inculturation: Historical Background, Theological Foundations and Contemporary Questions,' *Transformation* 24 (2007), 21-27.

given attention.⁶ According to Gealogo, earlier research on the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* has paid little attention to the *Birhen*, for instance in the works of Schumacher,⁷ extensive as it is, and the (biased and polemical, yet very well documented) ‘multivolume work of De Achutegui and Bernad...did not include the Aglipayan novenario and the calendario in its reproduction of primary texts and critical assessment of the Aglipayan movement.’⁸ While its absence in the work of Schumacher is surprising because this scholar was aware of the importance of such literature, its absence in the other work is even more striking, given that it would have made for such an easy (and attractive – given that it hits a devotional nerve) target when it comes to discrediting Aglipay and his church. It makes one wonder whether the existence of the work has been unknown for a while.

One of the first studies that highlighted the *Birhen* Balintawak again is Iletto’s *Pasyon and Revolution* of 1979.⁹ It also features a representation of the *Birhen* on its title page. An analysis of the Novenario is not offered in this work, however, although the narrative undergirding it, i.e., the account of the Katipunan’s dream at Balintawak, is discussed and analyzed. Yet, in particular Iletto’s observation that, while in earlier poetry Spain was portrayed as the mother or the mother country, it is here for one of the first times the *Philippines* that fulfill this role, is of high significance for understanding the *Birhen* in the *Novenario*. In terms of national self-imagination and self-representation this shift constitutes a watershed. In this context, Iletto also notes the complete integration of national and religious ideals in the tradition of the *Birhen sa Balintawak*, which is equally key to understanding this tradition.

⁶ I.e., Reynaldo Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1940* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1997 [1979]), Francis A. Gealogo, ‘Time, Identity and Nation in the Aglipayan Novenario ng Balintawak and Calendariong Maanghang,’ *Philippine Studies* 58 (2010), 147-168, Yuria Furusawa, ‘Image and Identity: A Study on the Images of the Virgin Mary Clad in a Local Dress in the Philippines,’ in: *Engage! Public Intellectuals Transforming Society: The Work of the 2011/2012 API Fellows* (The Nippon Foundation, 2014), 88-97, Deirdre de la Cruz, *Mother Figured. Apparitions and the Making of a Filipino Universal* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015). – Somewhat oddly, in Victor J. Sapidula, *Marian Piety and Modernity: A Sociological Assessment of Popular Religion in the Philippines* (PhD thesis; National University of Singapore, 2013), the *Birhen sa Balintawak* is virtually ignored (and only mentioned in passing on 110-111).

⁷ Cf. for instance John N. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1981); idem, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1987).

⁸ Pedro de Achutegui and Miguel Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines: Life and Church of Gregorio Aglipay 1860-1940 1-4* (1961-1972). – The documents made available through this collection are still highly valuable.

⁹ Iletto, *Pasyon*, 105-106.

A newer study (2010) has been contributed by Francis Gealogo.¹⁰ He notes from the start the oddity that the *novenario* (along with the *Calendario ng Iglesia Filipina Independiente* [1925]) has been neglected in Aglipayan studies, which is surprising, given that precisely this kind of literature would have been aimed at shaping and molding the beliefs of the membership of the IFI. In line with this, he states that it was 'one of the most popular and widely circulated and reproduced religious texts of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.'¹¹ He continues to sketch the use of the *Novenario* in the IFI:

The novenario contained prayers and readings to be said in parts for nine days, culminating on 26 August of the year, commemorating the Cry of Balintawak that signified the official start of the Philippine Revolution. Although specially written to commemorate the church's connection with the Philippine revolution, it was also recited on almost all occasions celebrated in the church, including the novena before Christmas and All Saints' Day, for the feast days of patron saints of various parishes, and was a regular feature of household novenas recited in the private homes of its adherents done almost throughout the year.¹²

In addition to this, he notes that the '[t]he image of the *Virgen sa Balintawak* became one of the most popular figures of Aglipayan iconography and religious portraiture that was prominently displayed in a number of prewar, pre-concordat Aglipayan churches across the archipelago.'¹³ The concordat that he refers to is the 1961 concordat between the IFI and the Episcopal Church (USA) that would cement the influence of the latter on the former and ensure it for years to come, which would also lead to a kind of intentional forgetting of the Aglipayan political and theological heritage.¹⁴ When it comes to analyzing the imagery itself, he highlights the 'indigenized physical features and local peasant costumes of both the Virgin and the child, and the call to freedom with which it became associated.'¹⁵ By thus varying on themes from the broader Catholic tradition, in fact, 'with the *Virgen sa Balintawak*, Aglipayan religiosity, class orientation, and nationalism became incorporated into one iconic representation.'¹⁶ How well this had been done, was already pointed out by Ileto in his 1979 study *Pasyon and Revolution*,¹⁷ and his analysis is quoted approvingly by Gealogo:

¹⁰ Gealogo 'Time.'

¹¹ Gealogo, 'Time,' 150; he does not substantiate this claim, however likely it is.

¹² Gealogo, 'Time,' 150.

¹³ Gealogo, 'Time,' 150-151.

¹⁴ See for a survey: Peter-Ben Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History. The Catholic Church in Every Place* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

¹⁵ Gealogo, 'Time,' 151.

¹⁶ Gealogo, 'Time,' 151.

¹⁷ Ileto, *Pasyon*.

There was no clear distinction, no crisis of meaning as one image flowed into another. One of the reasons why...religio-political groups and the Philippine Independent Church swelled with peasant members during the days of the republic and the succeeding years was because 'nationalist' and 'religious' idioms merged in them.¹⁸

Where Gealogo uses the notions of 'merging' and 'blurring the boundaries between' the realms of the sacred and the revolutionary, 'between the religious and the secular, and the spiritual and the political,' this essay will explore the notion of 'legitimation' to tease out even more of the dynamics involved and its effect. An effect and purpose that Gealogo himself summarizes as follows regarding the *Novenario* as a whole:

The novenario presented the role of the church not only as the repository of knowledge to be recited repeatedly through religious rituals like the novena. It presented the church as the institution that was tasked to keep constant vigilance because the objectives of freedom and liberation had yet to be fully realized by the nation. The novenario was both a text for the performance of religious ritual and a compilation of primary historical documents that would constantly remind the flock of the church's revolutionary roots and its liberating task of attaining independence for the people.¹⁹

In conclusion, Gealogo focuses on Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as "an imagined political community, and imagined as both limited and sovereign. It was limited for it has 'finite boundaries' while it was imagined as sovereign from the 'divinely-ordained' implying that modern nationalism should be secular, modernist, and inward-looking."²⁰ Rightly, he indicates that the literature he has studied, including the *Novenario*, shows that modernity and nationalism are not always mutually exclusive, but that 'Nationalism, as manifested in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, could be both the basis of the formation of a religious community and the locus of nationalist expression and identity formation.'²¹ The *Novenario* goes beyond nationalism alone, as Gealogo correctly sees, it serves to articulate a package of 'rational, nationalist, scientific, and secular outlooks and perspectives.'²² These perspectives and values had a double function: on the one hand, they served to support Filipino nationalism, on the other hand, they also positioned the 'nationalistic Philippines' as part of an international community of (universal) values and hence as internationally connected.

¹⁸ Iletto, *Pasyon*, 131; cf. Gealogo, 'Time,' 151-152.

¹⁹ Gealogo, 'Time,' 155-156.

²⁰ Gealogo, 'Time,' 185.

²¹ Gealogo, 'Time,' 185.

²² Gealogo, 'Time,' 185.

Furusawa's paper, published shortly after Gealogo's contribution,²³ provides a relatively general (but apt) description of the *Birhen sa Balintawak*; its greatest service is to position it among other representations of Mary in the Philippines, both imported and indigenous – of the latter variety, the *Birhen* is the first. She notes that such indigenous 'Mary's' only appeared from the beginning of the 20th century onwards, despite Marian devotion since the 16th century. The reason she postulates for this is illuminating: 'This late development is probably because of the fact that the Filipinos' awareness of their cultural identity and Filipino cultural value gained ground only after they strove for independence at the end of the 19th century.'²⁴ Furthermore, she notes that the indigenized (or 'localized') versions of Mary 'are associated with the freedom and protection of the Filipino people, from the current conditions of suppression and social difficulties.'²⁵ This applies to the *Birhen* in particular (as it does to another Mary, Our Lady of the Philippines). Next, she states that 'The localized images are associated with the maternal love and ideal mother realities in the Filipino culture.'²⁶ This point will be returned to later, given that the notion of love and maternal care has not been explored much in relation to the *Birhen*. Furusawa's final observations pertain to the fact that the indigenized representations of Mary are made by Filipinos for Filipinos, not for another audience and that they are meant to exist alongside other representations of Mary and not meant to replace these.²⁷

A final study that has, in more recent years, devoted substantial attention to the *Birhen*, is Deirdre de la Cruz' *Mother Figured*.²⁸ De la Cruz focuses especially on the apparition and the account provided of it in the *Novenario*.²⁹ She also draws attention to the manner in which various 'translations' take place in the image of the *Birhen sa Balintawak*, i.e., 'of the quasi-divine figure of the Virgin Mary and of

²³ There is limited interaction among scholars of the *Birhen sa Balintawak*: Furusawa does not refer to Gealogo (which may be so because of the chronology of publications) and De la Cruz seems to be unaware of the contributions of the other two scholars.

²⁴ Furusawa, 'Image,' 95.

²⁵ Furusawa, 'Image,' 95.

²⁶ Furusawa, 'Image,' 96.

²⁷ This is very debatable in the case of the *Birhen sa Balintawak*, at least in in her reception in Aglipay's *Novenario*: Aglipay certainly were not much in favor of traditional devotion to Mary and may well have intended to replace such devotion with (patriotic) devotion to the *Birhen sa Balintawak*, or rather: by a devotion to the country inspired by the *Birhen* and the nationalistic tradition that she represented.

²⁸ De la Cruz, *Mother*. See also her chapter, 'From the Power of Prayer to *Prayer Power*: on Religion and Revolt in the Modern Philippines,' in: Liana Chua, Joanna Cook, Nicholas Long and Lee Wilson (ed.), *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Power* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 165-179, esp. 171-174, where the same argument is made in a different context.

²⁹ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 59-60.

the globally circulating concept of the nation, into Filipino.’³⁰ The dream underlying the account of the *Birhen* is for De la Cruz another instance of imaging the Filipino nation.³¹ She positions Aglipay’s use of this account in the *Novenario* in the context of the developing theology of the IFI, which she understands to be one that moved from differing from ‘Rome’ mainly by refusing allegiance to introducing ‘secular, rational ideas that would rub acutely against orthodox Catholicism’s grain.’³² Of this, the *Novenario* is also an expression. In general, De la Cruz expresses her surprise at the work, for instance when noting

From the start the *Novenario* announces its strange hybrid method: it is a prayer, but one that will be communicated first and foremost through the faculty of scientific reason. Reason becomes the means through which God is extricated from the mediating practice and doctrines of “religion.”³³

When considering that the IFI had embarked, under the leadership of Aglipay and Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., on a course that sought to embrace many aspects of what may be called mainstream 19th century liberalism, including emphases on nationalism, democracy, and modern science, this stance of the *Novenario*, is, however, not surprising at all.³⁴ It may be a break from tradition, but it is also a consistent further development of the program of the IFI’s founding figures. It is positioned, as De la Cruz rightly stresses, vis-à-vis of older religions – the *Novenario* proceeds to present a discussion of many of them – and presents the IFI as the epitome of *modern* religion. The real axe that Aglipay have to grind is, however, not so much with primitive religions, but with those movements and churches that propound primitive views (from Aglipay’s perspective) in his day: the Roman Catholic Church, as De la Cruz notes, and American missionaries, which should be added to this.³⁵ De la Cruz discusses the 19th reading of the *Novenario*, a key text as far as Mary is concerned, in particular and notes how Mary appears as a symbol of the patria, not as an idol and as more than a representation, but rather, together with Moses and Jesus, as ‘prosthetic forms by means of which the nation is given presence.’³⁶ On this follows

³⁰ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 60.

³¹ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 74.

³² De la Cruz, *Mother*, 75.

³³ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 76.

³⁴ Cf. in general: Resil Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T. H. Pardo de Javera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2006), 332.

³⁵ Cf. De la Cruz, *Mother*, 76; see the remark about neo-Christian elements in the 19th reading of the *Novenario*. Aglipay’s less than flattering remarks about Judaism should be seen in the context of his notion of progress; more often than not (but no less problematically so), Judaism seems to stand for Roman Catholicism. I have not come across any racially based negative remarks about Judaism in Aglipay’s work.

³⁶ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 78.

a discussion of the remainder of the *Novenario*, stressing the mimicry that takes place and acknowledging that ‘such appropriations were... a powerful way to infuse daily life with national and moral consciousness.’³⁷ Finally, she notes that the entire modern(istic) enterprise – she ascribes it a near Protestant ethos – is not without a ‘mystical foundation.’³⁸ This foundation consists of the story of the dream of one of the Katipuneros, which she views as a *parergon* (in Derrida’s sense) to the *Novenario* itself, yet, at the same time, as its foundation: ‘An origin at the margins, transcendent yet not necessarily divine, describable yet nameless, it is the apparition of the Lady at Balintawak that gives rise to the work (of prayer) itself.’³⁹ She associates this with the transcendental foundation of Kantian(-style) religion (and ethics).

Having thus surveyed of the more recent scholarly considerations of the *Birhen sa Balintawak*, the *Novenario* can be contextualized further historically.

The *Novenario* in its Historical Context

The historical setting of the *Novenario de la Patria* consists of two ‘layers:’ the layer of the events of 1896 reported in the introductory materials of the work and the setting of publication of the work itself. In addition, there is the broader context of Marian devotion in the Philippines and – increasingly – ‘global’ Catholicism. Here, the latter two will be discussed; the first item is only considered to be of relevance in the form of Aglipay’s report: as noted already, what ‘really happened’ in 1896 is of secondary importance when it comes to analyzing and evaluating the *Novenario*.⁴⁰ Knowledge of the broader context of the emergence of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* is assumed here – in a way, the *Novenario* offers a very brief outline of this history by listing Aglipay’s various functions past and present on the title page: ‘Supreme Bishop of the Philippine Independent Church, former Military Vicar General of the Philippine Republic, President of the National Council of Tarlak [sic], Lieutenant General of the Army of Liberation and Commanding General of the Guerrillos [sic] of Ilocos Norte in the war against the Americans’ –the analysis of the *Novenario* itself, in a subsequent paragraph, will serve to highlight the doctrinal

³⁷ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 78.

³⁸ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 78.

³⁹ De la Cruz, *Mother*, 78-79.

⁴⁰ The main reason for this is that sources are absent; also, it is not impossible that one of the Katipuneros had a dream as reported – the question of the supernatural origins of what was seen and heard in the dream would still remain a question with that. The functioning of the story about the dream is also not dependent on its authenticity (whether in terms of being an accurate rapport of an historical event or in terms of being a ‘real’ message from Mary), therefore a term like ‘foundational narrative’ is appropriate, while terms like ‘fable’ and ‘legend’, when suggesting the inauthenticity of it all, ought to be used with restraint (all terms appear in De la Cruz, *Mother*, 74).

position of the *Novenario* and its place in developing Aglipayan theology.⁴¹ A brief note on the genre of the *Novenario* is also provided.

The publication of the *Novenario* is somewhat complex, as it appears that the Tagalog translation was printed prior to the Spanish original⁴² (the Tagalog version notes that it is a translation from the Spanish by Juan Evangelista);⁴³ in addition, also an English version appeared in 1926.⁴⁴ All editions have been published by Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr. (one of the sons of ‘Don Belong,’ he would, from 1946-1970, be *Obispo Maximo* of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*). The English translation is anonymous as far as a translator is concerned, but it is likely that the editor, Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., who had a good command of English, was responsible himself. The parish church of which he was the ‘parish bishop’ (or ‘bishop rector,’ as the title page has it) was dedicated to Maria Clara, a heroine and fictitious representation of the Philippines in José Rizal’s “Noli Me Tangere” and hence to a rather different kind of female representative of the Filipino people than the Birhen.⁴⁵ This church is also home to the oldest statue representing the *Birhen sa Balintawak* and must have been the center of devotion to her in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁶ In order to avoid having to produce a new English translation in the references made here, the 1926 English translation is used throughout; if anything, De los Reyes, Jr.’s translation also indicates how the

⁴¹ The adjective ‘Aglipayan’ is often used imprecisely, either referring to the personal views of Gregorio Aglipay or to the positions and vicissitudes of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, which overlap to a substantial extent, but are not identical (e.g., when considering the influence of ‘Don Belong’ during the first decades of the 20th century); in the case of the *Novenario* it seems reasonable to think the personal and the institutional fully overlap.

⁴² *Novenario de la Patria (La Patria se simboliza en la soñada madre de Balintawak). Escrito por el Emmo. Sr. Gregorio Aglipay y Labayan, Obispo Máximo de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente... aprobado por el Consejo Supremo de Obispos. Editor: Mons. Isabelo de los Reyes y Lopez, Obispo Rector de la Parroquia de María Clara en San Lazáro, Manila (Manila: 1926).*

⁴³ *Pagsisiyam sa Virgen sa Balintawak (Ang Virgen sa Balintawak ay ang Inang Bayan). Sinulat sa wikang Kastila at tinagalog ni Juan Evangelista (Manila: I. de los Reyes y Lopez, 1925).*

⁴⁴ *Novenary of the Motherland (The Motherland is symbolized in the envisioned Mother of Balintawak). Written by His Eminence Señor Gregorio Aglipay y Labayan, Supreme Bishop of the Philippine Independent Church...approved by the Supreme Council of Bishops. Editor: Mons. Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., Bishop Rector of the Parish of Maria Clara in San Lazaro, Manila (Manila, 1926).*

⁴⁵ On her in relation to the Philippines and the Filipino womanhood, see e.g., Quentin Terrenal, ‘Maria Clara and the Three Men in Her Life: An interpretation of Rizal’s “Noli me tangere,”’ *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 4 (1978), 1-18, and Jeane C. Peracullo, ‘Maria Clara in the Twenty-first Century: The Uneasy Discourse between the Cult of the Virgin Mary and Filipino Women’s Lived Realities,’ *Religious Studies and Theology* 36 (2017), 139-154, 147; in the novel, the ‘hyperfeminine’ (i.e.: dependent, weak, passive, and beautiful) Maria Clara ends her days locked up in a convent and manifestly insane. Thus, she quite adequately represents the Philippines under colonial rule.

⁴⁶ Cf. Furusawa, ‘Image,’ 92, she also indicates that the image was placed in the church in 1924 already (i.e., two years prior to the publication of the *Novenario* in Spanish, although the Tagalog version appeared in 1925 already). The altar of the church may also play a role in the *Novenario*, if it is the object referred to on day 7 of the devotions.

text itself was understood in its immediate historical context.⁴⁷ Thus, the publication is associated with two names in particular, Gregorio Aglipay and Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr.; in addition, Juan Evangelista appears as a translator for the Tagalog version. In the work itself, other names are mentioned, notably those of several Katipuneros, but these do not belong to the immediate historical context of the publication, rather, they belong to the past that the *Novenario* claims as the foundation for itself and its contents, and, especially, various Filipino intellectuals whose heritage the work seeks to hand on.

A rather different, but no less important part of the context of the *Novenario* consists of the broader field of Marian apparitions in the Philippines and beyond.⁴⁸ Important aspects of Filipino Marian devotion have been surveyed by, for instance, De la Cruz and Peracullo and especially in the succinct, yet illustrated, overview by Furusawa, from which it appears that the Virgin of Balintawak is a first representation of Mary in an indigenous outfit, although she continues the older tradition of depicting Mary as a European (as the *Novenario* puts it itself).⁴⁹ The differences with these other representations of Mary are also obvious: rather than encouraging a piety focused on the transcendent, the *Birhen* exhorts to a piety focused on agency and action in the sublunar (as Mariefe Revollido, teaching at Aglipay Central Theological Seminary, has pointed out to me in numerous interactions). Peracullo has also stressed this in her contribution to the discussion, underscoring that the *Birhen* represents a different kind of Filipina woman than the ‘Maria Clara’ type, drawn from the novel *Noli Me Tangere* by José Rizal, i.e., weak in body and mind, in need of protection by

⁴⁷ A more detailed comparative study of the three extant versions in Spanish, Tagalog, and English cannot be provided as of yet; that such a comparison would be of interest as it would shed light on the earliest reception of the *Novenario* is indicated by the manner in which De los Reyes, Jr., translates the title of the work. In his version, the work is called the *Novenario of the Motherland*, in which the ‘Mother’ represents the country. Aglipay’s Spanish version, of course, read: *Novenario de la Patria*, according to the subtitle the ‘madre’ of Balintawak is representing the ‘patria.’ Intentionally or not, De los Reyes, Jr., thus translates ‘patria’ as ‘motherland’ rather than as ‘fatherland’ and retains the ‘mother’ in the subtitle, thereby both steering away from a reference to a ‘virgin’ (as *Birhen sa Balintawak* would invite one to do, but which would sit uneasily with Aglipay’s – and likely: De los Reyes, Jr.’s, theological predilections) and strengthens the linguistic link between the ‘mother’ and the ‘motherland’ (i.e., stronger than the link between ‘patria’ and ‘madre’). The emphasis on the maternal dimension of Mary would suit accents in Filipino Marian devotion, which tends to display an ‘overtly sentimental emphasis on her maternal dimension (as opposed to, say, her perpetual virginity).’ (De la Cruz, *Mother*, 222–223). This emphasis also enables the interpretation of Mary that the *Birhen sa Balintawak* constitutes, as here Mary as mother coincides with the country as mother.

⁴⁸ For the broader pictures, see, e.g., Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary. From La Salette to Medjugorje* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1991) and Roberto Di Stefano and Francisco Javier Ramón Solans (ed.), *Marian Devotions, Political Mobilization & Nationalism in Europe & America* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

⁴⁹ European brings out the colonial aspect more than ‘Caucasian;’ following an address on the *Birhen* to the Supreme Council of Bishops of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente on 12 September 2018 (Dumaguete), I was taken aside by one of the participants, who expressed his surprise as having someone who was ‘colonially-skinned’ lecture on this very Filipino topic.

men.⁵⁰ Also, the *Birhen* is depicted with Jesus, rather than as an independent figure and it is in imitation of Jesus in particular that the devotee is exhorted to act – at least, in the text of the *Novenario*, i.e., as a freedom fighter.⁵¹ When following Furusawa's overview, it would seem that the *Birhen* has been a bit of an iconographic trendsetter in some of these respects, yet her link with the revolution remains a rather unique one. More broadly speaking, the *Birhen sa Balintawak* is also part of the (global) 'age of Mary,' beginning in 1830 and continuing through – at least – the remainder of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, with a proliferation of appearances, devotion, and dogmatic elevation (cf. the dogma of the Immaculate Conception Mary of 1854 and the dogma of Mary's assumption of 1950). As many scholars have noted, such appearances played an important role in negotiating modernity and the political circumstances of the people involved, i.e., 'within the processes of the construction of national and political identities.'⁵² More specifically, one may speak of the 'creation of territorial identities around Marian devotion.' It will become clear that the Virgin of Balintawak fits into such a pattern very well; as a 'Filipina Mary,' she both highlights Philippine identity and its value and she claims the catholic tradition for the Philippines (all the while interpreting it in a very modern and nationalistic manner) – a broader comparative study could shed more light on this. Furthermore, however, as is often suggested and as is often the case,⁵³ Marian apparitions and Marian devotion plays a role in reactionary or conservative movements; although this is not always the case – one may think of Mary in liberation and/or feminist theologies, for instance, the *Birhen sa Balintawak* certainly is an early instance of an outspoken modern Mary, both in terms of her anti-colonial orientation and the theologically modern(ist) materials that Aglipay adorned her devotion with and of which he made her the spokeswoman.⁵⁴ The combination of being Filipina nationalist and European in terms of heritage (and 'ethnicity'), catholic and liberal theologically (and ethically) ensures that the Virgin of Balintawak stands out among the various representations of Mary available in the Philippines and elsewhere, certainly in the

⁵⁰ Cf., e.g., Peracullo, 'Maria Clara,' 147, noting that this kind of 'archetype' propagates a kind of Filipina woman and mother who 'just like Mother Mary in the Christian faith... is expected to possess certain qualities such as kindness, piety, obedience, care, and virtue, essentially a sacrificial being who puts God's will above her own needs.'

⁵¹ Whether this is an intentional and more Christocentric correction of the veneration of Mary by herself, as would be common in large parts of Filipino Catholicism is beyond the scope of the analysis offered in this paper.

⁵² Cf. Roberto Di Stefano and Francisco Javier Ramón Solans, 'Introduction,' in: idem/idem (ed.), *Devotions*, 1-25, 1.

⁵³ Cf. Di Stefano and Solans, 'Introduction,' 10-15. See also, e.g., Jill M. Krebs, 'Contemporary Marian Apparitions and Devotional Cultures,' *Religion Compass* 2017 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12232>) noting that in the 'age of Mary,' Marian devotion was usually bound up 'struggles negotiating modernity, conflict with Church authorities, and interpersonal struggles.' (2)

⁵⁴ In order to gain historical relief, a compassion with 'La Conquistadora,' another type of Mary from the (Hispanic) colonial world, is helpful, cf. Amy G. Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014).

era between 1896 (date of the narrated appearance) and 1926 (publication of the *Novenario*).⁵⁵ The whole *Birhen* is, as will be discussed below, a cultural hybrid, and engaged engaged in subversive mimicry. On the one hand, the choice for the form of the novena/*Novenario* in order to popularize the views of the IFI (as they had been published before in works such as the *Biblia Filipina* and the *Oficio Divino*)⁵⁶ is a very traditional one, given that it was one of the most widely circulated and influential kinds of religious literature of Catholic life in the Philippines.⁵⁷ On the other hand, its contents are a complete transformation of what one might expect to find in such a work.

With this as both the narrower and broader historical contexts, while assuming the historical setting of the colonial Philippines under American rule, as summed up in Aglipay's various (former) titles, as the direct historical context of the publication of the *Novenario* is now possible to turn to the role of Mary in the work itself, in order to address the main question of this essay: What is the function of Mary in the *Novenario*?

Mary in the *Novenario*

When considering Mary in the *Novenario*, it should be stressed at first that the work and its use are, as other scholars have already observed, located right in the center of popular devotion. Novena's abounded and could be used at a variety of occasions. By connecting with this devotional life and transforming it, by introducing a new kind of mother and child and a new set of texts – as other *Novenarios* would also do, Aglipay's *Novenario* differs from these in degree, not kind, a very effective and appealing medium for the communication of Aglipayan theology and devotion is created.

Then, when it comes to Mary, there are two ways of looking at her occurrence in the *Novenario*. The first focuses on her actually being mentioned in the text, the second takes as its point of departure the subtitle of the work as a hermeneutical starting point. Depending on one's choice, the results are smaller or larger, yet the findings agree in terms of content. Both will be discussed in sequence. Prior to that,

⁵⁵ Cf. the various contributions in: Di Stefano and Solano (ed.), *Devotions*.

⁵⁶ Cf. Gealogo, 'Time,' 154; the first of these two works was voluminous and directed at an elite readership, the latter was a kind of missal, in which the most controversial portions consisted of the rubrics, which makes it unlikely that these received a large audience. Cf. also Smit, *Ecclesiologies*, 245-246.

⁵⁷ Cf. in general: Mojares, *Brains*, 332; Gealogo, 'Time,' 148, concurs – both also stress that another kind of literature, the *calendario*, a kind of almanac, was just as popular; this can only be noted here, the analysis will have to remain restricted to the *novenario*.

the more extensive description of mother and child in the work's preface will be analyzed.⁵⁸

The Account of the Appearance of the Mother and Child

The description of Mary that occurs in the preface to the *Novenario*, signed by Aglipay. He starts by quoting a(n undated) section of the periodical *La Vanguardia*,⁵⁹ in which the journalist Aurelio Tolentino is introduced as a spokesperson for the story about a dream that occurred to a *Katipunero*, who is part of a group that hides in Balintawak and plans to go to Manila. The dreamer is not identified precisely ('Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto and other comrades' are mentioned, of whom one had the dream, but the reader is not told who 'the dreamer' is – direct attributions to Andres Bonifacio are, therefore, mistaken). It is an etiological account, indicating where the devotion to this kind of Mary has its origins. It is therefore of key importance and the description of the person appearing in the dream is worth quoting in full:

A beautiful Mother dressed in the style of the farmers of Balintawak leading a pretty child by the hand, dressed like a farmer with short red pants and holding a shiny bolo, crying 'Liberty, liberty!' the beautiful woman approached the one dreaming and said to him 'Be careful.' When the dreamer woke, he told his comrades what he had dreamed, saying that the mother and child had the face of Europeans, though dressed like Filipinos.⁶⁰

Subsequently, the Katipuneros changed their plans, remaining in Balintawak and thereby escaping a raid on their planned destination in Manila. Tolentino, as the journalist reporting in *La Vanguardia*, notes that it is because of the dream that the first Katipunan wore red trousers (in imitation of the red pants of the Niño in the dream).⁶¹ In a comment on the dream, Aglipay states the following:

The Mother of Balintawak ...reminds you constantly of your sacred and inescapable duty to make every effort possible to obtain our longed-for Independence; and she is the sacred image of our Country. The voice of the people will constantly resound from our pulpits, reminding you of

⁵⁸ The text is included as prefatory material in the English edition, but as following on the novena in the Spanish version (cf. De la Cruz, *Mother*, 78).

⁵⁹ I have not been able to verify the appearance of this account in *La Vanguardia* – no date of publication is provided; given Tolentino's death in 1915 and the establishment of the newspaper in 1910, it must have been between those years.

⁶⁰ Aglipay, *Novenary*, 1.

⁶¹ If this claim can be substantiated on the basis of other sources, the choice for red pants would be an interesting instance of consciously 'performing' the role of the *Niño* at the service of the country and as an expression of one's relationship with the *Birhen*/motherland; it could also simply be an etiology on the part of Tolentino without much historical basis, of course.

the great teachings of Rizal, Mabini, Bonifacio, and other Filipinos, and these teachings of our greatest compatriots will form the special seal of our National Church.⁶²

A few observations can be made regarding this.

First, the occurrence of the Mary – albeit in a specific shape – and the occurrence of the cry for freedom can all be regarded as ‘emotives,’ bearers of – in this case – positive emotions that have the effect of drawing the reader or listener in and making him (or her) sympathetic or even outright supportive of the message that is being communicated.⁶³ As the account and the commentary on it combine emotives from the field of religion (Marian devotion) and nationalism (the cry for liberty, the Filipino dress, etc.), the result is appealing to all who are sympathetic vis-à-vis of either one or both of these fields. The use of the devotional tool of the novena only added to this, given that it was a popular manner of praying.

Second, the image of a country as a mother and (Filipino devotional) emphasis on Mary as a mother, facilitates their merging in this dream and its Aglipayan interpretation. A key shift is in this regard the replacement of Spain as mother and country, as it occurred in earlier texts and imagery, by the Philippines as (Marian) mother and country. The true mother country is the Philippines, which, on the level of the imagery involved, is at the same time associated with the ideal-typical motherly characteristics typical of Mary.

Third, the inclusion of the dream in Aglipay’s preface leads to a combination of multiple ideological strands. The dream itself is focused on the military aspect of the Philippine journey towards independence. Yet, Aglipay, writing in 1925 and hence far removed from the military struggles of the past (however actively he was involved in them), adds to this the cultural and intellectual emancipation of the Philippines by combining the heritages of Mabini, Rizal, and Bonifacio. The dream and the *Birhen* thus become something that goes beyond the military alone. In addition to this, and when further considering the political and cultural character of the *Birhen* and the novenary dedicated to her, it can also be stressed that this ‘type’ of Mary, although belonging to the ‘age of Mary,’ falls out of the typical pattern of conservative and restorative ‘Mary’s’ and associated Marian devotion: it is, as the *Novenario* will make clear, a radically liberal, nationalist, and even anti-clerical Mary.

⁶² Aglipay, *Novenario*, 1.

⁶³ For this notion, cf. the foundational work by W. M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Fourth, the manner in which mother and child are described can be interpreted with the help of two terms from post-colonial theory as well: hybridity and mimicry.⁶⁴ Hybridity is useful when it comes to addressing an aspect of the dream that is often overlooked: mother and child have European faces in combination with their 'native' outfits. This can be taken as an expression of the ambiguous relationship that the nationalist movement had with Europe: on the one hand, it was the source of colonialism and its influence should, therefore, be reduced, on the other hand, it was also the source of liberal and nationalist thought. Rizal, for instance, had famously been trained in Europe and also others, such as Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., were well-connected there. A similar ambiguity exists in relation to Christianity: it is, on the one hand, colonial import, on the other hand, it also serves as a source of nationalist inspiration in an indigenized form. Like the IFI itself, the mother and child are neither purely indigenous nor purely foreign, but indigenized; the hybridity inherent in something that has been indigenized also means that it cannot be reduced to other categories and remains somewhat 'outside of the box', which is certainly the case with this Mary. Mimicry is also a category that can be used to describe what the *Birhen* and her Katipunang *Niño* amount to. As mimicry involves the embrace of cultural patterns of the colonizer by the colonized in a manner that at the same time begins to subvert this patterns, it helps to see how Balintawak's mother and child both continue and subvert colonial patterns of Marian devotion: the dream and its ensuing reception, up until and including the devotional form of the novena, perpetuate such patterns, yet with a twist that steers the entire thing in a markedly anti-colonial direction – as the origins of it all are in a dream, the whole tradition may well be the expression *par excellence* of Bhabha's stress of the unconscious nature of mimicry.

Fifth, the relationship between the visual and the verbal is of interest. In many ways, Aglipay and his companions, such as De los Reyes, Sr., are typically (and emphatically) modern thinkers and, therefore, part of a tradition that emphasizes the rational over the emotional, the word over the image. Yet, in the case of the *Birhen*, things are the other way around: the visual, the dream is the foundation of the ensuing discourse, both in the sense that it is its source and in the sense that it legitimates it. Stressing this is necessary in order to do justice to the role of the *Birhen* in the *Novenario*, as her structural function for Aglipay's discourse might be somewhat obscured by the paucity of explicit references to her in the text of the *Novenario*. Although that is the case, the *Birhen* is the very bedrock upon which the whole rests.

⁶⁴ Cf. Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,' and 'Signs Taken from Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi,' in: idem, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92 and 102-122.

Sixth, it is also worth drawing attention to another manner in which the role of the *Birhen* in the *Novenario* goes against the grain of some cultural trends of modernity, such as the association of the political with the rational and (hence) with the masculine. It was already noted that the *Birhen* of the *Novenario* is a rather different type of woman representing the Philippines than the 'Maria Clara'-type and that she has replaced Spain as the 'mother country.' It can further be noted that female voices are absent from the *Novenario*; also, the *Birhen* is silent and speaks through her appearance only. even if her son does have a voice and cries 'freedom.' Yet, in the end, the entire discourse hinges on the 'Mother of Balintawak's' feminine, even maternal authority. The relationship between the masculine and the feminine is an intricate one in the *Novenario*.

Seventh and as a further development of the previous point, it can be noted that, at least in later representation of the *Birhen* (e.g., the statue kept in the Maria Clara church in Manila), it would seem that a dimension of maternal love, as associated frequently with Mary, according to Furusawa in the Philippines in particular, is part of the *Birhen's* character. Maternal love and support are another part of the way in which the *Birhen* undergirds Aglipay's position and religio-political agenda.

The Mother of Balintawak in the Novenary

Having discussed the presentation of the *Birhen* in the paratextual (prefatory) material in the *Novenario*, it is now possible to turn to the liturgical materials proper, to see how the 'Mother of Balintawak' plays a role there.

To begin with, when focusing on explicit references to the *Birhen* in the *Novenario*, the results are slim. This is a surprise, given the title of the work, which suggests that the work will aid devotion to a particular 'type' of Mary, i.e., the *Birhen sa Balintawak*. In fact, together with the etiological account in the paratextual materials, these are two out of three explicit occurrences of the *Birhen* in the work. In the devotional material *sensu stricto*, the 'mother' does not appear for a long time. In fact, she only occurs again on day seven of the novena, so rather towards the end of the nine-day period of prayer covered by the *Novenario*. The appertaining text is the following:

The mother of Balintawak symbolizes our Country, and the Katipunan child expresses the Filipino people, the rising generation which longs for independence, and both figures constantly remind us of the tremendous sacrifices of the liberators of our Country and of our sacred and inescapable

duty to follow them, also making all possible sacrifices on our own part to achieve our independence. To this end, the immortal teachings of Rizal and other Filipinos on our duties to God and people will live and constantly resound in this temple. So, brethren, come and help us in this noble task of patriotic liberation and the liberation of conscience as well, instead of enlarging the ranks of the enemies of our Country and our liberty and adding to their already vast treasures.⁶⁵

This text is preceded by a scene that Aglipay evokes, by describing an altar on which are statues of Moses, Jesus, and the *Birhen*. With the *Birhen*, Moses and Jesus are described as ‘monuments or guideposts to our ideals.’ The effect of this scene is that *this* Mary, representing the ‘Motherland,’ is placed in a kind of ‘genealogy’ of people who reveal (true) religion. What is also immediately apparent is that Aglipay is convinced that those who are represented by the *Birhen Balintawak* do a much better job in this respect than either Moses or Jesus, given that he notes emphatically that Moses and Jesus have made errors of the moral and scientific kind (or such errors have at least been attributed to them) and that their teaching cannot provide the ‘basis of a church worthy of the enormous progress of modern science.’⁶⁶ Aglipay’s (or rather: the Filipinos’) Mary represents two items that are intertwined, summed up in the expression of the ‘noble task of patriotic liberation and the liberation of conscience.’ It may well be that the Katipunan (and with them the Katipunan Jesus child) are representative of the one aspect primarily and Rizal and other intellectuals of the second, both are mentioned and highlighted in the text of the *Novenario* quoted above.. Furthermore, it is tempting to see the youthfulness of Jesus as an expression of the notion of the ‘rising generation’ that longs for independence. Thus, Mary, and with her the Katipunan Jesus child, is the last chain in a tradition of ever evolving religion that finds its theological and philosophical expression in Aglipay’s day and age, as he will outline, in the works of Rizal and others (especially: Mabini), in particular these men and their teachings are presented by Aglipay in his *Novenario*. In fact, although Aglipay does not state this with as many words, the apparition of Mary to Bonifacio and her subsequent integration into the ‘genealogy’ of religious teachers with Moses and Jesus, serves to legitimate the Filipino context as a context in which reasonable religious insight emerges. In a certain way, the entire Filipino religious tradition, as Aglipay understands it, speaks through the mouth of the ‘Mother of Balintawak’ in this manner, supporting a modern, national, and ‘scientific’ church and militating against everything that is less modern (particular foes are the Roman Catholic Church and American Evangelicals operating in the Philippines) and – especially – intruding upon Filipino sovereignty and emancipation. If this is indeed the case, Mary’s role in the *Novenario* is much bigger than one would expect

⁶⁵ Aglipay, *Novenario*, 21.

⁶⁶ Aglipay, *Novenario*, 20.

given the scarcity of references to her: she is the motherland and with that all that the *Novenario* has to say can be imagined well as her message, which is the message of the Filipino cultural, religious, philosophical, and political tradition, in particular as it is legitimized by her. All of this is confirmed in a concluding benediction found in some version of the *Novenario*.⁶⁷ It is intended for the dedication and blessing of a statue of the *Birhen* and its text sums up the contents of the work succinctly, in particular the relationship between the country as mother, the Filipinos as (her) children and God as father is stated more poignantly here than elsewhere in the work. The result is, of course, an even stronger symbolic, if not outright metaphysical, foundation for Filipino people and (consequently) nationhood.⁶⁸

When comparing this appearance of Mary as the 'Motherland' ('patria') in the *Novenario* to earlier uses of the figure of the 'Mother' in relation to the Philippines, in particular to the 'Motherland Trilogy' that De la Cruz has drawn attention to (but not compared to the *Birhen*), works by Hermenegildo Flores and Marcelo del Pilar commenting on the relationship between Spain and the Philippines in terms of a (deeply problematic and abusive) mother/child relationship, something else is worth stressing once more. In the *Novenario*, Spain as a mother has disappeared and has been replaced by the Philippines as a mother, i.e., the *Birhen*. Compared to earlier uses of the mother figure, this is quite an important shift.⁶⁹ Spain has simply, yet radically, been written out of the 'genealogy' of the Philippines, who are, as a country, no longer a child in need of and dependent on an (abusive) parent, but rather is a(n adult) parent itself. The child is now the 'rising generation', i.e., the revolutionary Filipino people, first and foremost the Katipunan (not the Philippines as such, the country is an adult now, not a child). With that the parent-child relationship with all the obligations and loyalties that belong to it has become a different one: Mary/*Birhen* appears to have brought forth the Filipino people, or at least is suggested to be supportive of their/her child's/children's, struggle; the Filipino people's obligation is

⁶⁷ Aglipay, *Novenario*, 32. Not all versions contain this; this circumstance, together with the introduction that speaks of an ageing father who is dedicating a church (in fact, not just a statue) to God and is having his son serve there as an apostle (i.e.: bishop), would suggest a connection with the De los Reyes family, particular with father and son Isabelo, and their (privately funded and owned) Maria Clara church in Manila. Cf. Gealogo, 'Time,' 152, for his note on the presence of this benediction in some and its absence in other versions of the *Novenario*.

⁶⁸ The national identity that is claimed in this manner is, at least in many ways, an identity that is part of the catholic tradition as far as imagination and devotional forms is concerned; Aglipay does not choose to become a protestant, which would, theoretically, have been an option as well (but not a likely one, given that the most prominent Protestants in the Philippines were also caught up with American colonial efforts). Of course, Aglipay has his own take on what the true catholic (or Christian) tradition is, yet that follows the logic (and rhetoric) of claiming the original as a way of positioning oneself vis-à-vis of competitors claiming the same tradition.

⁶⁹ Ileto has drawn attention to poetry, in particular by Andres and Procopio Bonifacio (e.g., 'Oh inang Espanya, humihinging') in which this shift is made explicitly. Cf. Ileto, *Pasyon*, 103-105.

to the mother(land), not to Spain as ‘motherland’ of the Philippines and the Filipinos alike anymore. When refraining from historical psychological and sociological comments on possible backgrounds in Filipino mother-child relationships,⁷⁰ as this would be too speculative here, it can be said that the ‘key’ in which this appears is that of both nationalism and Marian devotion, in which, on the one hand, the obligation of the ‘child’ of the ‘motherland’ is to the motherland and, on the other hand, the devotee’s obligation to ‘mother Mary’.⁷¹

In the context of Aglipay’s ‘modernist’ theological program, his use of the genre of a Marian apparition, albeit in a dream, is also interesting as such. It would seem to run counter to his ‘modernist’ agenda that has little interest in the miraculous otherwise (except when it comes to rejecting and ridiculing it as being outdated). There are two ways of going about this. On the one hand, Aglipay can simply be said to be inconsistent. He uses the apparition that suits him, yet debunks other miraculous events. On the other hand, it is also important to consider that Aglipay never makes a direct appeal to the miraculous and even seems to move away from it in his treatment of the *Birhen*. He reports Bonifacio’s dream, but does not make more of it than that: a dream. Next, he culls the *Birhen* (*cum* Niño) out of its immediate ‘revelatory’ context of the Katipunero’s dream at Balintawak and presents it as a representation of the Philippines (‘motherland’) as such. By the time that the *Birhen Balintawak* is presented as one of three statues on an altar (likely in the Maria Clara church, in any case, its image is evoked by Aglipay’s prose), she is no longer a miraculous apparition, but a symbol that represents Philippine political and intellectual emancipatory tradition and as a reminder of this tradition and the obligations resulting from it. As the *Novenario* states: ‘both figures constantly remind us of the tremendous sacrifices of the liberators of our Country and of our sacred and inescapable duty to follow them, also making all possible sacrifices on our own part to achieve our independence.’⁷² There is no prayer to Mary, no veneration of her, no mention of anything miraculous, but she has been integrated completely in Aglipay’s modern conception of religion in which religious symbols are reminder of the truth about the divine and about one’s moral duty.

At this point, disagreement can be noted with what De la Cruz seems to argue, taking her cue from De Achútegui and Benard, as she quotes their statement, apparently approvingly and as a fair evaluation of what happened historically, that the introduction of ‘secular, rational ideas’ was akin to the ‘sharp intrusion of a

⁷⁰ Cf. however De la Cruz, *Mother*, 222–223.

⁷¹ Cf. the ‘Children of Mary’ movement that stood at the beginning of the age of Mary from the 1830s onwards.

⁷² Aglipay, *Novenario*, 21.

foreign body into a living organism.⁷³ In the light of Aglipay's own work, however, this evaluation is questionable, to say the least. In fact, it only makes sense if one uses formal late 19th-century and early 20th-century Roman Catholic theology as a measuring rod for evaluating what Aglipay is doing. However, this would be to fail to listen to the voice of Aglipay and his political, military, cultural, theological, and philosophical comrades in arms as such: in their program – not just De los Reyes, Sr.'s program – a combination of emancipatory ('liberal') nationalistic politics (including armed rebellion), emancipatory cultural politics (vindication of Filipino culture and philosophy) and an embrace of modernity as part of that, and emancipatory religious politics (a free Filipino church for a free Filipino people). This was a coherent program from the start, even if some may have been somewhat surprised as to its eventual outcome.

Concluding Reflections

When concluding on the above observations and considerations, the following can be stated, moving beyond extant research when it comes to attention for the *Birhen's* function in the discourse established by means of the *Novenario* in particular. Also, the study contributes to the study of Mary outside of Roman Catholicism, even if the 'key' in which the *Novenario de la Patria* is written, is strongly indebted to this tradition and even claiming it for the author and his church, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*.

First and rather generally, the 'Mother of Balintawak' is a good example of what Krebs has identified: a devotion to Mary that is 'at the core of the lived religious worlds of her faithful' and that the relationship to Mary serves to 'establish Mary as an authoritative agent determining the attitudes of her faithful.'⁷⁴ The *Birhen*, as presented in the *Novenario*, rearranges the relationship of devotees to their country, to Filipino freedom fighters, to modern thinking, to foreign influences, and to the broader Christian tradition.

Second, it has been shown how the role of the *Birhen* in the *Novenario* consisted of legitimizing an appeal to Filipino religious thought and the Filipino context as a source of theology and religious insight. This aids Aglipay to claim the 'true' Christian tradition for himself, while positioning himself against other versions of it, that are either outdated or oppressive (or both).

⁷³ Cf. De la Cruz, *Mother*, 75.

⁷⁴ Jill M. Krebs, 'A The Body of Mary: Embodiment and Identity in Modern Apparitions,' 7 (2017), 224-239, 239.

Third, and because of the first two items, it has also become clear that the role of the *Birhen* in the *Novenario* is much broader than her initial role in the Katipunero's dream, which consisted of warning them. Beyond the military, Mary now serves to legitimize the entire Filipino intellectual and cultural tradition, including a desire for complete emancipation. In this respect, the role of the *Birhen* is also transformed, specifically: broadened, in the *Novenario*.

Fourth, when comparing the *Birhen* to other 19th and 20th century Marian apparitions (and representations) both in the Philippines and beyond, it has become clear that it stands out as a particularly subversive representation (reflecting the dynamics of mimicry, directly in support of revolutionaries (as different from more reactionary apparitions, even if these often served to put a group of region on the 'map of Catholicism' as well). In Aglipayan tradition, the *Birhen* who represents the motherland also replaces Spain as mother. In the *Novenario* she stands out even more because of the outright modernist interpretation (rather than conservative devotional) interpretation that she receives.

Fifth, it has also become clear that the tradition of the *Birhen* combines both traditional devotional forms, the veneration of Mary as such and the form of the novena, and transforms these. In the course of this, affective dimensions of Marian devotion (Mary as caring mother) are transferred to the mother country, who supports those struggling for her emancipation. As she becomes the representative of the entire country, she is also the one who, in a certain way, articulates the entire Filipino religio-political discourse that makes up the contents of the *Novenario*. In this role, and somewhat surprisingly in such a 'modern' setting, the visual – apparition/dream – is the foundation for the verbal and feminine authority undergirds and enables male agency (e.g., Katipunan, but also Rizal and Mabini).

A final word may concern the evaluation of the *Novenario* as a theological project. It would be my contention that looking at the hermeneutics and intellectual dynamics in the work involved should take priority over a focus on the precise contents of the work, in order to appreciate what Aglipay attempted to achieve and did achieve. His project is driven by a desire to find the most authentic form of Christianity, which for him needs to be a form that can stand the test of science, it is also a form that is liberating, rather than oppressive, and he uses all resources at his disposal: philosophical, historical, theological, cultural, and devotional to outline this program. That, I think, is the achievement of his work on the *Novenario*, however problematic many of his more detailed claims in the work may be. In order to evaluate

the work, his program should be highlighted, rather than the concrete shape that it got in points of detail.**PS**

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