The indigenous Filipinos had religions of their own long before the arrival of the Spanish. After nearly four-hundred years of Spanish contact in the Philippines, the Filipinos appeared to have adopted Catholicism from the Spanish. It would be expected that a change in religious beliefs would be reflected in a change in practices that may be seen in the archaeological record, particularly in changes to burial practices. The location of burials, position of both the body and burial goods, and decoration of burial goods may indicate ritual. Despite claims made by the Spanish about the overwhelming acceptance of Catholicism in the Philippines, the influence of Spanish colonialism was not as widespread as was advertised. The indigenous Filipinos continued their own burial practices, and thus continued to follow their own religions, beyond the influence of Spanish colonialism which was centered in and immediately surrounding large trade cities.
Acknowledgements

This work could not have been completed without the guidance and support of a group of truly amazing people. I would like to thank my reader, Dr. Christine Hippert, who helped me explore what religion meant to a society changing under colonialism. My thesis would be disorganized chaos without the guidance and calm provided by my advisor and professor, Dr. David Anderson. Thank you to Ty Matejowsky for his suggestions, encouragement, and for giving me information to pursue. I am eternally grateful to the lovely ladies of my reading group, Kaylee Doemel and Brittany Viviani. Their comments and suggestions helped to smooth out the numerous rough patches. I would also like to thank my family for their support, especially my mother who was in part the inspiration for my thesis.
INTRODUCTION

Colonialism, particularly by European countries, was a popular form of political and economic competition during the late fifteenth to twentieth centuries. Several countries expanded their empires significantly by establishing colonies in multiple continents to maximize their economic potential and maintain trade routes to foreign trade centers. Spain extensively colonized the Americas but also established colonies in Africa, India and several islands in the Pacific, including the Philippines. After Miguel Lopez de Legaspi’s landing in Cebu in 1565 (Vandermeer 1967:320), the Philippines became a part of the Spanish empire for over three hundred years. Multiple strategies were utilized by the Spanish in order to fully colonize and claim the Philippines as their own.

All cultures have ritual practices that are included in many aspects of life. Society does not exist in a vacuum; it is influenced by external forces (Douglass 2002:4). Religion, as a part of society, is also affected. The indigenous religions of the Philippines would not be resistant to the influence of Catholicism that was being forced on them by Spanish colonialism through the efforts of Catholic missionaries and the establishment of regulations. Humans tend to resist ambiguity; we desire “hard lines and clear concepts” (Douglas 2002:163) which can be provided for by religion. Colonialism, particularly in its early stages, would have been a period of ambiguity for the Filipinos. A reliance on ritual and religion, whether indigenous or Catholic, may have provided needed structure during this time. Similarities between indigenous beliefs
and Spanish Catholicism may have made it easier for Filipinos utilize the beliefs of the colonists as another religious resource.

For the pre-Hispanic peoples of the Philippines, burial practices may have varied from region to region but each community was concerned that, if rituals were conducted improperly, the dead would return to the land of the living (Dakudao 1992:135). The Spanish were also concerned with the treatment of their dead, although not in quite the same way as the Filipinos. Both cultures held in common the idea that the dead deserved special treatment despite differences in religion; a factor that may have facilitated Spanish colonialism in the Philippines. An acceptance of Spanish Catholicism was an important step towards the acceptance of Spanish control in the Philippines.

Much of the archaeological research previously conducted in the Philippines has focused on the rise of complex societies, but ritual and religion have mostly gone unstudied outside of an ethno-historical context (Aure 2004). While burial goods have been utilized as evidence of complex society, they have to a great extent not been used to critically analyze pre-Hispanic rituals and how the beliefs associated with these practices may have contributed to the relative ease and longevity of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines. Due to their role in Philippine society, burial sites such as the warrior burial of Tanjay (Junker 1999) should be reinterpreted through the lens of religion and ritual. An analysis of the archaeological evidence of religion, specifically to burial, during the time of Spanish colonialism may demonstrate to what extent Catholicism influenced the ritual practices of indigenous Filipinos.
BACKGROUND

The Philippine Islands (Figure 1) are an archipelago in Southeast Asia, southeast of China and north of Indonesia. There is evidence of complex societies in the Philippines and the active development of extensive long-distance trade between A.D. 800 and A.D. 1300 (Dizon 2003; Junker 1993, 1998; Peterson 2003). Chinese and Muslim traders maintained economic relations with the Philippines, along with various other Southeast Asian countries. Archaeological evidence combined with Chinese and early sixteenth century Spanish accounts suggest an increase in inter-polity warfare between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries amongst the various indigenous peoples of the Philippines (Junker 1999:44). Such conflict would have been advantageous to Spain, which was looking to extend its empire in the region.

The Spanish discovered the Philippines in 1521 when Ferdinand Magellan landed at Cebu (Peterson 2003:53) during his attempt to circumnavigate the globe. Formal colonization and a direct Spanish influence did not occur until Miguel Lopez de Legaspi attempted to colonize Cebu forty-four years later (Vandermeer 1967:320). Once Spain claimed the Philippines as a colony, it began to use the islands as a stepping stone for trade between Spain, Mexico, and the Far East, mainly China (Skowronek 1998:47). Relatively few Spanish colonists settled in the Philippines due to its secondary economic status although Spanish missionaries, including the Jesuits, were sent to establish Spanish trade port cities and to convert the indigenous peoples to Catholicism. The Philippines remained a Spanish colony for nearly three hundred years, ending with the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898 (Skowronek 1998:60).

Religion and ritual practices were important to both the indigenous Filipinos and the Spanish colonizers. In the pre-Hispanic Philippines, ritual leaders known as catalonan or babaylan, maintained ritual order and relatively high social status among the barangay, the basic
Figure 1  Map of the Philippine Islands (from Nishimura 1988:128).
socio-economic unit (Barreto-Tesoro 2008:74). Many ethnic groups populated the islands throughout history, cultural diversity increased as one looks farther back in time although the Philippines is still quite diverse today (Coutts and Wesson 1980:211). Variations in religious and ritual practices between regions and islands may be attributed to this diversity. The Catholic Church attempted to standardize Catholicism; they often did not officially recognize the many variations to Catholic doctrine. Within Catholic societies, priests maintained roles similar to those of the catalonan. They attempted to conserve the traditions and standard practices of the Catholic Church on a local level. Cities established by the Spanish were constructed according to Spanish architectural design, radiating outwards from centralized churches (Dakudao 1992:134,139; Skowronek 1998:52). This is the physical display of the Catholic Church’s central role in Spanish society. Through missionary efforts deemed successful by Spanish officials and the Catholic Church, the Philippines became known as an icon for Spanish colonialism and Spanish Catholicism in Asia.

**METHODLOLOGY**

In order to address the topic of religion and ritualism in the Philippines and how they may have changed during and as a result of Spanish colonial practices, data from pre-Spanish and Spanish contact burials have been examined. This data was collected from reports and various analyses from previously conducted and published archaeological excavations. The pre-Spanish and Spanish contact burial data were compared to each other on four main points: location, burial type, skeletal positioning, and burial goods. The location of burials is significant to a community; it is worth noting if burials are found within rock shelters and caves, beneath homes, or were
separate from settlements. Various burial types (e.g. cremation, burial jars, and boat-coffins) have been used by indigenous Filipinos before the arrival of the Spanish (Dakudao 1992:133). The inclusion of burial goods with the dead, such as ceramics, tools, and jewelry, indicates ritual. Particular motifs on some of these items and the placement of burial goods within the grave may also indicate aspects of ritual. Position of the skeletons, if applicable, has been noted as well as the absence or specific placement of the skull used as a burial good. Any patterns noted among the pre-Spanish burials that are reflected in the Spanish contact burials may indicate the continuity of indigenous religion and ritual practices within the increasingly Spanish-Catholic Philippines.

Many pre-Spanish burials have been excavated in the Philippines as part of archaeological research in the region of Southeast Asia. Much of the data on pre-Spanish burials used in this paper comes from these previous studies. In particular, the data from Junker’s excavations in Tanjay (Junker 1993, 1999, 1998) have been utilized. The excavations of the Tanjay region (Figure 2) provide data on both a mass burial and what Junker has interpreted as a warrior burial (Junker1999). The mass burial at Tanjay has been suggested as a starting point for the reinterpretation of burial sites in the Philippines with a primary focus of religion and ritualism (Aure 2004). This suggestion prompted my interest in the religious climate of the Philippines during Spanish colonialism.

Most of the data on Spanish contact burials comes from ethno-historic accounts of burials during the time period. Letters written by Spanish missionaries in the Philippines provide accounts of the burial practices of indigenous peoples (Arcilla 2000). Government records of the commission of cemeteries were also used to provide details of more direct Spanish influence on burial practices. Manila cemeteries, commissioned during Spanish colonialism, provide much
Figure 2  Map of Tanjay Project area (from Junker 1996:392).
data on burial practices within the city. The Cementerio General de Paco, also known as Paco Park, is one such cemetery. The burials at Cementerio General de Paco along with many other Spanish cemeteries were segregated based on race and social class (Dakudao 1992:143), making it easier for the purposes of this study to distinguish between Spanish burials, indigenous burials, and the burials of racial classes that developed with the mixing of the two populations.

**DATA PRESENTATION**

Religion and ritual were “significant aspects of everyday community life” (Aure 2004:162) for the Filipino people. This integral aspect of society was not exclusive to the Philippine Islands. The Filipinos’ “preoccupation and concerns for the disposal of the dead . . . in the most effective way possible” (Dakudao 1992:134) was similar enough to Spanish Catholic beliefs for the colonizers to establish a religious relationship with the indigenous Filipinos. However, differences between the periods of pre-Spanish and Spanish colonialism are evidenced through the archaeological record and ethnographic accounts.

**Pre-Spanish Colonialism**

Formal colonization did not occur in the Philippines by the Spanish until Lagaspi arrived on the island of Cebu in 1565 (Vandermeer 1967:320). Evidence of the burial strategies practiced by the occupants of the Philippines before that time can be seen through archaeology and the written accounts of traders to the islands. The islands themselves as well as the varied landscapes within each island provided some measure of isolation between the many ethnic groups of the Philippines. This influenced the development of multiple dialects, cultural beliefs and practices, including burial strategies. The expression of beliefs and customs through the way people take
care of their dead is specific to the group of people and dependent on the environment and cultural history of the group.

Various locations have been used to bury the dead including burials beneath houses, within houses, or inside caves and rock shelters (Aure 2004:162; Dakudao 1992:133). Despite the great variety, burial areas were often near settlements (Dakudao 1992:136). The dead were still part of society despite their obviously changed levels of participation. Ancestor veneration occurred through the belief in anitos, deities or deceased ancestors renowned for various grand feats accomplished during their lifetime (Dakudao 1992:135). At the death of such distinguished individuals, they acquire supernatural powers and can act as intercessors on behalf of their living descendants (Dakudao 1992:135). Rituals associated with calling upon the anitos would have been easily conducted due to the nearness of the burial. Sick descendants could call upon the anitos to help heal them in times of need just as Catholics might call upon the saints (Dakudao 1992:135).

Treatment of the Dead

Different practices for treating the body were used: simple inhumations, boat-coffins, burial jars, and cremations (Dakudao 1992:133). Before a simple inhumation, the body was washed with aromatics and dressed in the finest clothing (Dakudao 1992:138). The body was then kept in the house within a hardwood coffin for three days of mourning (Dakudao 1992:138). Individuals who were given simple inhumations for their burial were wrapped in mats and buried in fields surrounding the settlements (Dakudao 1992:137), buried beneath the family’s house, or buried inside a cave. Gold was placed in the mouth of the deceased as they were buried; many other items were also buried along with the body (Dakudao 1992:138). Coutts and Wesson recognize two types of Philippine archaeological sites, cave sites and “open sites” (Coutts and Wesson
Some cave sites contained cultural material; most of these sites were used as burial places (Coutts and Wesson 1980:207). “Open sites” are sites that are not found in caves; such sites with burial in them tend to date to the historic period, around 1,000 B.P. and onward (Coutts and Wesson 1980:207).

Boat-shaped burial markers and boat-coffins are another burial practice evidenced in the Philippines. Several boat-shaped stone burial markers have been discovered in the Batanes Province (Figure 4) (Dizon 2000:115). Stones of various sizes, and in some cases color, were placed above the buried remains of an individual in a shape resembling a boat (Figure 3). Boat-coffins have been used by various maritime peoples throughout Southeast Asia (Dakadao 1992:136). Boat-coffins were commonly carved from hardwoods and decorated with bird symbols (Dakadao 1992:137). Birds are symbols of the sky world, *kaitaasan* or heaven, in Filipino symbolism (Barreto-Tesoro 2008:82; Dakadao 1992:137). By carving bird motifs on to the boat-coffins, the souls of the dead were encouraged to travel upwards where they would be at peace.

![Figure 3 Boat-shaped stone grave marker (Dizon 2000:123).](image-url)
Figure 4  Map of Batan Islands showing sites with boat-shaped stone markers (Dizon 2000:116).
Jar burials, an example of which is shown in Figure 5, entailed multiple reburials using jars of varying sizes; smaller jars were used with each subsequent burial (Dakudao 1992: 136). Jars used for burial were locally made earthenware. In the primary stages of jar burial, the entire body was placed within a large jar (Dakudao 1992:137). As the body decomposed, it was reburied within progressively smaller jars. In the secondary stages, only the skeleton which was sometimes painted with hematite was placed within a jar smaller than used previously (Dakudao 1992:137). Jars were also used to hold the ashes of the dead. The practice of cremation in the Philippines is thought to have been a result of contact with China (Dakudao 1992:138). The ashes and the skeletal remains were buried directly in pits or burial jars, some of which were made in China and brought to the Philippines through trade (Dakudao 1992:138).

Figure 5 Example of burial jar with cover (from Dizon 2000:118).
Calatagan Burials

Barretto-Tesoro conducted her study of burials within the region of Calatagan, part of the Batangas Province southwest of Manilla (Figure 6) (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:76). Barretto-Tesoro’s research included the study of 1,296 burials (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:78); many of which displayed signs of ritual. Earthenware vessels and porcelains were found in most graves in Calatagan; some were used as ritual objects while others were functional covers for burials (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:75). Of the 1,296 burials, some of them were missing skulls, were part of multiple burials, and some were infants buried in jars (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:78). Most burials were of adults and juveniles whose limbs were tied, usually their feet (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:78). Many of the adults had filed teeth, stained teeth, or both (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:78). Barretto-Tesoro focused her study on the 284 burials which contained mortuary goods; this includes eleven infant burials, thirty-six children, twenty-eight juveniles, 189 adults, and twenty individuals with no age data (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:78). Many different grave goods were found with the burials; many foreign ceramics dating to the fifteenth century, stone statues, locally made earthenware vessels, glass beads and bracelets, stone beads, animal bones, shells, spindle whorls, and human skulls (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:78).

Barretto-Tesoro interpreted the flower designs found on many of the ceramics as ‘sunburst’ designs (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:81). Porcelain plates with these designs (Figure 7) were often found on or near the pelvis of buried individuals (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:81). Thirty adults and juveniles were found with such plates on their pelvis (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:81). Some porcelain bowls with sun designs were also used (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:81). When viewed from above, earthenware vessels with an incised triangle pattern around the rim also appear as a ‘sunburst’ design (Figure 8) (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:84). Barretto-Tesoro believed that the sun
Figure 6 Map of Calatagan sites used in Barretto-Tesoro’s study (from Barretto-Tesoro 2008:77).
Figure 7 Porcelain plate with ‘sunburst’ design (from Barretto-Tesoro 2008:84).

Figure 8 Earthenware vessel with ‘sunburst’ design as seen from above (from Barretto-Tesoro 2008:85).
may have symbolized fertility and regeneration; thus items with this design were commonly placed over the pelvis (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:81). The sun is also a symbol of *kaitaasan*, heaven (Barretto-Tesoro 2008:82). Ceramics with this design may have been specifically chosen and added to burials for their association with a peaceful afterlife.

**Tanjay Burials**

Junker’s studies of Philippine complex societies were based on her excavations of the Tanjay Project area (Figure 2). Burials dating to A.D. 1400 to 1600 have been uncovered beneath and adjacent to houses (Junker 1993:164, 165). These houses were pile houses, elevated on stilts to avoid the flood waters during monsoon season (Junker 1993:165). The ground beneath the elevated floor would have provided an ideal place to bury the dead where the family could still maintain a sense of contact with the deceased, such as the performance of rituals for contacting *anitos*. Junker focused on two burials in particular, a single burial that she suggests is a warrior burial (Figure 9) and a mass burial.

Skulls used as grave goods, Junker questioningly labels them as trophy skulls as seen in Figure 9, were found as part of the warrior and many other burials European accounts reported instances of revenge-killing or head-taking which often were the results of warfare-related deaths (Junker 1999:32). This ethnographic evidence seems to support Junker’s interpretation of the detached skulls found at the Tanjay site; Junker believes the skulls to be either the heads collected by the deceased during a raid completed during life or heads of those who were responsible for the death of the individual (Junker 1999). With regards to the warrior burial such an interpretation may hold true however the mass burial might best fall under a different interpretation.
Figure 9 Warrior burial uncovered at Tanjay site (Junker 1999:27).
It is possible that the Tanjay mass grave was not caused by political or economic warfare but instead was a result of religious or ritual warfare (Aure 2004:167). Filipino tales of warfare include elements of religion and ritual (Aure 2004:168). Junker also suggests an interpretation of the grave through ethnographic accounts of human sacrifice on the Philippine Islands. There are accounts of the widespread use of captives in rituals (Junker 1999:34); captives obtained through raiding and warfare. Aure agrees that ritual may have played a role in the mass burial however Aure’s interpretation differs in the source of violence.

Religion and ritual was not only played a role in the care of the dead but may have been a contributing factor to the cause of death (Aure 2004:164). Ritual and religious violence would have targeted specific groups of people such as any suspected aswang, witches. The mass burial may have been a result of witch persecutions (Aure 2004:173). Aswang were persecuted in the Philippines even before the arrival of the Spanish; these persecutions involved mass killings and could have resulted in mass graves (Aure 2004:172). Since witchhood was “thought to be transmitted usually along kinship lines” (Aure 2004:171), not only would a suspected aswang be killed but several members of his family would also be killed in order to be sure the threat was indeed gone. The belief in aswang not only dictated the death of certain individuals, it also influenced burial practices (Aure 2004:168). Indigenous Filipinos feared that the dead would return (Dakudao 1992:135) if they were not properly cared for. This fear was particularly centered on the belief in aswang. The detached skulls included in many burials may have been used to prevent the aswang from rising, not as the heads of sacrificed slaves as Junker suggests (Aure 2004:173).

Skulls used as burial goods have been found associated with many types of burials, including simple inhumations and boat-coffin burials inside caves (Dakudao 1992:136), and may
be interpreted as part of the burial in a variety of ways. Skulls found in burials may have been a result of warfare (Aure 2004:172-173), trophies taken by the deceased during their lifetime or skulls of an enemy added to the burial of an avenged individual (Junker 1999:30). Another possibility is that the skulls were used for ritual purposes and had no direct association with warfare (Aure 2004:172-173). Burial goods were used as appeasement for the dead; the proper burial goods would prevent the dead from returning to haunt the living (Dakudao 1992:139). A proper burial would prevent the soul of the deceased from being left to wander (Dakudao 1992:139). The fear of aswang rising from the dead would have provided additional incentive for having proper burial goods. In this case, inclusion of skulls in an aswang’s burial acts as a type of “counter-sorcery or counter-witchcraft to ward off or exorcise the aswang” (Aure 2004:173).

In the case of the Tanjay mass grave, no other burial goods were uncovered other than eight detached skulls (Junker 1999:29). This may be interpreted as giving more care to keeping witches down as opposed to insuring loved ones move on in a peaceable manner. The position of the bones may also indicate ritual. In one particular instance a long bone was inserted into the eye socket of a skull perhaps as a way to blind the witch or to prevent the witch from rising (Aure 2004:173), another form of counter witchcraft.

**Spanish Colonialism**

Much of the data on religion and ritual during the period of Spanish contact comes from various ethnographic accounts (Aure 2004:162). Journals written by Spanish sailors and letters sent by Jesuit missionaries include descriptions of the different peoples and customs that they encountered on their travels and during their attempts to “civilize” the Filipinos. Several Filipino practices were encouraged to be discontinued by the Spanish colonizers. Cremations were forbidden by the Catholic Church as it is against the belief that the dead will be resurrected by
the second coming of Christ (Dakudao 1992:134), which required the body to be intact. The fact that the Spanish Catholics were eagerly anticipating the rising of the dead would have been disturbing to the indigenous Filipinos who believed that such an event would bring death to the living. With the incorporation of Christianity into indigenous Filipino belief, burial patterns obtained more uniformity across the islands (Dakudao 1992:134), to some extent conforming to the Catholic Church’s standardization of burials.

The Spanish Jesuit missionaries sent to the Philippines encouraged the Filipino people to convert to Catholicism, celebrate Catholic holidays, and to observe religious days of obligation. Converts to Catholicism would have to be assured that resurrection was a positive experience that did not involve evil. Many Filipinos converted to Catholicism upon or near their death even if the individual had not previously been particularly observant of Catholic doctrine (Arcilla 2000:40). In this way, these Filipinos were attempting to ensure a desirable afterlife in the chance that Catholic belief held some merit. All Soul’s Day is one of the religious holidays Jesuit missionaries attempted to instill within Filipino culture. This was relatively easily done as the Filipinos already held a similar day for honoring the dead (Dakudao 1992:135). The celebration of All Soul’s Day shows that “integration between the pagan and Spanish rites did take place” (Dakudao 1992:136); Spanish colonialism did indeed have an influence on indigenous ritual practices.

During Spanish colonialism, Spain’s influence was evident through the establishment of Catholic churches. Churches were often the center of cities (Dakudao 1992:134), both with regards to city layout and society. Early on, the dead were buried both inside and directly adjacent to the outside of the churches (Dakudao 1992:133). Those Filipinos with enough money and influence were allowed burials within the church beneath the floors, walls, and pillars
The majority of elites in Philippine society were Asian: creoles, Filipinos, Chinese, and mestizos (Skowronek 1998:54). Very few Spanish-born *peninsulares* lived in the Philippines (Skowronek 1998:54). They, along with Catholic priests, were granted burials beneath churches without overly large sums of money (Dakudao 1992:140). All other Catholic Filipinos were buried outside in the adjacent cemetery (Dakudao 1992:140).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, it became standard practice to establish cemeteries separately from churches (Dakudao 1992:133). Cholera epidemics overcrowded the cemeteries necessitating their movement away from the center of cities (Dakudao 1992:140). Government officials considered the move necessary to protect the health of their citizens. Despite the need and government assurances, many Christian Filipinos feared the move would leave the dead unprotected from birds and other animals (Dakudao 1992:142). These Filipinos truly believed in the values and traditions of the Catholic Church. Their beliefs now operated within the traditions of the Catholic Church which dictated that cemeteries must be on consecrated ground to ensure the souls of the individuals buried there would reach heaven. Churches directly adjacent to cemeteries provided extra assurance of the sanctity of cemetery grounds. Funeral chapels were built attached to the separated cemeteries, acting as smaller versions of churches (Dakudao 1992:142). The *Cementerio General de Paco*, known today simply as Paco Park, was the first Manila cemetery established outside of the city (Dakudao 1992:142). The plan drawings of the cemetery show its chapel as the octagonal structure at the top of the drawing (Figure 10). As with churches, governors and bishops were buried inside the chapels (Dakudao 1992:142). These chapels were essential to stand-alone cemeteries (Dakudao 1992:142), they allayed the fears previously expressed by protecting the cemeteries in the way churches had done previously.
Figure 10 Plan drawing of the Cementerio General de Paco (Dakudao 1992:141).
While burials remained near settlements, formal cemeteries imposed the same separation of class and race reflected in Spanish society (Dakudao 1992:134) that was not particularly evident in Filipino society before Spanish colonialism. Funerals were expensive even if the deceased and their family were not wealthy enough for a burial within the church. Burial spaces had to be continuously paid for or the body would be removed and placed into a pit for mass burials in the back of the cemetery (Dakudao 1992:143). Catholic priests and Spanish colonials were exempt from the continuous payment; they were buried beneath churches without having to pay an excessive sum of money (Dakudao 1992:140). Since Spanish cemeteries were associated with the Catholic Church, only Christians were allowed burial (Dakudao 1992:134). Not all Filipinos converted to Catholicism, despite over three-hundred years of Spanish colonialism and the enticement of covering one’s bases when it comes to a potential afterlife. This begs the question of how non-Christians Filipinos took care of their dead during this time.

Despite nearly four hundred years of Spanish contact, the Philippines remained culturally diverse with many ethnic groups speaking around seventy different languages and dialects (Coutts and Wesson 1980:211). Jesuit missionary letters written in 1882 describe a funeral held by the Subanon, an ethnic group living on the southeast coast of Mindanao (Arcilla 2000:11). The body was left to decompose inside a small hut; after the bones dried, they were cleaned and placed inside a large earthenware vessel (Arcilla 2000:11). The event described in the letters is of a jar burial, which was not part of Catholic funerary tradition. By 1882, the Philippines had been under Spanish rule for 317 years. Despite all this time, the indigenous Filipinos were still practicing their own traditions.

The influence of foreign traders varied between coastal and inland communities (Coutts and Wesson 1980:211). Larger port cities on the coast were more desirable to the Spanish as for
their potential in terms of trade opportunities, thus they held the greatest source of Spanish influence. Beyond the immediate area of such cities, Spain had far less influence. Churches established throughout the islands by Jesuit missionaries did have some influence on the local peoples although their success was highly variable and also limited to the immediate area. The Filipinos incorporated pieces of Catholicism to suit their own needs, essentially taking only pieces that were useful to the indigenous peoples and easily incorporated within longstanding beliefs. The symbol of the cross was used to ward off evil spirits that had always been a part of Filipino belief (Arcilla 2000:37). Both peoples used the cross as a sign for good but the Filipinos related the Catholic symbol to their own beliefs and traditions.

As the Spanish were determined to maintain trade from coastal communities, those groups of indigenous Filipinos who lived on the coast and wished to avoid Spanish control were left little options except to relocate. Many Spanish accounts bemoan the difficulty in colonizing the indigenous Filipinos as they easily “disregarded them [Spanish colonizers] and disappeared into the hills” (Peterson 2003:48). Communities which escaped Spanish influence by moving inland and into the mountains were able to continue burial practices and described earlier at least during the early stage of Spanish colonialism.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Indigenous Filipinos continued to practice their own beliefs and buried their dead accordingly away from the centers of Spanish influence, mainly in inland and mountain communities. In communities outside of the direct influence of Spanish colonialism, burials recorded in 1882 98 were still conducted according to indigenous beliefs (Arcilla 2000:11). By this time, the
Philippines had been a colony of Spain for 317 years and was 16 years away from switching from a Spanish colony into an American one. Much of the Spanish influence in the Philippines was limited to the Spanish settlements on the coast. Indigenous inland communities felt less pressure from the Spanish than communities that stayed near Spanish settlements and thus were less inclined to convert to Catholicism although some beliefs were incorporated such as the symbol of the cross used to ward off evil (Arcilla 2000:37).

Those Filipinos who did convert to Catholicism were perhaps more easily drawn to it due to certain aspects of Spanish Catholicism which were comparable to aspects of Filipino religion. Since the Spanish were able to relate to the Filipinos in this regard, the Spanish used religion as a strategy for colonialism. Both peoples shared a concern for the treatment of the dead that reflected their specific religious beliefs. Both the Spanish and the indigenous Filipinos felt the need to keep burials close to habitation sites. The frequency of solar and bird motifs found on both porcelains and earthenware vessels found in association with pre-Hispanic burials shows a concern for the afterlife. Such items with these designs were chosen for their association with heaven, a belief that the Spanish Catholics shared. The ritualistic role of catalonan is comparable to the role Catholic priests hold within the community. They both maintain the rituals and traditions of the community. “Bathala and the anitos, the pagan god and deities, were easily translated into the Christian God and the saints” (Dakudao 1992:139). Descendants could implore their empowered ancestors, anitos, for help in much the same way Catholics ask saints to intercede for them. The Spanish Catholics found that indigenous Filipinos held a religious holiday concerning the dead that was similar to one that they practiced, All Soul’s Day. These similarities made it easier for the indigenous Filipinos to accept and convert to Catholicism.
There are similarities between Spanish Catholic symbology and Philippine symbology that potentially made conversion to Catholicism easier for the Filipinos who chose to do so. Fish are considered symbols of the underworld by the Filipino people, alternatively so are lizards, snakes, and crocodiles (Dakudao 1992:137). In Catholic mythology, snakes are associated with the Devil and Hell while fish are associated with Jesus of Nazareth who rose from the dead. In both Philippine and Catholic symbology, birds are associated with heaven (Barreto-Tesoro 2008:82). Both the Spanish and the Filipinos believed that the soul was immortal (Dakudao 1992:139) and a proper burial would ensure the soul’s passage to heaven. In this way, converted “Filipinos found their new religion compatible with their old one” (Dakudao 1992:139), which may have eased some of the anxiety of adopting a new religion.

One aspect of Catholicism that has helped it to survive to the present in the Philippines and elsewhere is its flexibility. Successful Catholic missionaries were able to identify with and eventually incorporate indigenous beliefs, traditions, and customs into Catholic beliefs and practices (Dakudao 1992:147). The placement of Catholic churches may have been influenced by previously existing burial sites. Beneath the Santo Niño Church in Cebu, archaeological excavations conducted by Nishimura uncovered two prehistoric burials (Nishimura 1988:143). The Spanish missionaries may have constructed the church over these burials to preserve the burial practices of the local people whom they wished to convert.

Spain considered its colonization of the Philippines as a success; it was to be seen as an example of Catholicism in Asia. Many indigenous Filipinos did eventually adopt Catholicism as a result of Spanish colonialism, at least on the surface. Large trade cities, such as Manila and Cebu, were heavily influenced by Spanish colonialism. This can be seen through Spanish-style architecture and the use of churches and formal cemeteries as burial grounds. The sacred spaces
were only available for use by those Filipinos who had converted to Catholicism. Though spacious, these areas cannot account for the entire population of the islands. As time passed, more and more of Catholic doctrine was adopted by or forced upon the Filipinos but they did not all convert to Catholicism and the Philippines remains, even to this day, culturally diverse and various indigenous traditions continue under the mantle of Catholicism (Coutts and Wesson 1980:211).
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