

# Antipo Ritual

**TAGALOG, MARINDUQUE ISLAND PROVINCE, CENTRAL PHILIPPINES.**

*The Lenten season in the island attracts tourists and visitors because of the many rituals and religious practices observed by the locals. The antipo is one of those tolerated but not sanctioned by the Catholic Church which draws numerous participants and hordes of onlookers.*



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Flagellants end their ordeal, washing the blood from their injuries in the sea, in the fulfillment of their vows, their identities now revealed.



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(from left) Children watch the bare-backed, head covered flagellants on their knees. Bloodied bamboo sticks of a penitent. Traditionally, the number of sticks corresponds to the number of years the penitent intends to do the ritual.

ANOTHER RITUAL in Marinduque during the Holy Week is the *antipo* or self-flagellation done by male penitents of Marinduque. The word *antipo*, according to Monsignor Rolly Nuñez Oliverio, parish priest of St. Isidore the Farmer in Mogpog, came from the Latin word *antifona*, which literally means, "Let's begin."

Marinduque's *antipo*, like other rites during Holy Week, is done in atonement for sins or as a sacrifice. A description of the *antipo* in the 1970s describes a penitent as,

*"... wearing nothing but only leaves that cover the forbidden parts of their bodies. On their heads, they wear thorny branches with leaves... They are barefooted and they did not take or drink anything before the sacrificial work. They are only provided with a small piece of rope or string. Five pieces of bamboo spools the size of the middle of the finger are tied together to form a cluster. It is five in order to represent the five mortal wounds Jesus received while nailed on the Cross."*

Back then, the participants performed the ritual in the cemetery in the early morning of Good Friday. A cross is erected at the center of the cemetery. In front of this, the penitents prepare themselves spiritually. After making the sign of the Cross, they recite the Lord's Prayer, Apostle's Creed and the Act of Contrition.

After these prayers, the penitents form a single line going to the *magkakadlit* who makes the first incision on their back using a blade. After receiving the incision, the penitent starts self-flagellation until blood is drawn from his wound. The *magkakadlit* will then add incisions on the back of each penitent until three in the afternoon, the hour of death of Jesus Christ.

An *antipo* done in 2009 varied in rites compared with the earlier *antipos*. For one, there was no cross in the cemetery where the penitents still do the ritual. The penitents were grouped together in different corners of the cemetery. Second, the penitents no longer covered their faces during the ritual, specifically when the *magkakadlit* performed the incisions. Third, the much younger penitents were not particular about the number of bamboo sticks they use. Fourth, some of the penitents drank local wine as the *magkakadlit* did the incisions. The wine helped numb their body from the pain caused by the wounds and the flagellation.

Not many participants of the *antipo* join the procession. Most of them, as was traditional, head out to sea by noon to wash off the wounds on their backs. This signals the end of their *antipo*.

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