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Translating the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: A Linguistic and Cultural Analysis in the Tagalog Context

Abstract: The linguistic analysis shows how Christian concepts are deeply rooted in the Tagalog language, with the sacraments of Confirmation, Baptism, and the Eucharist holding significant theological and cultural meaning in the Philippines. Despite the growing influence of English due to globalization, traditional terms like *Kumpil*, *Binyag*, and *Eukaristiya* remain relevant, especially in liturgy and catechesis. These terms not only express Christian doctrine but also reflect Filipino family and community values. The preservation of these terms is crucial to safeguarding the country's religious and cultural identity, which continues to keep its spiritual heritage alive despite external influences.

Keywords: theological translations, Sacraments, inculturation, Philippines, evolution of language.

Theological translation is not only a linguistic challenge, but primarily a bearer of the Word of God, which should be proclaimed to every nation, community, and individual person, as emphasized by Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*[1]. Thanks to this translation, the believer can read the Bible with understanding, make use of the sacraments, and, in the privacy of their own homes (cf. Mat 6, 6), pray to God with words that most deeply express the innermost desires of their souls.

We understand that many countries, including the Philippines, are multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious. Moreover, as Pope Benedict XVI accurately noted in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate*[2], these cultures, languages, and religions are increasingly intermingling. In this very environment, the

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1 Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Rome, December 8, 1975, (EN 63 and 65).
2 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, Rome, June 29, 2009.

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translator of theological texts faces the challenging task of conveying the deposit of faith while respecting local cultures and customs.

How can this be achieved?[3] Wojciech Kluj[4], a professor from the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, outlines in his monograph four principles that can make translation more effective.

The first principle is the *dual faithfulness* rule, which means that the translation must be consistent with Christian doctrine while also being in harmony with local culture.

The second principle is cultural reference to the given language. The text should align with the cultural etymology of the language.

The penultimate principle is the dynamics of language. Language evolves and changes. Translation should not be overly archaic but tailored to the local community. When we talk about this community, it is the foundation for the final principle, which is the collective subject of translation. Even if the translator applies all the other but neglects this one, all efforts will be in vain if it is not applied within the community and accepted by it. It was similar with the recognition of the canonicity of the Biblical Books, where, for example, the Gospels of Peter or Thomas was not included in the Canon of the Holy Scripture.

What challenges, then, might await the translator? The first challenge is that many Asian languages, including Tagalog (lingua franca of Filipinos), do not have clear equivalents for terms such as *Eukaristiya* (*Eucharist*)[5], *Santísimá Trinidád* (*Holy Trinity*)[6] or *Diyós* (*God*)[7]. In such situations, translators must seek terms or expressions that convey doctrinal meaning while being comprehensible to the believing community.

Another challenge in expressing concepts is linguistic ambiguity. It is worth mentioning here the lecture by Professor Jesus Federico C. Hernandez[8] from the University of the Philippines, who precisely showed the difference in the word *love* in Tagalog. Other examples include words like *Kaligtasan*[9], which means salvation in a theological sense but also safety in a medical sense. Another example is the term *Komunyon*[10], which in theological language refers to the Eucharist, but in a social context can mean a community of people.

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3 Cf. S. Schabowicz, *How to translate prayers into missionary languages?*, ed. R. Matysik-Pejas, M. Bogusz, P. Rachwał, Słupsk 2024.

4 W. Kluj, *Kształtowanie się podstawowych tekstów wiary w języku mangalskim*, Warsaw 2013.

5 B.S. Pabillo, *Eukaristia: langing kapiling si Jesus Tuwina*, Philippines 2016.

6 F.R. Limcaco, *Nobena sa Santisima Trinidad*, Philippines 2008.

7 Cf. J.J. de Noceda, P. de Sanlucar, *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala: compuesto por varios religiosos doctos y graves, y coordinado*, Manila 1860.

8 https://linguistics.upd.edu.ph/news/unpacking-pag-ibig/ (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

9 J. Noceda, P. Sanlucar, V.S. Almario, E.R. Ebreo, A.M.M. Yglopaz, *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala*, Manila 2013.

10 Ibidem.

An example of the application of all the principles is the 1593 catechism written by Father Juan de Plasencia titled *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala* (*Christian Doctrine in Spanish and Tagalog Languages*)[11], which pioneeringly demonstrated how the basic principles of Catholic doctrine, its key theological terms, prayers, and commandments were translated. It is worth noting that his text is bilingual – alongside the Spanish version, it contains a Tagalog translation written both in the Latin alphabet and *baybayin*[12] – the ancient alphabet used by the Tagalog people before Spanish colonization, emphasizing its importance.

The sacraments of Christian initiation[13]—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—hold profound importance in Catholic belief and practice. These sacraments represent the fundamental rites of passage into the Christian community, and their translation into languages spoken by diverse communities, such as Tagalog in the Philippines, requires not only linguistic precision but also cultural sensitivity. The Philippines, being a multilingual, multicultural, and deeply Catholic nation, serve as an important case study for exploring the translation of these sacraments' terminology in the context of local traditions and the evolving role of language in religious expression.

The main objective of this work is the linguistic and cultural analysis of sacramental concepts in the Tagalog language, with an emphasis on their role in Filipino society. The study will focus on analysing the origin of each term, their use in various catechisms, and how they were received by the local community.

To initiate our analysis, we shall delineate the key theses and the methodologies through which we will accomplish our objectives.

The translation of sacramental terminology in Tagalog reflects the process of linguistic adaptation and inculturation, allowing theological concepts to become more accessible and meaningful to Filipino Catholics.

Spanish colonial influence has significantly shaped the religious lexicon of the Philippines, but the adaptation of terms like *bautismo* to *binyag* (*Baptism*) demonstrates how the local language integrates foreign elements while maintaining its cultural identity.

As Filipino Catholicism continues to evolve, so does its sacramental vocabulary, demonstrating the fluid relationship between language, faith, and culture in shaping religious identity.

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[11] *Doctrina Christiana – The first book printed in the Philippines*, Manila 1593, cf. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16119/16119-h/16119-h.htm (Accessed: January 6, 2025); https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2002rosen1302/?sp=8&st=image&r=-0.978,-0.072,2.956,1.346,0 (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

[12] A.T. Camba, *Baybayin: The Role of a Written Language in the Cultural Identity and Socio-Psychological Well-Being of Filipinos*, Cambridge 2021.

[13] G. Pyźlak, *The Role of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation in Preparing the Faithful for Marriage and Family Life*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 17(2018), p. 133-146.

I will employ these methods to validate the proposed research theses: By means of the linguistic analysis, I will examine the structure of the Tagalog language, including lexical, syntactic, and semantic analysis of terms related to sacraments. Using the comparative analysis, I will compare the use of sacramental terms in Tagalog with those in other Catholic cultures, such as Latin, Spanish, or English, to identify differences and similarities. The cultural analysis will involve studying the significance of sacraments in the social and cultural context of the Philippines, including the influence of Catholic religion on Filipino values and customs.

Etymology and Linguistic Evolution of Sacramental Terms in Tagalog ang *mga sakramento ng panimulang pagpasok ng Cristiano*

In reading the *Katesismo ng Iglesia Katolika* (*Cathechism of the Catholic Church*)[14], one encounters a systematic division of the sacraments, reflecting their theological significance and role in the religious life of the faithful. The first group of sacraments is: ang *mga sakramento ng panimulang pagpasok ng Cristiano w*hat can be translated into English. *The sacraments of initiation*[15].

Paraphrasing paragraph 1212[16] of this book we can know that: Christian initiation sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—form the foundation of the Christian life. Participation in the divine nature, granted to humanity as a gift through Christ's grace, is analogous to the origin, development, and growth of natural life. The faithful, reborn through Baptism, are strengthened by Confirmation, and in the Eucharist, they receive the nourishment of eternal life. Thus, through the sacraments of Christian initiation, they progressively attain the riches of divine life and advance in perfect love[17].

Let us now analyse each word. Morphological analysis: *ang* (*the*)[18], *mga* (*grammatical marker used to make something plural, with no direct English translation; about; approximately*)[19], *sakramento* (*sacrament*)[20] – noun, Span-

[14] *Katesismo ng Iglesia Katolika*, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila, 1996.

[15] C.C. Obiorah, *Sacraments of Christian Initiation*, Manila 2021.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Cf. Sa pamamagitan ng mga sakramento ng panimulang pagpasok ng cristiano, ang Binyag, Kumpil at Eukaristia ay inilalagay na pinakabatayan ng buong buhay cristiano. *Ang pakikibahagi sa kalikasan ng Dios, na tinatanggap ng mga tao bilang kaloob sa pamamagitan ng grasia ni Cristo ay kahawig ng simula, pag-unlad at pag-alaga ng buhay na natural. Sa katunayan, ang mga binyagang muling sumilang sa Binyag ay lumalakas sa sakramento ng Kumpil at sa wakas, ay pinakakain sa Eukaristia sa pagkain ng buhay na walang hanggan, at sa gayon, sa pamamagitan ng mga sakramento ng panimulang pagpasok, ang cristiano ay tumatanggap sa tuwina nang masaganang kayamanan ng buhay ng Dios at sumusulong sa ganap na pag-ibig.*

[18] https://www.tagalog-dictionary.com/search?word=ang (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

[19] https://www.tagalog-dictionary.com/search?word=mga%5C (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

[20] https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/sakramento (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

ish, Latin root *sacramento*[21], *sacramentum*[22] (*sacrament*), *ng* (*genitive marker indicating possession*)[23], *panimulang* (*beginning, inauguration*) – adjective from *panimula*[24] with the *pang-* affix, *pagpasok*[25] – deverbal noun meaning *entry* (from *pasok*[26] – to enter), *ng* – another genitive marker, *Cristiano*[27] – noun meaning *Christian* borrowed from Spanish The structure of the phrase is typical for Filipino: article + plural marker + noun + genitive + noun indicating action or state.

The term *panimula* occurs in various linguistic contexts: temporal (*first*, *preliminary*) e.g. *panimulang yugto*[28] – initial phase, starting stage or *panimulang bahagi*[29] – introductory part, beginning; educational (*introductory*, *elementary*) e.g. *panimulang aralin*[30] – introductory lesson or *panimulang edukasyon*[31] – early education (preschool, early school years); *formal / procedural* (*initial*, *trial*) *e.g. panimulang pagsubok*[32] – trial test or *panimulang pananaliksik*[33] – preliminary research; technical / practical (*starting*, *basic*) e.g. *panimulang kapital*[34] – initial capital or *panimulang proyekto*[35] – initial project; religious / symbolic (*initiatory*) e.g. *panimulang ritwal*[36] – introductory ritual or *panimulang panata*[37] – initial vow.

21 https://www.spanishdict.com/translate/sacramento (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

22 https://www.online-latin-dictionary.com/latin-english-dictionary.php?lemma=SACRAMENTUM100 (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

23 Cf. M. Casimiro, L. Mocasero, *What particle ng really is: The unified analysis of Tagalog ng and its functions*, https://www.academia.edu/35663391 (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

24 https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/panimula (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

25 https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/pagpasok (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

26 https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/pasok (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

27 In dictionaries, we see the word *Krystiyano*, while in the Catechism, we find *Cristiano*. This difference arises from the following reasons. The forms differ in origin and adaptation within the Filipino language. *Krystiyano* – This version is more adapted to the phonetics of Tagalog, where the letter *K* is more commonly used instead of *C*, and *Y* reflects the local pronunciation. It is the more commonly used form in everyday speech. *Cristiano* – This version comes directly from Spanish, which had a significant influence on the Tagalog language. It is a more formal and traditional form, which is why it appears in official documents such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which often uses classical language and loanwords. Similar differences exist in many Spanish loanwords in Tagalog, such as: eskwela (school) vs. escuela or relihiyon (religion) vs. religión.

28 https://www.easynepalityping.com/tagalog-to-english-translation-google (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

29 Ibidem.

30 Ibidem.

31 Ibidem.

32 Ibidem.

33 Ibidem.

34 Ibidem.

35 Ibidem.

36 Ibidem.

37 Ibidem.

The word *pagpasok* occurs in various linguistic contexts too: physical entry (*entering*, *entry*) e.g. *pagpasok sa bahay*[38] – entry into the house or *pagpasok sa opisina*[39] – entry into the office; educational / professional (*beginning*, *attendance*) e.g. *pagpasok sa klase*[40] – attending class or *pagpasok sa trabaho*[41] – going to work; process of acceptance / inclusion (*joining*, *initiation*) e.g. *pagpasok sa relihiyon*[42] – entering into religion or *pagpasok sa samahan*[43] – joining an organization; commercial /economic (*import*, *revenue*) e.g. *pagpasok ng produkto sa merkado*[44] – introduction of a product to the market or *pagpasok ng kita*[45] – financial income.

In summary the word *panimulang* (initial, introductory) is essential in understanding the sacraments of Christian initiation. Baptism is the *panimulang* sacrament, marking the beginning of one's life in the Church. Confirmation serves as a *panimulang* strengthening of faith, deepening the believer's commitment. The Eucharist provides *panimulang* spiritual nourishment, sustaining and enriching the Christian journey. Together, these sacraments form the *panimulang* foundation of a lifelong relationship with God. The concept of *pagpasok* (entry) is significant in the context of Christian initiation sacraments. Baptism marks the entry into the Christian faith, symbolizing spiritual rebirth. Confirmation strengthens this commitment, deepening one's connection to the Church. The Eucharist sustains this new life, providing spiritual nourishment. Together, these sacraments represent a progressive entry into the fullness of Christian life and divine grace.

ang Bautismo/ang binyag (Baptism)

In the Tagalog language, there are several words referring to baptism, depending on the context and historical influences: *Binyag* – the most common word for *baptism* used in both religious and general contexts (e.g., baptism ceremony). Example: *Ang binyag ay unang sakramento ng Kristiyanismo* (Baptism is the first sacrament of Christianity)[46] and *bautismo* – A loanword from Spanish *bautismo*, also meaning baptism, mainly used in the Catholic context. Example: *Natanggap natin ang sakramento ng bautismo noong tayo ay mga bata pa*[47]. (We received the sacrament of baptism when we were still children).

38 Ibidem.
39 Ibidem.
40 Ibidem.
41 Ibidem.
42 Ibidem.
43 Ibidem.
44 Ibidem.
45 Ibidem.
46 https://www.easynepalityping.com/tagalog-to-english-translation-google#google_vignette (Accessed: January 6, 2025).
47 Ibidem.

Bautismo

The term appears in other things in the 1970 dictionary of Leo Jamsed[48]. The word *bautismo* comes directly from the Spanish language *bautismo*—baptism). It was adapted into Tagalog during the colonial period (1565-1898), when the Spanish introduced Christianity to the Philippines.

However, the origin of this word is much older. The word *Bautismo* comes from the Greek[49] word *baptisma* (*βάπτισμα*[50]), which means *a dipping*, *a washing* or *a baptism*. The root of this word is *baptizein*[51] (*βαπτίζειν*), which means *to dip*, *to immerse* or *to wash*. The term was used in the context of ritual washing or cleansing, especially in religious ceremonies. The Greek term was adopted into Latin as *baptismus*[52], which then influenced various European languages, including Spanish.

Bautismo is a noun that retains its Spanish form in the Tagalog language and refers to the sacrament of baptism, just like *binyag*. *Bautismo* is a more formal, historical and religious term and is more commonly found in Bible[53]. By comparing Bible verses (Mat 3, 13-17) across six different Bible translations in the Tagalog language, we can find this form.

The word *bawtismo*[54] is a phonetic variation of the Spanish *bautismo* (baptism). It resulted from the Filipino adaptation of the Spanish pronunciation, where *au* transformed into *aw*—a common phenomenon in the phonology of Tagalog.

Bawtismo is a noun and, like *bautismo*, does not undergo affixation typical of native Tagalog vocabulary. This form of the term is a less formal variant of *bautismo* and is more commonly used in everyday speech or in dialects.

Ang binyag

According to the authors of the Tagalog dictionary from 1860[55], the word comes from the Malay language used in Brunei and means *to pour water from above*. An interesting fact is that this word was used in a purification ritual performed by an imam and was later applied to Catholicism.

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48 https://archive.org/details/tagalogenglishdi00leoj (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

49 R.A. Ward, *The Semantics of Sacramental Language*, Tyndale Bulletin 1966.

50 H.G. Liddell, *A Greek-English lexicon*, Oxford 1940.

51 Ibidem.

52 https://www.online-latin-dictionary.com/latin-english-dictionary.php?parola=baptismus (Accessed: January 7, 2025).

53 *Filipino Bible in Tagalog* (*Ang Biblia*), Philippine Bible Society, 1905; *Ang Magandang Balita Biblia*, Phlippine Bible Society, 1973; *Ang Biblia*, Philippine Bible Society, 1978; *Ang Biblia*, Philippine Bible Society, 2001; *Magandang Balita Biblia May Deuterocaninico*, Plilippine Bible Society, 2002; *Ang Bagong Tipan: Filipino Standard Version*, Plilippine Bible Society, 2009.

54 *Ang Salita ng Diyos* (cf. Lc 12, 50), Philippines Bible Society, 1998.

55 J.J. Noceda, P. Sanlucar, *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala, elaborado por varios religiosos eruditos y serios*, Manila 1860.

It is worth noting that Islam appeared in Brunei in the 14th century[56], specifically between 1363 and 1408, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah, who was the first Muslim ruler of Brunei. Islam was introduced to Brunei through trade and cultural contacts with neighbouring regions such as Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as by the influence of Arab and Indian merchants who arrived in the region.

Robert Blust and Steve Trussel, creators[57] of *The Austronesian Comparative Dictionary*, claim that the word comes from the Proto-Filipino language *buniag*. To support this claim, they refer to other Filipino languages (Ikoko: *buniag*, Pampango: *biniag*, Bikol: *bunyag*, Cebuano: *bunyag*, Hiligaynon: *bunyag*, and Maranao: *boniyag*).

In the Tagalog language, phonetic variability is a common phenomenon in which words with similar sounds may have alternative forms of spelling and pronunciation. This results from historical influences of other languages, especially Spanish, as well as the natural evolution of the language.

In the former Tagalog online dictionary[58], we find a definition very similar to baptism. It is *binyang*. This word means *vineyard* (cf. J 15, 1-11). This translation carries a deep symbolism of spiritual union with Christ in the sacrament of baptism. Baptism can be associated with this image because, through the sacrament of baptism, a person is incorporated into Christ, becoming one of the *branches* on his vine. This sacrament gives spiritual life, just as the branches draw life from the vine. Without remaining in Christ, a person cannot bear fruit; therefore, baptism is the beginning of Christian life, which grows through faith and the sacraments.

It is the same in Chinese. This language is of great significance for Tagalog, mainly due to the historical and cultural connections between China and the Philippines[59]. Many people of Chinese descent, especially from southern China, settled in the Philippines, particularly during the colonial period, and their influence on Philippine culture, trade, and language was significant. Therefore, it is worth mentioning this example.

Binyang (宾阳, Bīnyáng) most often refers to Binyang County (宾阳县, Bīnyáng Xiàn[60]) in the Guangxi Autonomous Region of southern China. According to the Chinese – English Dictionary[61] 宾 (bīn) – means *guest* or *visitor*

[56] M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300*, (3rd ed.), Stanford University Press 2013.

[57] R. Blust, R.S. Trussel, *The Austronesian Comparative Dictionary: A Work in Progress*, "Oceanic Linguistics" 52(2013), no. 2, p. 493-523.

[58] https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/index.php?embedded_search_keyword=binyang#binyang (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

[59] K. Wong, *Review of the book Tsinoy: The Story of the Chinese in Philippine Life*, "Journal of Chinese Overseas" 3(2007), p. 162-164.

[60] https://www.citypopulation.de/en/china/guangxi/admin/n%C3%A1nn%C3%ADng_sh%C3%AC/450126__b%C4%ABny%C3%A1ng/ (Accessed: January 7, 2025).

[61] H.A. Giles, *A Chinese-English dictionary*, Shanghai 1912.

阝日 (yáng) – means *sun* or *southern side* (often symbolizes something bright, positive).

These words also carry deep symbolism. In the Chinese context, the symbolism of a *guest* can refer to someone who enters a new environment, which can be compared to entering into spiritual life after baptism—a spiritual *arrival* to God and the Church. The sun, in Chinese symbolism, is often associated with life, light, and hope (日, *rì*). It symbolizes strength, warmth, and abundance. In the Christian context, the Sun can be related to Jesus Christ, who is the *Light of the World* (cf. J 8, 12). The baptism gives a person new life and hope, illuminating them with God's grace, just as the sun gives life to the Earth. After baptism, much like the sunrise, a person is gifted with new life and vision.

In summary, the word *binyag* has an incredibly rich etymological background, linking different cultures and religions.

When it comes to the morphological structure of the word *binyag*, it is identified as a noun that cannot be further segmented morphologically because it constitutes a complete lexical root. This also reflects its symbolism. However, it can be transformed by adding prefixes and affixes, such as *pagbibinyag*[62] (the baptism ceremony—a deverbal noun), *bininyagan*[63] (baptized—verb in the completed aspect), and *binibinyagan*[64] (is baptized—verb in the incomplete aspect).

The word *pagbibinyag* consists of several morphological elements that give it its specific meaning: *pag-* is a prefix indicating a process, action, or event; *bi-* is a reduplication of part of the root, indicating intensity or continuity of the action; *binyag* is the root meaning *baptism*.

Pagbibinyag refers to the act of baptism or the baptism ceremony, rather than just the concept of baptism as a sacrament. *Pagbibinyag* belongs to the category of deverbal nouns that describe and emphasize the action as a noun.

The evolution of terminology observed in Catholic catechetical documents is quite fascinating. In many older catechisms, both in the religious literature of the Philippines, the term *bautismo* was commonly used.

In the Philippines, where Catholic tradition holds a special place, the process of language inculturation led to *binyag* gradually replacing *bautismo* in local contexts, especially in catechetical textbooks[65]. This phenomenon is an

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62 https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/also_spelled.php?translation_entry_id=481&e=49d97e (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

63 Ibidem.

64 Ibidem.

65 Cf. bautismo: P. San Buena Ventura, *Vocabulario de lengua tagala: El romance castellano puesto primero*, La Noble Villa de Pila, 1613; L. Amezquita, *Catecismo na naglalaman ng mga pangunahing aral at maiikling kasaysayan na dapat pag-aralan ng bawat taong Kristiano*, Impr. de los Amigos del Pais, Manila 1878; M.D. De Castro, *Platicas doctrinales tomadas de varios libros predicables, vertidas en idioma Tagalo*, Manila 1920.
Binyang:
Katesismo ng Iglesia Katolika, Roman Catholic Archdiocese de Manila, 1996; Ch. de Guzman, *Hinimay na Pananampalataya*, Paulines Philippines; Philippine Conference of

example of the natural evolution of language, where foreign terms are adopted and adapted to the local specifics. *Binyag* has become more common because it is phonetically consistent with the phonology of the Tagalog language and more accessible for everyday use among Catholic Filipinos. Though less formal, this word retains the original theological meaning of the sacrament but carries a more localized character.

This change in terminology, while it may seem purely linguistic at first glance, carries broader theological and pastoral implications. *Binyag* in the Filipino context not only refers to the sacrament of baptism but, in some cases, may also carry additional connotations related to cultural and social rituals that extend beyond the strictly liturgical framework. For example, in rural communities, *binyag* may refer to local traditions connected to transitions to another stage in religious life, often accompanied by additional social rituals.

Filipino and Tagalog refer to different aspects of Philippine culture and language. Filipino is the official national language of the Philippines, based on Tagalog but expanded to include words from other languages to represent the entire nation. It is also used to refer to the people of the Philippines as a whole. Tagalog, on the other hand, is both a language spoken primarily in Luzon and an ethnic group native to that region. Understanding these differences helps clarify the relationship between the various languages and people of the Philippines and fosters a better appreciation of the country's cultural diversity.

On the other hand, the term *bautismo* in older catechisms had a more universal character and was closely associated with Catholic dogmatics, emphasizing the universality and uniformity of the sacrament. In this sense, the use of *bautismo* in older documents served to highlight the unity of the Church and the consistency of terminology across all Catholic countries.

From a pastoral perspective, this change may also help facilitate understanding and assimilation of the sacrament of baptism by younger generations of Filipinos, who may be more accustomed to *binyag* than to the formal *bautismo* or English form *Baptism*. This, in turn, could foster greater engagement in religious life, as the terminology becomes more relatable and accessible. It can be used metaphorically as *initiation* or *symbolic beginning*. In the Philippines, both *binyag*, *bautismo* and Baptism are used interchangeably, though *binyag* is more common in everyday speech.

Confirmacion/Kumpil

Paraphrasing point 1285 of the *Katesismo ng Iglesia Katolika*: The Sacrament of Confirmation, together with Baptism and the Eucharist, is part of the *sacraments of Christian initiation*, which must remain unified. It is important to help the faithful understand that receiving this sacrament is essential for

Catholic Bishops, *Katesismo para sa mga Katolikong Pilipino / Catechism para sa mga Pilipinong Katoliko*, Wikang Tagalog, ECCCE, 2016; https://cfamphil.org/our-materials-category/catechetical-fans (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

completing the grace given through Baptism. In fact, *through Confirmation, those already baptized become more deeply connected to the Church, receive a special empowerment from the Holy Spirit, and are thereby even more firmly committed, as authentic witnesses of Christ, to spreading the faith through both words and actions, as well as defending it*[66].

As in many countries with a Catholic tradition, in particular in the Philippines, Confirmation is an important sacrament of Christian initiation. However, in the past, before the word *Kumpil*[67] became widely used, Filipinos largely used the Spanish term *Confirmación*[68] to refer to this sacrament. This is indicated by catechisms[69] and Tagalog dictionaries[70]. Filipinos receiving the sacrament of Confirmation used the word *Confirmación* which comes from the Spanish verb *confirmar*[71] meaning *to confirm* or *to strengthen*, fulfilling the fundamental function of confirming and strengthening one's faith. The word *confirmación* derives from the Spanish verb *confirmar* (to confirm, to strengthen), with the addition of the suffix *-ción*, which is a characteristic element of Spanish word formation, used to create abstract nouns. In the Latin is *confirmare*[72]. Semantically, *confirmación* refers to the sacrament that confirms and strengthens the Christian faith, as well as full membership in the Church. It is an act that empowers the faithful with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to participate more fully in the sacramental life of the Church and engage in its evangelical mission. This term, as a religious term, holds a well-defined meaning within the Catholic context, referring to the process of spiritual strengthening, with the goal of affirming the faithful in their faith and responsibility toward the Church.

The term *kumpil* is a single-word noun. Its morphology indicates adaptation and transformation of the Spanish word *confirmación* which underwent phonetic simplification due to the influence of the Tagalog language. There is

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66 Cf. *Kasama ng Binyag at Eukaristia*, ang sakramento ng Kumpil ay ang kabuuan ng mga *sakramento ng panimulang hakbang ng cristiano*, na ang pagkakaisa ay dapat ingatan. Kailangan nga ipaliwanag sa mga binyagan na ang pagtanggap ng sakramentong ito ay kailangan sa ikagaganap ng grasia bautismal. Sa katunayan, sa mga bininyagan *sa sakramento ng Kumpil ay lalo silang nasasanib sa Iglesia at pinalalakas ng isang tanging kapangyarihan ng Espiritu Santo. Sa ganitong gawain nagkakaroon sila ng lalong tungkulin, bilang tunay na saksi ni Cristo na palaganapin at ipagsanggalang ang pananampalataya sa paraan ng mga salita at gawa*.

67 https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/index.php?embedded_search_keyword=kumpil#google_vignette (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

68 https://www.spanishdict.com/translate/confirmacion (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

69 *Catecismo de la Doctrina Cristiana de Padre Astete (Edición en Español)*, Secretariado Catequístico Nacional, 2022; L. Amezquita, *Catecismo na naglalaman ng mga pangunahing aral at maiikling kasaysayan na dapat pag-aralan ng bawat taong Kristiano*, Impr. de los Amigos del Pais, Manila 1878.

70 S.G. Calderon, *Diccionario Ingles – Español – Tagalog*, Primera Edición, Manila 1915; D. Santos, *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala: primera y segunda parte*, Manila 1794.

71 https://www.spanishdict.com/translate/confirmar (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

72 https://www.online-latin-dictionary.com/latin-english-dictionary.php?lemma=CONFIRMO100 (Accessed: January 9, 2025).

also a hypothesis that the word *kumpil* might have originated from the local verb *cumplir*[73] which means to fulfill obligations, particularly in a religious sense, where it signifies fulfilling the Christian duty of living according to the faith. Such morphological changes are typical in lexical adaptation, a process in which foreign words are altered to better fit the phonological and grammatical structures of the receiving language.

Over time, local vocabulary began to evolve. While the Spanish influence remained present, Filipinos started adapting the words to their needs, giving them a more local sound. *Confirmación* gradually transformed into *Kumpil* in Tagalog, simplifying the original Spanish term. Thus, *Kumpil* became a popular[74] term for the sacrament of Confirmation in the Philippines. There are traditions that suggest it is a shortened form of *Confirmación* but another explanation says that it comes from the word *cumplir* meaning to fulfill one's duties. As a sacrament of Christian maturity, the faithful are obliged to bear witness to their faith through their lives.

This change was a natural linguistic process, related to adapting foreign vocabulary to the phonetics and structure of the Tagalog language. Filipinos, attached to their identity, introduced a term that fit more easily into their everyday usage while preserving the original meaning. Although *Kumpil* remains the official and widely used term in the Philippines, o, there has been an increasing influence of the English language over time.

The English term *Confirmation* is widely used, especially in church, educational, and media contexts. This phenomenon is part of a broader globalization process, where the English language, being the administrative and academic language in the Philippines, is gaining greater significance[75].

Moreover, younger generations, who are more accustomed to using English in daily life, are increasingly using the word *Confirmation* instead of *Kumpil* particularly in cities and among educated individuals. In this context, *Kumpil* is still present in traditional, but the English version of the term is appearing more frequently in official documents and media[76].

Although the use of the English word *Confirmation* is a natural element of contemporary Filipino reality, it is important to remember the strength and significance of local terms like *Kumpil*. This word not only ties to historical traditions but also reminds us of the spiritual identity of the Philippines as a Catholic nation. Using *Kumpil* helps preserve a unique aspect of Filipino linguistic and cultural heritage, which has deep roots in the country's religious history.

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73 https://www.spanishdict.com/translate/cumplir (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

74 P.O. Pirlo, *Ang Sakramento ng Kumpil*, Sons of the Holy Mary Immaculate – Quality Catholic Publications, Parañaque City, Philippines 2016.

75 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNva8Jn5FCE (Accessed: January 10, 2025).

76 https://store.paulines.ph/?_gl=1%2Aol5ebo%2A_ga%2AMTU1NTI3NDQ3Ni4xNzM4Mjg0Mjkw%2A_ga_7KB0WR5G44%2AMTczODI4NDI4OS4xLjAuMTczODI4NDI4OS42MC4wLjA (Accessed: January 12, 2025). In most cases, theological literature is in English.

The word *Kumpil* is an example of how language evolves and adapts to changing circumstances. Originally derived from the Spanish *Confirmación* it has gradually become an integral part of Filipino ecclesiastical terminology. Although contemporary English influences make *Confirmation* increasingly common, the term *Kumpil* remains a living part of Filipino tradition, linking modern generations to their religious heritage.

Eukarystia

Paraphrasing point 1322 of the *Katesismo ng Iglesia Katolika*: The Most Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who, through baptism, have been elevated to the dignity of royal priesthood, and who, through confirmation, have been more deeply conformed to Christ, partake in the Lord's sacrifice through the Eucharist, joining the entire community in this sacred offering. *Our Savior, during the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood to preserve the Sacrifice of the Cross for all ages, until His return. He entrusted to His beloved Bride, the Church, the memorial of His Passion and Resurrection: a sacrament of mercy, a sign of unity, a bond of love, and a Paschal feast, in which we consume Christ, filling our souls with grace and receiving the pledge of future glory*[77].

In Tagalog, there are several terms used to refer to the Eucharist. Here are some of them: *Banal na Komunyon*[78] – the most commonly used term for the Eucharist, which literally means *Holy Communion* referring to the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. *Eukaristiya*[79] – directly borrowed from the Greek term *Eucharistia,* used in formal and liturgical contexts. *Pagdiriwang ng Eukaristiya*[80] – means *celebration of the Eucharist* referring to the ritual or Mass during which the sacrament of the Eucharist is administered. *Hapunan ng Panginoon* (cf. Lc 22, 14-23, 56)[81] – means *The Lord's Supper* referring to the event of the Last Supper when Jesus instituted the Eucharist. *Banal na Hapun-*

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77 Ang Banal na Eukaristia ay rurok ng panimulang hakbang ng cristiano. Ang mga itinampok sa karangalan ng pagkaparing-hari dahil sa Binyag at natulad nang lubusan kay Cristo sa paraan ng Kumpil, ay lumalahok sa sakripisio ng Panginoon sa pamamagitan ng Eukaristia kasama ng buong pamayanan. *Ang ating Panginoon, sa huling Hapunan, nang gabing ipagkanulo siya, ay nagtatag ng sakripisio eukaristiko ng kanyang katawan at dugo upang ipagpatuloy magpakailan man, hanggang sa kanyang pagbabalik, ang sakripisio ng krus at ipagkatiwala sa kanyang mahal na Esposa, ang Iglesia, ang alaala ng kanyang kamatayan at muling pagkabuhay, ang sakramento ng kabanalan, tanda ng pagkakaisa, buklod ng pag-ibig, piging ng paskuwa na dito ibinibigay si Cristo at napupuno ang kaluluwa ng grasia at ipinagkakaloob sa atilang isang tanda ng darating na kaluwalhatian.*

78 https://ptrjess.blogspot.com/2015/05/banal-na-komunyon.html (Accessed: January 10, 2025).

79 F.A. del Castillo, *Ang banal na misa sa mata ng kulturang Filipino: Isang relihiyosong eksplorasyon*, Manila 2012.

80 https://www.cbcplaiko.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Pagdiriwang-ng-Banal-na-EukaristiyaOkt.-6-1.pdf (Accessed: January 6, 2025).

81 Cf. *Ang Bagong Tipan: Filipino Standard Version*, 2009.

an (cf. 1 Cor 11, 23-25)[82] – literally *Holy Supper* also referring to the Eucharist, particularly in the context of the Mass. These terms may vary in use depending on the region, context, and tradition, but all refer to the same sacrament within the Catholic Church.

The word *Banal* derived from the Malay word *benar* which comes from the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian term *bənər* meaning *true, righteous, honest*. This is similar to the words in Bikol Central *banal*, Kapampangan *banal*, Masbatenyo *banal*, and Tausug *bunnal*. *Banal* retains its meaning of being sacred or consecrated, specifically in religious contexts[83].

The term *Komunyon*[84] is a direct borrowing from the Spanish word *Comunión*, which means *communion*. It refers to the act of sharing or partaking, particularly in the context of the Eucharist, where believers partake in the Body and Blood of Christ. This term derives from the Latin word *communio* meaning *sharing* or *fellowship* emphasizing the unity of believers with Christ and each other through the sacrament.

Banal na Komunyon holds profound cultural and religious significance in the Philippines, a country with a predominantly Catholic population. The sacrament of the Eucharist is considered a vital part of Christian initiation. In Filipino culture, the act of receiving communion is not just an individual act but it is deeply rooted in communal and familial ties.

In Filipino society, receiving *Banal na Komunyon* is a rite of passage in the life of a Catholic. It is often associated with First Holy Communion (or *Unang Komunyon*[85]), a key milestone in a child's religious education. This event is celebrated with great reverence by families and communities, further emphasizing the sacrament's importance in Filipino culture. The act of sharing *Banal na Komunyon* also reinforces social and religious solidarity. It serves as a moment of unity not only between the individual and Christ but also between the individual and the larger Catholic community.

Eukaristiya is a direct borrowing from the Greek word *Eucharistia* (*Εὐχαριστία*), which means *thanksgiving* or *gratitude*. The term is derived from the Greek verb *eucharistein* (*εὐχαριστεῖν*[86]), meaning *to give thanks*. This Greek term is used in Christian liturgy to refer to the sacrament of the Eucharist, which commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with His disciples. In Tagalog, the word *Eukaristiya* is a transliteration of the Greek *Eucharistia* and has been adopted in the Filipino language primarily to refer to the sacrament of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. The word is used in both formal and liturgical contexts, highlighting the sacred nature of the sacrament. *Eukaristiya*

82 Cf. Magandang Balita Biblia, Philippine Bible Society 2012.
83 Cf. https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/banal (Accessed: January 10, 2025).
84 https://www.tagalog.com/monolingual-dictionary/komunyon#google_vignette (Accessed: January 8, 2025).
85 Unang in tagalog means first.
86 https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/eucharisteo (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

refers to the Eucharist, a central sacrament in Catholicism, in which the faithful partake of the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ.

Filipino families and communities gather for the celebration of the Eucharist during important Catholic feasts, Sunday Masses, and significant life events such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. The act of receiving Communion is seen as a way to strengthen relationships not only with God but also with the family and community.

The act of thanksgiving in the Eucharist aligns with Filipino values of gratitude and thankfulness (often expressed in Filipino as *pasasalamat*[87]). In Filipino culture, gratitude is a key virtue, and it is ingrained in both personal and communal life. The Eucharist, as an act of thanksgiving, resonates deeply with these cultural values, emphasizing the importance of recognizing God's grace and offering thanks for His blessings.

The communal aspect of the Eucharist fosters a sense of unity, solidarity, and belonging among Filipino Catholics. During special events like First Holy Communion (*Unang Komunyon*), the term *Eukaristiya* is often associated with rites of passage for young children in the Philippines. This event is widely celebrated with family and friends, highlighting the cultural importance of Eucharistic rituals as milestones in the life of Filipino Catholics.

The word *Pagdiriwang*[88] comes from the root word *diriwang*, which means *celebration* or *festivity*. The prefix *pag-* turns the verb into a noun, indicating the act or process of celebrating. The word can be used in various contexts, referring to a formal celebration or observance of any kind, especially religious, festive, or significant events.

This idea of collective participation reflects the Filipino value of *bayanihan*[89] (community solidarity) and communal faith. The act of celebrating the Eucharist is culturally significant for Filipinos, where religion plays a central role in daily life. The Philippines, being a predominantly Catholic nation, often expresses its deep religious commitment through collective observances, family gatherings, and social rituals centred around the Mass.

Religious celebrations like *Pagdiriwang ng Eukaristiya* are also linked to major cultural festivals in the Philippines. For example, the celebration of the Eucharist is a central part of the Simbang Gabi (Literally Night Mass but really Dawn Mass)[90] (a series of early morning Masses leading up to Christmas), Easter Masses, and other annual feasts like *the Feast of the Black Nazarene*[91]. These events bring together local communities and are often accompanied by

87 https://www.tagalog.com/dictionary/index.php?embedded_search_keyword=pasasalamat# pasasalamat (Accessed: January 8, 2025).

88 Ibidem.

89 Y. Ealdama, *BAYANIHAN: the indigenous Filipino strengths perspective*, Kathmandu 2012.

90 M.F. Marchan, *Ma Luoy Man Me: Reproductive health and family planning in Siquijor*, Siquijor 2016.

91 I.T. Marinay, *Black Nazarene Procession*, Manila 2016.

local traditions, music, food, and family gatherings. Filipino Catholics are encouraged to participate in the Eucharistic celebration as an act of devotion and gratitude. The Eucharist becomes a way of renewing one's faith, acknowledging God's blessings, and drawing closer to the community of believers.

The word *Hapunan* in Tagalog means *dinner* or *supper* and is derived from the root word *hapo* which refers to the evening or night. The suffix *-nan* denotes the object or place where the activity takes place, in this case, the meal or supper.

In the Filipino Catholic tradition, *Hapunan ng Panginoon* (*Last Supper*) is closely associated with the celebration of the Eucharist. The term is often used in reference to Holy Thursday (*Maundy Thursday*) during Holy Week, when Catholics observe the commemoration of the Last Supper of Jesus with His apostles. On this day, the Church celebrates the institution of the Eucharist, recalling the moment when Jesus instituted the sacrament by sharing bread and wine with His disciples and commanding them to *do this in memory of Me* (cf. Lc 22, 19).

Many Filipino families also observe the Visita Iglesia (visiting multiple churches) during Holy Week, reinforcing the importance of religious observance and communal participation in these sacred events. The social aspect of *Hapunan ng Panginoon* also carries cultural significance in how it strengthens family ties and communal worship. During this time, extended families often gather to participate in the liturgies and rituals together, emphasizing the importance of the family unit in Filipino Catholic practice.

Conclusion

The linguistic and cultural analysis presented the idea that the translation and adaptation of sacramental terminology in Tagalog is a complex and dynamic process. The influence of Spanish colonialism is indeed central to understanding the evolution of religious terminology in the Philippines. Terms like *bautismo* transforming into *binyag* exemplify how the Filipino language integrates foreign elements while maintaining its own unique cultural identity. This linguistic adaptation is not merely a superficial translation, but a deeper process of inculturation, where theological concepts are made more relevant and meaningful to the local population.

Furthermore, as Filipino Catholicism continues to evolve, it is clear from the analysis that the sacramental vocabulary also adapts. This aligns with the observation that language, faith, and culture have a fluid and interconnected relationship in shaping religious identity. In the Philippines, where Catholicism plays such a central role in the lives of the people, the sacramental terminology cannot be seen as static but rather as an evolving reflection of the cultural and social changes occurring in the country.

The use of both traditional Tagalog terms like *Kumpil*, *Binyag*, and *Eukaristiya* alongside their English equivalents (*Confirmation*, *Baptism*, and *Eucharist*) demonstrates this evolving linguistic reality. This shift towards the incorporation of English does not necessarily signify the replacement of native

terms, as highlighted in the article. Instead, it reflects the increasing influence of globalization and the changing linguistic landscape in the Philippines, where English is becoming more dominant in formal and media contexts.

In relation to the Bible, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) has indeed been involved in translating and adapting the Bible into a more accessible language for the younger generation in the Philippines. They recognize the need to communicate the message of the Bible in a way that resonates with the modern Filipino youth, many of whom are more comfortable with the use of *code switching* between Filipino and English. By adopting this approach, they hope to make religious texts more relatable and understandable for young people, bridging the gap between traditional faith and contemporary culture.

In terms of methodology, the linguistic and comparative analyses are essential for further exploring the structure of Tagalog language, particularly its sacramental vocabulary. Comparing Tagalog sacramental terms with those in other Catholic cultures will provide deeper insights into the universal and localized aspects of religious language. Additionally, the cultural analysis is crucial, as it will enable a deeper understanding of how sacraments are not just theological concepts but also reflections of Filipino values, such as community and family. This aligns which emphasize that Filipino sacramental language is deeply rooted in cultural and familial values.

The methodologies outlined in article provide a solid framework for the linguistic and cultural study of sacramental terms in Tagalog. The findings underscore the significance of preserving native sacramental terminology, as these terms are not only linguistic markers but also vital expressions of the Filipino religious and cultural identity.

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