

The researchers conducted an ethnographic study where behavior was observed for three years of Roman Catholic culture and religious practices within the indigenous peoples of the Baguio City area of the Philippine Cordillera region. Interviews of priests, seminarians, parishioners, former Catholics and non-Catholic Christians were conducted with regard to the Catholic religious experience, and the researchers compared these experiences to the six conversion motifs posed by Lofland and Skonovd (1981). The results are that the experiences do not conform to any of the six motifs, but fall into a new motif identified as a “traditional-pagan hybrid.” As opposed to the traditional mystical motif often identified with the Christian Pauline conversion, this hybrid is characteristic of being “raised” as an acceptable Catholic regarding church practices, thus conversion was at baptism during early childhood, and is aggravated via an amalgamation of pagan practices involving the sacrificing of pigs to pagan gods and participating in pagan dance rituals and prophetic readings.

Photographs and videos of some of the celebrations and rituals, and interviews of the Cordilleran people are presented and discussed. The implications of the lack of adult conversion and the influence and consequences upon the Cordilleran society of the integration of pagan practices into Roman Catholicism are also explored, analyzed and discussed. Conclusions, recommendations and solutions, which will further enhance our understanding of Christianity in indigenous people’s contexts, are formulated.

References

Lofland, John and Norman Skonovd (1981). “Conversion Motifs.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 20(4), 373-385.