The Knottiness of Othering and the Cosmopolitanism Turn in Everyday Religion

Maria Arceño
Asian Theological Seminary, maria.pubarticles@gmail.com

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This paper explores the knottiness of othering in Christian-Muslim relations in everyday religion in the urban marginal enclave of Baseco, Philippines. In examining the framing of the other from a sociological perspective, it is necessary to shift from a monolithic understanding of othering to a more nuanced approach that considers the entangled web of poverty, religious diversity, colonial legacies, power relations, the social nature of religion, and the sense of national loyalties that contributes to othering. Additionally, this study presents solidarity narratives as pockets of cosmopolitanism, draws lessons from them, and proposes a fuller cosmopolitan imagination that can mitigate the process of othering.

INTRODUCTION

Farida, a young Muslim mother in an urban poor community narrates:

> Normally, when there's a Christian newcomer to the neighborhood, some of our Muslim neighbors will greet the Christian warmly as if they are close friends, but when the person leaves their presence, they will give the person a disapproving look. Since the new resident is a Christian, they imagine most Christians are drug addicts and thieves. In our community, there are also Muslims identified as drug users and burglars, but they are only a few.
>
> I had seen Christian and Muslim parents quarrel when their child complains about being bullied by a playmate. The parent would rush to the neighbor and exchange bitter words with the parent of the offender. Often, I hear the Christian parent say, "We are not afraid even though you are Muslims." Some Muslims are confident that as Muslims, they are feared by Christians.

Umida, a twenty-three-year-old Muslim mother, observed that betrayal and gossiping are the common causes of conflict between Muslims and Christians in the neighborhood. However, Umida's experience with her six interreligious friends is different.

> In our friendship . . . , we have strong companionship even though some already have children. We still have strong connections with each other because there is trust and strong Christian-Muslim relations. Until now, we are still friends—we meet, ask what's up, and have a solid friendship.

The narrations of Farida and Umida demonstrate that social interactions with other religious groups in urban spaces are often confronted with the challenges of navigating between cooperation and conflict, inclusion and exclusion, and othering and solidarity. Farida and Umida both live in a poor community where Muslims and Christians live their everyday religion. The casual comments about people belonging to another religion often reflect religious

prejudices intertwined with feelings of distrust and accusations. On the other hand, social solidarities are also formed as people endeavor for economic sufficiency and land tenure.

In *The Religious and the Political,* Turner (2013, 24) claims that in the context of globalization and migration, religion defines identity and political boundaries. Consequently, religion oftentimes contributes to political tensions, social fragmentation, and urban violence (19–33). Dealing with otherness or the phenomenon described as "the fear of diversity" (21) is commonplace in Christian-Muslim relations in urban marginal enclaves.

The interreligious divide resulting in othering has been investigated using socio-economic-political frameworks. Muzzafar (2005, 62) ascribes religious conflict in the multi-religious context of Asia to the ruling elite's exploitation of religious majority and minority sentiments for electoral purposes as a quick fix for the leaders' failure to deliver their legal obligations to constituents. Other publications analyze othering by looking into identity and social structural injustices. For instance, Powell (2015, xx) employs power dynamics in the society that generates racism. These works offer helpful theoretical lenses for understanding the construction of othering. However, in the Philippine context there is a need for a case-specific study that analyzes religious othering in an urban marginal enclave from multiple lenses.

The challenges of Christian-Muslim relations in an urban poor context elicit the examination of the following questions: What framework can provide a more nuanced understanding of the process of othering between Christians and Muslims? What are the existing solidarities formed in the community, and how can they be further strengthened through cosmopolitanism?

This paper explores the knottiness of othering between Christians and Muslims in everyday religion in a marginal enclave and possible approaches to reduce othering. It explores the context of Baseco in South Pier, Metro Manila as a case in point through interviews and ethnographic non-participant observation. The first section examines the framing of the other from a sociological perspective using a more nuanced approach to understanding othering. It considers the entangled web of urban poverty, religious diversity, colonial legacies, the social nature of religion, and the sense of national loyalties in understanding the construction of othering. The second section describes solidarity narratives as pockets of cosmopolitanism, draws

lessons from them, and proposes a broader cosmopolitan vision as a possible way forward in abating the process of othering.

As a community development fieldworker, the author is particularly concerned with othering that is driven by personal contact with other religions in urban poor communities. Frequently, the othering is expressed in one's negative perception or rhetoric of the other—conscious or unconscious, hidden or evident. Despite not being as conspicuous as physical and verbal violence, the phenomenon of othering has a pernicious effect on individuals and communities, slowly stamping out community life and draining human resources and social capital. Additionally, the author's interest is directed by an appreciation of urban poor community dynamics of sharing vulnerability and interdependence, and how this solidarity can be connected to the values of cosmopolitanism, a moral perspective of belonging to the global community and not just to one's own tribe (Nussbaum 1995, 1). The article aims to contribute to social transformation in marginal enclaves, especially to other urban marginal enclaves that deal with the complications of Christian-Muslim relations.

I. THE KNOTTINESS OF OTHERING

Historically, the area of Baseco served as the harbor of the National Shipyard and Steel Company (NASSCO). In 1964, NASSCO was obtained by the Romualdez family and became the Bataan Shipping and Engineering Company (BASECO) (Murphy 2014, 2). When President Cory Aquino ascended, BASECO was sequestered and opened for resettlement. Eventually in the 1980s, it was formally proclaimed as Barangay 649, Zone 68. In 2002, Baseco was proclaimed a residential area under President Gloria Arroyo (1).

Currently, Baseco is one of the densest informal settlements in the Port Area of Manila with 64,750 residents in a 54-hectare land area.[1] The thick population of Baseco is occasioned by urbanization, internal displacement of people, internal migration, and government-initiated relocation of residents. The internal displacement of people is often caused by armed conflict between the government and non-state groups in Mindanao and natural disasters.[2] In terms of internal migration, Metro Manila is the favored destination of people coming from regions in Mindanao, especially the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Baseco has also been the target place for the relocation of informal settlers.

A. URBAN POOR MILIEU: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL URBAN POVERTY AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Simultaneous with the growing slum population is the mounting multi-dimensional urban poverty. The gap between the rich and poor is more pronounced in urban areas since cities often cannot cope with the increasing demands of employment, housing, and basic services. Due to low educational attainment and lack of specialized skills, the urban poor are often employed informally and have low wages (World Bank 2017, xv). This scenario explains the 2009 poverty incidence rate among the families in the Port Area where Baseco is located, which hits 11.9 percent—the highest poverty incidence rate in Metro Manila compared to Tondo's rate of 2.9 percent (PSA 2012).

The Baseco religious landscape is diverse. The influx of people at different periods in Baseco was accompanied by their own variegated faith expressions and spirituality. The plurality of religious identities is evidenced by the presence of a number of Catholic chapels, Evangelical/Pentecostal churches, an Iglesia ni Cristo chapel, Oneness Pentecostal churches, Jehovah's Witness activities, necromancers' (*espiritista*) houses, and five mosques.

Christianity and Islam are two major religions wherein the devotees have varied articulations of their faith. Islam has a non-monolithic Islamic landscape represented by the Maguindanaons, Maranaos, Tausug, Iranun, and Kalagan. Each of these intra-faith groups have their distinct culture and lived faith. There is also a considerable presence of Christians categorized as Evangelicals, born-again Christians, and Roman Catholics who have their own religious distinctiveness.

In Baseco, the intersection of poverty with religious diversity can be viewed as a double-edged sword, bringing benefits and liabilities. In times of crisis when there is growing insecurity, vulnerability, and material deficiency, a concern for others is instilled among the neighbors. For instance, Aaliyah, a Muslim college student and one of the respondents, commented that during the pandemic Christian and Muslim neighbors shared information about where to get relief goods and government assistance. She said, "Times are changing, and the situation of our nation is also transforming. We are in a new generation, unlike in the old when there was strong competition between Muslims and Christians. In our period, people unite to get out of poverty together." In other circumstances, sharing social spaces

breeds tension among neighbors. Resentment toward neighbors is harbored and leads to generalizing statements about Muslims and Christians when some residents use the facade of their neighbors' houses for hanging their clotheslines and clothes.

As a general observation, people negotiate differences in faith by practicing tolerance with their neighbors. For instance, Christian neighbors do not complain when the Islamic call to prayer ("*adhan*" in Arabic) is announced from the mosque. The Muslims on the other hand, do not disrupt their neighbor's Christmas celebration. Despite instances of religious tolerance, the issues regarding the congestion of houses and lack of privacy prevalent in urban marginalized enclaves make cultural and religious practices more visible and pronounced, complicating people's lived religion. Most of the one-room houses in Baseco are separated by plywood and it is not uncommon for Muslims to talk to other Muslims about their annoyance at a Christian neighbor cooking pork.

B. CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS
FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The challenges in Christian-Muslim relations in Baseco are influenced by the Christian-Muslim divide in the Philippines during the Spanish and American colonization. In this section, historical narratives are analyzed through a post-colonial lens, assessing power relations between the two religious and ethnic groups under hegemonic foreign dominance.

THE SPANISH COLONIAL LEGACY (1565–1898)

Drawing on the semantic relationship of conquest, conversion, and translation in his analysis of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, Rafael (1988) posits that conversion to Roman Catholicism became the most crucial dimension of colonization that consolidated Spanish power in the Philippines. Spanish *conquistadores* utilized religion as a tool to control the minds and hearts of the natives and create voluntary submission.

Spain had achieved substantial religious conversions among the lowlands despite small-scale rebellions. However, it had difficulty proselytizing the densely Muslim-populated Mindanao highlands. Consequently, war often broke out between Spanish soldiers and

the Muslims. The *conquistadores* influenced the lowlands Catholic converts to perceive the Muslims as a common enemy and inspired them to join the series of Spanish military operations in Muslim territories. The association and alliance of the Filipino Christians with imperial powers instilled "hatred, resentment, and suspicion" among the Muslims (Makol-Abdul 1997, 314). Both groups had negative perceptions of each other, harboring ill feelings toward each other.

The polarity between Christians and Muslims is reflected in their educational and economic disparities. The Muslims' decades-long resistance to Spanish hegemony and the Spanish-initiated pedagogical system had repercussions on the Muslim educational system. A wide intellectual gap was created between the Muslim and Christian populations. Consequently, the Muslims were delayed in academic progress and suffered illiteracy. Moreover, an economic backlash was felt in Muslim territories as an aftermath of the struggle with Spanish colonialism. Agricultural lands and crops owned by the Muslims were attacked by Spanish forces (Makol-Abdul 1997, 315).

THE AMERICAN CONQUEST'S LEGACY (1898–1946)

America's victory over Spain in the Spanish-American War resulted in Spain ceding its sovereignty over the Philippines to America through the Treaty of Paris.[3] Driven by economic interests on the Philippine shore and Asia (Vaughan 1997) as well as its civilizing obligations abroad (Lansang 1952), America subjected the Philippines to its imperialism.

In 1903, the Bates Treaty, which pledged America's non-interference with Muslim internal affairs and religious practices (Gowing 1968, 373–74), was abrogated and superseded by the direct-control policy through a newly established government structure called the Moro Province. The Moro Province (1903–1913) was a governing body tasked to administer Muslim-dominated territories in preparation for the Philippine state integration. Although there were installed Muslim leaders, the political decisions were dominated by American military generals, the Governor-General in Manila, and the Philippine Commission comprised of the Filipino Christians majority. While there was socio-economic progress, the issue of Muslim autonomy remained a critical area of contention. From the Muslims' perspective, the development in Mindanao was for the

socio-economic gain of America and Christians, not the Muslims (376). Additionally, the power-sharing of the lowlanders with the Americans was felt as the subjugation of the Muslims by another colonial master—the Filipino Christians (Makol-Abdul 1997, 320).

State-sponsored land legislations were instrumental to the demographic shift and landownership transitions in Mindanao. The laws enforced by America carried the principles of Spain's Regalian Doctrine and Maura Law.[4] More importantly, the land laws served the state integration policy that aimed to assimilate the Muslim territories into the Philippine national concept (Gowing 1968, 372). Not to say that the state-sponsored land legislations were based on the Western worldview of land ownership and had failed to respectfully consider the tribal land rights concepts and indigenous land laws. As a consequence, the unregistered lands of the indigenous people were reverted back to the state, forfeiting the natives' claim of ownership over their lands. Examples of these land laws are the Land Registration Act of 1905, the Philippine Commission Act of 1903 No. 178 (Molintas 2004, 284–94), the Mining Law Act of 1905, and the Cadastral Act of 1907. Additionally, the Public Land Laws of 1913, 1914, and 1919 encouraged the landless Filipino Christians in Luzon and Visayas to resettle in Mindanao and Sulu (Makol-Abdul 1997, 320). Private individuals were allowed to own a maximum of 200 acres and corporations to have 2,560 acres of investments (Franco 2016, 318). The influx of Filipino Christians to Mindanao and the displacement of Muslims further created an ethnic/religious cleavage between the two groups, not to mention Mindanao's heterogeneous religious landscape as a concomitant of the phenomenon. With the growing Christian-Muslim rift and claim for self-determination, the Muslims resisted integration with the other parts of the Philippines.

THE POST-COLONIAL IMPLICATIONS IN BASECO

Baseco and Mindanao have porous borders where Muslim migrants in Baseco go back and forth to their provinces in Mindanao to seek better economic opportunities or refuge from family feuds. This trend shows that Muslims are still closely connected to their roots in Mindanao; and the social, political, and religious affairs happening in the region have implications for them.

In Mindanao, there is an ongoing competition between the "religious factors for peace" and the "religious justifications for violence" (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs 2013,

12). It is noteworthy that the colonial legacy of lingering resentment and the deeply entrenched negative perception between Muslims and Christians are acknowledged as critical socio-political concerns. If this were not the case, considerable efforts and resources would not be exerted in conflict resolutions, peacebuilding projects, and integration programs at the grassroots, religious, and military levels in Mindanao. This paper argues that understanding the historical antecedents of Christian-Muslim relations in light of Spanish and American colonialism and efforts to bridge the gap is a precursor to the contemporary experience of Baseco, where both religious groups negotiate social relationships to maintain social harmony. These relationships are fragile because of the traces of hidden negative perceptions of the other. Additionally, the residents' experiences brought to Baseco, individually or collectively, are complicated by memories of relatives killed under the Marcos regime, of military encounters, and of land disputes between Muslims. Regarding power relations, the economic and educational disparities between Christians and Muslims are not distinct. Both religious communities aspire for more social/political access and economic development. At large, in times of social conflict, power belongs to the ones who have access to loose firearms in Mindanao or influential state authorities.

C. THE DIFFERING SENSE OF NATIONAL LOYALTIES

Another factor contributing to the Christian-Muslim divide in Baseco is the sense of national loyalty of each religious group. Christians hold fast to the concept of "one nation" for the Philippines. The Muslims, on the other hand, struggle for self-determination, nation-state, and national identity.

"FILIPINO" AS A DEPLORABLE TERM

The Muslims' claim for separate nationhood traces the historical antecedents that gave rise to Filipino nationhood. During Spanish imperial rule, the term "Filipino" initially referred to the Spaniards born in the Philippines. It was later used to address the natives who pledged allegiance to Spain and fought against the Americans in 1898 (Jubair 1999, 12). Additionally, Filipino nationhood as a

late political development is perceived by Muslims as tainted with allegiance to foreign rule. Jubair (1999, 14) disdains to employ the term "Filipino" to refer to Muslims. He argues that the term alludes to subjugation to colonialism and is therefore synonymous to "the child of colonialism." Instead, he prefers the term "Moro" to identify the Muslims as "the offspring of anti-colonialism" (14). Muslims preferred to be called "Moro," meaning those who fiercely fought against Spanish and American sovereignty over them.

The Muslim nationalist narrative has continued to resist integration with other parts of the Philippines since the Filipinization policy in 1913 in preparation for the 1946 Philippine Declaration of Independence. The saga for separate nationhood led them to secessionism and eventually to peace negotiations as an alternative to war. Unfortunately, the peace process that seeks inclusive solutions to Mindanao's socio-political and economic problems remains to be protracted and has always been hampered by recurrent violence in Mindanao that caused Christians and Muslims to perceive the peace process with cautious hope.

RELIGION AS INTEGRAL TO THE NATIONALIST NARRATIVE

Bangsamoro pillars like Jubair (1999, 14–15) frame the Moro people's quest for nationhood on Quranic beliefs. His theological interpretation of Quran 49:13 reflects God as the creator of distinct tribes and nations. For Jubair, religion is the underpinning of Moro nationalism.

From an Islamic perspective, religion and nationalism are intertwined with each other. Liow (2016, 2) rightfully observed that in Southeast Asia, religion and nationalism are the two powerful socio-political forces that inform many aspects of life, including national identity. Religion provides belief systems that buttress the conception of nationhood and can deliver "persuasive nationalist frames" (11) and a "metaphor of resistance" (135) that can sharpen differences with other nationalist groups. When the nationalist agenda is framed under the banner of "faith and flag" (18), one group stands within the danger of the construction of othering. Turner (2013, 24) has correspondingly elaborated that the impetus of religion toward violence is strengthened when "a sense of national degradation" is integrated with different religions' justifications for the use of aggression.

A case in point is the integration of "faith and flag" in Malaysia, where ethnic Malay nationalism emerged due to polarization over race, stakes in the economy, religion, and politics (Welsh 2020, 41). Although there are different articulations of Malay nationalism among the dominant political parties (42), Islamism, also called political Islam, is the common goal in the nationalist agenda. Liow (2009, 43–72) demonstrated how Islamism is advanced through the bureaucratization of Islam. Lobbying for Islamic legislation such as the *hudud*, the penal code for crimes and punishments in Islam, and apostasy was pushed in various ways by two leading political groups in Malaysia, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (Islamic Party of Malaysia or PAS) (58–62). The fusion of nationalist rhetoric and the process of Islamization impinge on the rights and well-being of non-Muslims, create political instability, and intensify community tensions (Welsh 2020, 50).

THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY OF CLANS AND THE NATIONALIST NARRATIVE

Religion is not the only factor that is integral to the nationalist narrative. Lara (2016, 107–11) identifies the political kinships' dynamics that have allowed the locals to recognize their "right to govern" their social lives. In the context of Muslim Mindanao, where the clan is the dominant institution, the political legitimacy of elite families competes with the legitimacy of the Philippine state (74–118) and the Bangsamoro transitional government. The drivers of the legitimacy of clans are Quranic interpretations based on kinship interests, local people's patronage of corrupt politicians, religious and rebel leaders' loss of funding from the elite (109, 112). The legitimacy of elite kinship lies in its ability to protect the local people through the solidarity of the clan, the capacity to use violence, the provision of fighting force to engage in intra-kin and inter-clan warfare, and access to economic and political powers (117).

Since the construction of national identity is not static, the Muslim nationalist narrative has been overlaid by other layers of identity. The interplay of internal migration, globalization, the government's appeals to shared history, and the Philippine educational curriculum on Filipino contribute to how Muslims negotiate their national identity. In Baseco, the Muslims do not find the term Filipino disgraceful but identify themselves as Filipino Muslims or Muslim

Filipinos. The nationalist sentiments on the Bangsamoro issues are often defined by the people's level of political consciousness. Those who are swamped with family responsibilities and can barely make ends meet are not politically engaged. Nonetheless, those awakened to their political role have lobbied in Congress for the approval of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. The reinvigoration of Muslim nationalist ideals is often made by the Manila Muslim Affairs of the Manila Office of the Mayor by reminding the Muslim youth not to waste the Bangsamoro pillars' efforts.[5] In Baseco, how much of the nationalist narrative is tied to religion is something that all should be vigilant of.

D. THE SOCIAL NATURE OF RELIGION

Another driving force to the othering between Christians and Muslims in Baseco is the social function of religion. Religion, espoused by Durkheim (1995, 21–33), is a social institution with collective systems of beliefs that generate a group culture, group-based emotions, and social categorizations. When religion "others" individuals belonging to another faith, the negative perception is difficult to deconstruct. According to Turner (2013, 28), religion can provide grievances of individuals "a collective force and organizational framework." Under a circumstance that religion has adherence to an "exclusive notion of Truth," engaging in interreligious dialogue is distant (33).

As a general observation, Christian and Muslim parents in Baseco guard their collective faith against conversion and proselytizing by being selective in the religion of the person their children intend to marry. Collective beliefs are upheld by the Christian religious leaders (i.e., Catholic priests, pastors, and lay leaders) and Muslim clergy (i.e., *imams* also known as the mosque's worship leaders*; ustadz*, who are teachers in Islam; and mosque administrators). They are the moral authority that prescribe and interpret moral precepts and exert social control on devotees. How do spiritual guides contribute to othering? Spiritual leaders can play a significant role in creating a collective perception of those who belong to other spiritual traditions in their hermeneutics of sacred text or defense of their religious particularism. Religious leaders can be responsible for the production of feelings and solidarity that is not without polarized categories of "we-ness and other-ness" (Terren 2004, 17). Consequently, religion creates a culture identified by the group's perception of others that is usually preserved in collective memory and handed down from generation to generation.

COLLECTIVE EMOTIONS

Christian and Muslim rituals are ubiquitous in Baseco. Muslims gather every Friday at the five mosques, Catholics attend mass outside the community, and born-again Christians congregate for worship services. Religious festivals like the Muslims' Eidl Adha and Eidl Fitr and the Christians' Lenten and Christmas gatherings evoke collective emotions, which Durkheim (1995, 116–18) refers to as "collective effervescence" because people join in ceremonies. During Eidl Fitr, the overflow crowd extends to three streets adjacent to the major mosque. Participants of the celebration, like Umida the Muslim mother respondent, share feelings of fulfillment and joy after the religious event.

The collective symbol is another source of collective emotions in Baseco, which gives existence to social sentiments (Pickering 1984, 282). Muslims show deep moral and emotional attachment to collective symbols such as women's *hijab* and *abaya*, men's long dress, and the "crescent and star" icon. Likewise, Christians exhibit an emotional connection to the cross. In particular, Catholics have strong bonds with relics and religious images. These representations are emotionally significant in creating religious identities that mark the faith group's distinctiveness and denote religious boundaries. In short, they serve as a safeguard to the collective faith and in some ways will contend for it. For example, a Catholic Christian would engage in a debate and probably a fight when the religious images are desecrated in the same way a Maguindanaon or a Maranao Muslim would confront the offender when the mosque, their sacred place, is vandalized.

The collective symbols serve as the community's "moral force" because through them the community members are "morally bound" to extend assistance in support of or vengeance on behalf of other members thereby fostering affinity (Pickering 1984, 192). As a result, collective conscience is formed among individuals. Collins (2004, 35) calls this the "heightened intersubjectivity," where an intersection of people's cognitive perspectives takes place forming collective consciousness. The collective consciousness produces a shared conviction and mental image of themselves and concurrently "hold at bay" (Durkheim 1995, 210) different religious representations. Anti-Christian and anti-Muslim community discourses can be heard in the community.

Lynch (2012, 6, 89) extended the collective symbols to "emotionally charged" stories in social media that stir up people

for common sentiments and collective emotions like the killing of George Floyd that gave birth to the Black Lives Matter Movement. As such, "emotionally charged" stories in Baseco can be considered as collective symbols. To illustrate, the narrative of the 2015 Mamasapano encounter in Maguindanao rekindled old flames of Mindanao Christian-Muslim resentment in urban enclaves like Baseco. Initially, both Christians and Muslims shared the national grief brought by the tragedy of the death of the 44 members of the Special Armed Forces (SAF), a government elite police unit, on a mission to serve arrest warrants to two wanted terrorists in Maguindanao province. However, as the national politicians investigated the state troops and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), many Christians shared the government's questions on the MILF bond with some terrorist groups during the peace process (Senate of the Philippines 2015). Inevitably, the Mamasapano bloodshed brought to mind old memories and anxieties of recurrent violence associated with Muslims in Mindanao. The stereotyped image of Muslims as violent people comes to mind—an image that is related to the drug-related gun violence incidents in Baseco.

On the side of the Muslims, there was a prevailing sentiment that Muslims were marginalized when the deaths of Muslim civilians and MILF fighters were not given equal attention by the government investigative body. Moreover, the use of the word "massacre" in the Mamasapano tragedy was not only offensive to the Muslims' position that the clash was a wrong encounter, but the word brought back painful memories of atrocities committed by the colonial powers and the state in the 1906 Bud Bajo, 1968 Jabidah, and 1974 Palimbang massacres (Castillo 2018). The Muslims' powerful collective memory intensified their aspiration for Bangsamoro independence, which by that time had received waning support from politicians because of the Mamasapano tragedy. The narrative of Mamasapano violence and its weight on Christian-Muslim connections to collective postcolonial memory, collective emotions, stereotyping, and aspirations for self-determination are examples of the knottiness of othering.

COLLECTIVE CATEGORIZATION

Often, group categorization is the lens used in perceiving the religious other in Baseco. The process of grouping can promote ill feelings, prejudice, and stereotyping of people of other faiths when

the "content" in the categories homogenize members of the religious groups and do not perceive each member of the congregation as a person.

In the case of the Muslims, their binary opposition—*halal* and *haram*[6] worldview—guides their perspectives in all aspects of life, including their perception of the Christians. Muslims' line between *halal* and *haram* resonates with Durkheim's (1995) "sacred and profane" dichotomy and with Douglas' (1996) "pure and impure" thought process of categorization of society, where the "profane" or "impure" things are perceived to be different in essence from the "sacred" or "pure;" they are prohibited and are to be separated from the sacred.[7] When society becomes extreme, it desires to eliminate the "profane" and purify the society like what happened in the Rohingya massacre (Mohajan 2018) and genocide of Christians by the Islamic State (Isakhan and Shahab 2022). The unlawful killings of the alleged drug dependents and traffickers in the Oplan Tokhang, the Philippine state's deadly war on drugs, carry the same theme. Cornelio and Medina's (2019) empirical study in Payatas investigates the response of Christian leaders to Tokhang. Their study revealed that some Christian pastors' theological reflections identified the "nature of drug users" (8, 9) as "sinners" that have to be "eradicated in the society or redeemed" (4, 16).

From a religious point of view, the Muslims considered women wearing "body-revealing" clothes as *haram*. For Muslims, the woman's "*awrah*" is the parts of her body that should be covered—her whole body except her face, hands, and feet. Homogenization occurs when Christian women as a group are perceived to be indecent and greatly influenced by Western culture. In worse cases, Christian women become victims of men's "gaze" and acts of lasciviousness.

From another perspective, the halal and haram dichotomy is an avenue for Muslims to experience instances of othering. When Farida, the young Muslim mother, was in elementary, her Christian classmates would make fun of her because she was fat, dark-skinned, looked untidy, and wore a Muslim headdress. There was a time her headscarf was pulled off by her female classmates who teased her. Whenever she complained to her teachers, they would not believe her.

Similarly, Christians have negative imaginaries of Muslims as rigid and legalistic in their expression of faith. Turner (2013, 28) correctly observed that people tend to be driven by "essentialism."

Othering operates in "iterative processes of comparison, differentiation, and classification" (Akbulut and Razum 2022, 3).

This section on the knottiness of othering engaged in the complex task of unpacking the notion of othering in Christian-Muslim relations in Baseco by exploring the entangled webs of urban poverty, religious diversity, nationalist narratives, historical antecedents, power relations, and the deep structures of religion. Understanding othering, whether expressed in negative perceptions, words, or actions, whether it's a lingering resentment or a sprouting phenomenon, entails consideration of different contributing factors analyzed in the context of contemporary migration flows, globalization, and changing religious and political landscapes.
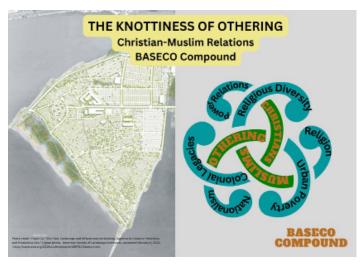

Figure 1. The Knottiness of Othering: Christian-Muslim Relations in BASECO Compound

II. THE COSMOPOLITANISM TURN

This section presents moral cosmopolitanism as both "within" and "without" Baseco. It briefly describes the pockets of cosmopolitanism in this marginal enclave and gleans lessons from the tales of solidarity. Additionally, this article acknowledges that no community has reached the full realization of cosmopolitanism; thus, it paints a cosmopolitan imagination amidst the residents' religious and cultural identity negotiations to mitigate othering and promote peaceful coexistence and a flourishing community.

POCKETS OF COSMOPOLITANISM

Cosmopolitanism came from the ancient Greek word *kosmopolites,* which means world citizen. It is a view that perceives all peoples as members of the global family of humanity and the universe as a state, where the cosmopolitan is a citizen of the state (Kleingeld and Brown 2019). Nussbaum (1995, 1) describes a cosmopolitan as "the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world." Thus, cosmopolitanism is both a planetary consciousness and ethical perspective where every member of the world has a moral responsibility to work for the common good and welfare of people across all borders and ethnic groups.

The concept of cosmopolitanism is not viewed without detractors; often, it is placed in juxtaposition with patriotism and judged as incongruous with devotion to one's patria. Cosmopolitans are purportedly perceived as "rootless vagabonds" (Kleingeld 2011). In recent years, Appiah (1997, 619–21) harmonized the seeming dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and patriotism by advancing the idea of "cosmopolitan patriots," which is suitable in the present context of voluntary or forced migration and religious/cultural diversity that produces a local form of human life that had undergone the process of "cultural hybridization" over the years. Baseco, as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious enclave, negotiated the ethnic/cultural boundaries and religious identities as they formed layers of solidarity in meeting their socio-economic needs. One example of this pocket of cosmopolitanism is the tale of people's solidarity in their land rights struggle.

On January 28, 2002, President Gloria Arroyo signed Proclamation No. 145, s.2002, declaring Baseco as an area "open for disposition to its actual occupants" and subject to private rights.[8] Critical to the success of the people's advocacy of land ownership was a circumstance of God's providence that the contested land was not private property but rather under government land custodianship (Murphy 2014, 4). More importantly, the people's solidarity played a significant role in sustaining the advocacy for land security and eventually attaining land ownership.

The cooperation of Baseco residents and their partnership with non-governmental organizations that champion the poor's land rights concerns served as engines that propelled their cause. For instance, the people's organization in Baseco, Kabalikat sa Kaunlaran ng Baseco, was at the forefront of negotiating with the city mayor for occupants' land rights. At the time of the awarding of house

certificates, the report noted that they had approximately 3,000 members—200 of whom were actively involved in dialogue with policymakers (Murphy 2014, 19). In Kabalikat, religious affiliation and ethnicity were not the basis of membership, but the common aspiration for better lives and freedom from the fear of demolition. The residents' devotion to Baseco as their new homeland resonates with Appiah's (1997, 662) description of cosmopolitans as individuals who love their "homelands", both the place where they grew up and the place where they live.

Another layer of solidarity was laid when Kabalikat was assisted by non-governmental organizations like the Urban Poor Association (UPA) and Technical Assistance Organization (TAO) in the areas of community organizing and urban architectural planning in preparing for the "urban renewal" of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Project (Murphy 2014, 3–6). In community organizing, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious community participated in bottom-up decision-making in drafting a community vision for Baseco. A consensus of people's ideas was conducted block by block, which was joined regularly by about forty persons (6). One more layer of solidarity was added when the thirty-three more organizations working in Baseco joined Kabalikat and UPA in the campaign for securing land rights (7).

Aside from the social cohesion formed through the pursuit of land ownership, the urban poor community's hope for dignified housing is another quest that united the residents regardless of their religion and culture. In July 2021, the public housing project of Manila Mayor Domagoso was formally opened to accommodate 229 residents of Baseco (Moaje 2021), most of whom are victims of previous fire incidents. Behind the fulfillment of this project are the consolidated efforts of Kabalikat and UPA in partnership with Habitat for Humanity and the local government unit (Estrada 2021).

From these narratives, lessons on the practice of intentional inclusion of solidarity are essential in practicing cosmopolitanism. Beyond the boundaries of religious beliefs and cultural particularism, the Baseco residents and existing organizations were regarded as significant stakeholders in planning, decision-making, and advocacy for the common welfare of the community—the security of land tenure and decent houses. Baseco was successful in being a host to people of different cultures, ethnicities, and religions without centering on one culture, marginalizing others, and without privileging

a single voice. With the people's collective consciousness for a common good, the enclave embodied a community with "multiple centers" of culture and faith. The actions of the Baseco residents support the central claim of Appiah (1997) that cosmopolitanism is citizenship centered not on similar culture but "imaginary" citizenship devoted steadfastly to common institutions and conditions necessary for a flourishing shared life. Moreover, the layers of solidarity formed resonate with Bayat's (2010, 14–15) idea of the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" as a forerunner of social change. The role of the poor and the disenfranchised as ordinary social actors had quietly impinged on the powerful and decision-makers in their struggle to survive and flourish.

COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINATION: COSMOPOLITANISM AS AN ETHICAL PROJECT

Although Baseco has pockets of cosmopolitanism, the necessity to shape an environment conducive to broader experiences of cosmopolitan ideals remains a paramount concern. In re-imagining cosmopolitanism in Baseco, where perceptions of the other are sometimes defined by the other's religious allegiances and the issues tied to it, the visualization is influenced by the following question: How could a fuller imagination of cosmopolitanism promote better understanding between people of different faiths in the context of shared struggles of poverty?

The image of cosmopolitanism in Baseco promotes the inherent human rights and human dignity of every resident regardless of religion, nationalist loyalties, and economic status because every individual is perceived to be a member of humanity and the world.[9] The mere plurality of voices and ethnicity will not transform a community; there has to be a commitment to human rights. Cosmopolitanism as an ethical project is both a moral perspective and an ongoing endeavor.

In Turner's (2013, 71) continuous study of religion and politics, he rightfully identifies the sovereign-state's poor implementation of human rights as one of the challenges to its institutionalization because the recognition of rights means "politics can be replaced by morality" and justice can be brought to leaders' abuses. In the Philippines, upholding human rights in every sector of society is a critical issue. Notwithstanding the stipulation of the Bill of Rights

in the Philippine Constitution and the country's pledge of allegiance to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the preservation of human rights is often challenged. Moreover, there is a general perception, though not publicly stated, that the people who fight for the rights of the people are tagged to have "left political" leanings.

With such a scenario in Philippine society, how can human rights as one of the ideals of cosmopolitanism be advanced by Christians and Muslims in urban poor communities? One possible way to attain it is to tap and cultivate the local traditional or indigenous resources deeply embedded in the community. Bell (1996, 642) sees traditional cultural resources as promising in advancing human rights campaigns. He claims that "building human rights practices on traditional cultural resources is more likely to lead to a long-term commitment to human rights ideas and practices" (649). In the Philippines, for instance, the debate on the death penalty and the practice of euthanasia do not advance because generally, many Filipinos still hold on to the sanctity of life. This cultural value can be utilized in promoting the human right to life for every individual.

In Baseco, the filial responsibility of caring for old parents despite poverty is a cultural resource. It is common to see adult Muslims and Christians sharing material resources with aged parents. No legislation is needed to ensure the custody and protection of elderly parents; it is the assumed responsibility of adult children to love and provide for old parents. This value reflects the "non-legalistic mechanisms" in culture available for the promotion of human rights (Bell 1996, 659) and should be further cultivated.

How could a turn to the human rights ideal of cosmopolitanism promote better interfaith understanding and address othering? Since Baseco was tagged as the "most drug-affected area" in Manila (Talabong 2019), there have been incidents of gun violence in the streets. When a person is shot dead, community breaking news quickly identifies the religious identity of the person—a Christian or a Muslim. The question asked is often informed by the generalization that drug addiction is more associated with Christians and violence with Muslims. A turn to the human rights ideal of cosmopolitanism shifts from the collective religious categorization and collective faith and grieves for the loss of life because the deceased is a member of the global community of human beings to which both Muslims and Christians also belong.

The ethical project is supported and sustained by "cosmopolitan human rights consciousness" (Gieda 2019, 38), which is analogous

to the concept of "hospitality" as imaginary spaces where a person sacrificially and generously accommodates the needs of the "other" even though the cost will be losing one's place at the center (Rodriguez 2009, 15). Rodriquez (2009, 17–18) rightfully claims that "hospitality" is a "phase of restitution" where people have the opportunity to reconstruct the unjust social systems and "make it more hospitable and just for the Other."

CONCLUSION

This study unpacked the notion of othering in Christian-Muslim relations by taking the particular social milieu of Baseco, an urban poor community in the city of Manila. This inquiry argues the necessity to rethink the construction of othering between Christians and Muslims in the Philippine context from a polylithic lens rather than from a monolithic one. As demonstrated in this paper, the framework used in analyzing the process of othering considered the factors of multi-dimensional poverty and religious diversity in urban poor communities, post-colonial historical narratives, differing nationalist narratives, and religion's collective faith, emotions, and categorizations.

On a positive note, the paper also argued that amid poverty and the existing negative perception of the other in Christian-Muslim relations, the residents formed layers of solidarity as they met their socio-economic needs, such as land rights, dignified housing, and trade, and expressed their political allegiances. The layers of solidarity are pockets of cosmopolitanism. The paper clarified its affinity to the kind of cosmopolitanism that embraces the moral ideal of respecting each member of humanity as a world citizen without the institution of a world state.

Furthermore, the paper painted the face of cosmopolitanism in Baseco as one that can be cast by an ethical project that respects the inherent human rights and dignity of every resident regardless of religion, culture, and nationalism. The article humbly proposed that the cosmopolitan turn is a possible way forward in mitigating the process of othering in urban poor communities. Cosmopolitanism, as an ethical perspective, can be a powerful social force in transforming communities. With a more nuanced understanding of othering and a closer look at cosmopolitanism's role in Christian-Muslim relations, the aspiration for flourishing communities and peaceful coexistence of different faith groups in Metro Manila and Mindanao will not remain a chimerical dream.

NOTES

1   PhilAtlas, 2023, "Barangay 649, City of Manila," accessed October 8, 2021, https://www.philatlas.com/luzon/ncr/manila/barangay-649.html.

2   Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023, "Philippines," Country Profile, May 25, 2022, https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/philippines, last updated May 24, 2023, accessed February 9, 2023.

3   Official Gazette, 1898, "Treaty of Peace between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain (Treaty of Paris), signed in Paris, December 10, 1898," https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1898/12/10/treaty-of-peace-between-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-kingdom-of-spain-treaty-of-paris-signed-in-paris-december-10-1898/.

4   Spain's Regalian Doctrine (Jura Regalia or Spanish Royal Law) declared that ownership of all lands colonized by the *conquistadores* were turned over to the king of Spain (Molintas 2004, 283–284). In effect, the law claimed that the entire Philippine shore belonged to Spain's royal crown. The Maura Law issued in 1894 was the last land law initiated by Spain, imposing that all untitled lands in the Philippines in 1880 were reverted back to the state or by default belonged to the state (284). Under American colonization, the lands were relinquished to America as the new colonial master. Failure to register the natives' lands for titling meant loss of land ownership.

5   "Bangsamoro sa Maynila Nagkaisa," Facebook, August 3, 2021, Office of the Mayor-Manila Muslim Affairs, https://www.facebook.com/ManilaMuslimAffairs/posts/363017655423235.

6   "*Halal*" is an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted object or action according to Islamic law, while "*haram*" denotes unlawful or prohibited.

7   Although Durkheim's claim that the sacred and profane polarity is a universal feature of human culture has been subjected to criticism by several social scientists like Jack Goody and Gordon Lynch, the merit of looking at the sacred-profane framework cannot be denied in the analysis of religion as a possible agent in constructing othering. Other sociologists like Roger Caillois (1913–1978), Georges Bataille (1897–1962), and Michel Leirris (1901–1990), who established the *Collège de Sociologie*, worked on the revitalization of Durkheim's work and sought to apply the dichotomy of the sacred and profane to the fight against fascism. See Philip Smith and Jeffrey Alexander, 1996, "Review Essay: Durkheim's Religious Revival," Review of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* by Emile Durkheim and trans. by Karen E. Fields, *American Journal of Sociology* 102(2):585–592, https://doi.org/10.1086/230959.

8   Official Gazette, "Proclamation No. 145, s.2002," https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2002/01/18/proclamation-no-145-s-2002/.

9   The cosmopolitanism in this paper does not promote the establishment of a world state as espoused by Danielo Zolo. See Kok-Chor Tan, 2004, *Justice Without Borders: Cosmopolitanism Nationalism, and Patriotism* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 93–94.

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MARIA ARCEÑO is a peace advocate. Her line of interest is in the field of Christian-Muslim relations in the Philippines. She is a PhD student working on her dissertation about peacemaking in the context of religious othering. <maria.pubarticles@gmail.com>