

Cultural Heritage Recovery: The Historic and Contemporary Struggle To Maintain 350 Years of a Legacy

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Preface

In this my first paper, quite aptly the opening salvo, so to speak, I would like to retrace the beginnings and development of this symposium. This symposium contributes in no small way to an understanding of the vast tapestry of heritage recovery enterprise in the Philippines. I would want to demonstrate the various paths we took and are taking, and the point at which we all did eventually converge. Then, I would show also that there are other institutional agencies and groups doing comparable notable and noble work of cultural heritage conservation and advocacy – efforts that illustrate a picture of the Filipino People as a worthy member-nation of the Hispanic world and in the international community of nations.

Finally, in this first paper, I would conclude with few words about what to do with the Filipinos' proclivity for forgetting and forgetfulness, so that with these, I can follow through with the second paper which also very aptly concludes, by tomorrow afternoon, the entire proceeding of this interdisciplinary symposium, with all the speakers having eloquently delivered their masterpieces.

The Historical Antecedents of the *Encuentro Filipino*

The singular and independent endeavors in music studies of and by Dr. William Summers, Prof. Maria Alexandra Chua, Dr. Elena Mirano, Prof. Ma. Patricia Silvestre, and Prof. Regalado Jose, converged or coalesced in what was dubbed the First Conference-Workshop on Heritage Musicology and Music Paleography, held in a quaint place known as Tagbilaran City, in the island-province of Bohol, December 9-10, 1998, almost a decade ago.

Of all places, why there and not here? Where is this place? Since this *Encuentro Filipino* has been organized on the heels of the 110th anniversary of the American Invasion of the Philippine Islands, it would perhaps arouse our curiosity to know how an American signal officer by the name of George Percival Scriven (1854-1940), in his diary, described this one particular island called Bohol, which had 250,000 inhabitants when he visited and lived there the first time with the 44th U.S. Volunteers, in 1900. In that diary, he portrayed the island of Bohol as “this odd corner of a little unknown island in the hardly known Visayas of the little known Philippines.”¹ Scriven's visit to Bohol, I think, would be his own first “Encuentro Filipino.” Certainly, his first *Encuentro Boholano*.

Just exactly three centuries before Scriven's arrival on the island, and in a more relevant setting, we take note of what one Spanish Jesuit missionary, by the name of

Valerio de Ledesma, wrote in 1600 about his encounter with the newly baptized Boholanos. He said, “There was so great a hunger to hear the things of God and to learn the doctrine that all night long, they never ceased, now one group and now another, to sing and pay homage to God in their own homes. Morning and evening, in the fields and in church, nothing was to be heard save praises to the Lord.”^{1,2}

The Spanish Jesuit’s 1600 report and the American invader’s 1900 diary give us important insights into the relevance of retracing the historical underpinnings of this *Encuentro Filipino* by grounding us in place and time, which are two basic but important factors when we study culture.

Arguments advancing Bohol’s trailblazing as the main precursor to this *Encuentro*

I would now cite quickly some reasons why our *Encuentro Filipino* conference actually started in Bohol. The first reason relates to the preparations for the Philippine Independence celebration. Heritage awareness that began in Bohol in 1993 somehow accelerated during the Philippine Independence centennial celebrations in 1998. Remembering one hundred years through an entire year of different activities highlighted the growing trend among Filipinos to appreciate deeply what Philippine identity looked like and so to maintain it for the next generations of Filipinos. It was in this atmosphere of nationalist introspection that historical research on Philippine history and culture flourished. The Provincial Government of Bohol, the Diocese of Tagbilaran, and the business sector had the idea to organize a conference-workshop highlighting current studies of Philippine music, while focusing on Bohol, in view of its music-making tradition. That was how the First Conference-Workshop on Heritage Musicology and Music Paleography was conceived and came about.

However, the first heritage musicology conference-workshop would not have happened were it not for the confluence of fortunate events. One particular occasion stands out. On the eve of the centennial of the declaration of Philippine Independence, Dr. Summers, in December 1997, in the company of Prof. Trato Jose, set foot on “this odd corner of a little unknown island in the hardly known Visayas of the little known Philippines.” As a matter of course, no one had any notion at the time that this would be the venue for the succeeding 1998 and 2000 Heritage Musicology and Music Paleography Conference-Workshops.

On December 10, 1997, Dr. Summers presented his first impressions of the twelve or so Bohol pipe organs installed in Bohol churches during the Spanish colonial period, and on a large number of *cantorales* found in the parishes of Baclayon and Loay, during a half-day lecture-forum held at the Meridian Hotel before the mesmerized music community of Tagbilaran City. This event was *the* precursor of the 1998 and 2000 conference-workshops on heritage musicology. This was the fount for what the present *Encuentro Filipino* continues, what Dr. Summers, Dr. Mirano, Profs. Jose, Chua, Silvestre, and myself had been doing in our respective areas of competence.

Now, the results of Dr. Summers's initial *Encuentro Boholano* on that December afternoon engendered so much interest among those who attended his lecture-forum that it was agreed among ourselves to hold a province-wide Conference-Workshop on Heritage Musicology and Music Paleography the following year, 1998, so that we in the Boholano community would be able to take stock of what heritage music we had lost and what we could still recover, in the process uncovering or discovering the forgotten legacy of our rich past.

Since then, Dr. Summers has been returning to Bohol every year he is in the Philippines to pursue and continue his research on the turn-of-the-twentieth-century music manuscripts of the Nuestra Señora del Villar Parish, in Corella, Bohol. It is to his particular credit that these manuscripts were saved from becoming fuel for the flames. He has documented them all, conserved their contents in CD format, and offered interpretations of them in the light of his expertise. Now, he plans to have them all digitally scanned to preserve the manuscripts' priceless contents.

The second reason why I think the *Encuentro Filipino* began in Bohol has got to do with the impulse—and this one is also credited to Dr. Summers—at internationalizing what would otherwise be local music. Music transcends national boundaries in such a way that processes of replication, adaptation, and implantation can become the subject for in-depth study. In the context of the Hispanic world, this impulse lends evidence to the Philippines' special affinity for making music. In other words, music in the Hispanic Philippines is not only indigenous but it is also international and cosmopolitan.

The third reason I would like to propose as having substantial bearing on the beginnings of the *Encuentro Filipino* localized in Bohol has to do with historical events. We know that American colonial forces invaded and occupied this peaceful island in the middle of March 1900 for the purpose of pacifying an already peaceful people, and protecting them perhaps from themselves. In his diary, Scriven noted that the inhabitants of this "unknown" island – one of the last Philippine islands to be invaded and occupied – at the singular moment of contact with the Americans, led a contented, peaceful, community life with its culture intact, its churches intact, its civil life, its government, and its artistic and cultural expressions all intact. Dr. Summers's lecture-forum of December 10, 1997, in Tagbilaran was a sincere endeavor to recall that high degree of intactness or integrity in the area of music, just before, and on the eve of, the arrival of the Americans on Philippine soil. His subsequent papers in the 1998 musicology conference-workshop that he titled "Searching the Past to Explain the Future: Some Thoughts on Church Music in the Historic Recollect Churches of Bohol," and his 2000 paper on "Bohol's Role in an International Filipino Musical Culture," clearly demonstrate this increasing momentum to recover and rediscover a vibrant and culturally prosperous musical heritage inherently embedded in our history.

The fourth and final reason was quite obvious to me when we organized the 1998 and 2000 Heritage Musicology Conference-Workshops, because we had wanted to show, beyond nationalistic fervor, the supranationality of the kind of music that prevailed in Bohol and other islands of the Philippine archipelago. This supranationality is one that

the Church in the Philippines engendered not only for the community that sings in the churches but also for the community that makes music outside these churches. The lecture-forum and the conference-workshops, then, showed that Philippine music was Hispanic as it was international and, beyond all that, transcendent, a musical foretaste of a world yet to come.

Having pinpointed the precise instance when and where the *Encuentro Filipino* finds its fount and the reasons behind the argument favoring Bohol's trailblazing work, I would like us to be familiar with the role actively played out by our other renowned colleagues.

The Major Precursors

Professor Ma. Alexandra Iñigo-Chua, for her part, was first introduced, in September 1997, to Bohol music-making of the Spanish colonial era when she embarked on a study of an 1826 music manuscript called the *Baclayon kyrial*, specifically the *Misa Baclayana* mass setting, for her master's degree in musicology from the University of the Philippines. Since the music was in the *canto figurado* style, she transposed it into modern music notation, and the first performance—after approximately a century—was heard on December 8, 1998, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, in the Immaculate Conception Parish Church, in Baclayon, Bohol, in the very liturgical environment (space and event) where the *Misa Baclayana* ought to be sung. Part of the large choir that sang at the premiere of the *Misa Baclayana* right in its own home is with us today, namely, the Loboc Children's Choir, which is ably managed by music impresario and award-winning director Gardy Labad, along with their directress Mrs. Alma Taldo, and pianist, Mrs. Lina Jala, and their collaborators.

Prof. Chua focused her research on the *Kirial de esta Yglesia de Baclayon, año 1826*. She also studied the music tradition of another Bohol town, Loboc, and capped it with an exhibit on the life and times of the Loboc music maestros and maestras, an exhibit that she helped curate, at the newly opened section of the Museo de Loboc, in January 2004. This followed the inauguration of the restored 1830 pipe organ of the St. Peter the Apostle Parish Church, in Loboc, Bohol. With these many activities in the heritage-musicology scene, Prof. Chua, together with Prof. Jose Buenconsejo, formed the Philippine Musicological Society in December 2002, an offshoot of her dedication to the musicological heritage of the Philippines.

Among all the heritage practitioners and workers in the Philippines, we all agree that none is as indefatigable and consummate as Prof. Regalado Trota Jose. Prof. Jose is devoted to researching the cultural heritage of the Church, and the numerous books and articles he has authored and the awards he has received are evidence of his expertise. Spanning three decades of documentation and interpretation of the country's ecclesiastical patrimony, he is—and I'm sure his peers will agree with this assertion—the *Magisterium* on the cultural heritage of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

Like Dr. Summers and Prof. Chua, Prof. Jose labored on the ecclesiastical-cultural heritage of the Church in Bohol. He was very instrumental in organizing the National Historic Patrimony Seminar held for the Bohol parish priests and select lay leaders on June 27-29, 1995. This activity resulted to the creation of the Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, of the Diocese of Tagbilaran, on July 17, 1995. That was when I became acquainted with his work. Knowing his proficiency in the language of church bells, I asked him to write about the bells of the St. Joseph Cathedral, in Tagbilaran. The resulting article that came out in the May 1, 1996, issue of *Lántawan*, the parish weekly news bulletin, was his first on church bells. When the first musicology conference-workshop was held, Ricky shared his notes about “Music-Making in Old Bohol: Notes from Three Bohol Parish Archives.” He followed this up in the 2000 conference-workshop with a paper on “An Introduction to the Study of the Bohol *Lingganay*.”

His other “firsts” with Bohol include his twice-successful retrieval of a late-eighteenth-century wooden image of San Blas stolen from the Immaculate Conception Parish, in Baclayon, Bohol. The image was first carted away in 1987 and retrieved in 1989, only to be stolen again in 1997 and returned in 1999. Another first with Bohol is his comprehensive but very reader-friendly guidebook on the Bohol churches, aptly titled “Visita Iglesia Bohol” and published by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in 2001.

When it was decided to hold the first Heritage Musicology Conference in Tagbilaran in 1998, the organizers at that time decided to incorporate an introductory topic about musicology in general, and Philippine musicological studies in particular. So, we engaged the services of Prof. Ma. Patricia Brillantes-Silvestre, who delivered her paper “Retrieving the Past: Translation in Musicology,” based on her master’s thesis examining the translation from Spanish into English and critical analysis of selected documents in Spanish on music in the Philippines. Her study underscores the value of these primary sources in Spanish in recreating the distant past, and it was very well received because of its novelty. She followed this up with her paper “Studies in Heritage Musicology,” delivered in the 2000 Musicology Conference-Workshop at the MetroCentre Hotel. The topic presented an introduction to the field of musicology, its history, branches, methodologies, and applications in the Philippine setting, with a focus on the tradition of music making in Bohol.

Dr. Flora Elena Rivera-Mirano, for her part, demonstrated in her paper that the domain of heritage musicology is not only liturgical but also popular and devotional. Her 1998 conference-workshop paper “A Methodology for the Study of Music in the Oral Tradition” revealed, among many things, that the Subli of Batangas is a form of popular piety among Batangueños expressed as a prayer through dance invoking the protection of the Holy Cross. At the First Biennial National Convention of Church Cultural Heritage Workers held in the Diocese of Tagbilaran in February 1999, Dr. Rivera-Mirano shared her paradigmatic case study titled “On the Fragility of Memory: The Case of Marcelo Adonay, Musician,” a topic she reprises here. She also presented this research at the

Second Biennial National Convention conducted in September 2001, in the Diocese of Butuan, Agusan del Norte, on the island of Mindanao.

Movements Towards Maintaining a Filipino-Hispanic Legacy

Music, no matter the fact that it is the most fleeting of all the arts, is a persuasive expression of a community's heritage. In fact, all the art forms that encapsulate the finest and highest achievements of a given community, enduring from one generation to the next, constitute cultural heritage. These heritage typologies then become powerful tools for identifying, determining, and strengthening national collective identity. As we have seen in developed countries, heritage is deployed as an economic driver. This is not to say that heritage becomes an unwitting commodity of a market economy, but rather that heritage supplies the compelling ethic for an economy's genuine progress.

In the Philippines, where forgetfulness and forgiveness are seeming virtues, there are quite a number of groups, agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and people's organizations (POs) that toil to guarantee that every Filipino knows who he or she is, where the Filipino has come from, and what are the fundamental implements at his or her disposal in the journey towards a common future.

These groups and institutions are many and variegated at different community levels, and it will suffice here simply to identify them and give only a brief description of each.

National Government Cultural Agencies

First among the list at the level of the Philippine national government is the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the precursor of the Presidential Commission for Culture and the Arts (PCCA) created in 1987 by President Corazon C. Aquino by virtue of Executive Order No. 118. The PCCA became the NCCA in 1992 by an act of the Philippine Congress through Republic Act No. 7356. Tangential to our interest are two of its six mandates, namely: the development and promotion of Filipino national culture and arts, and the preservation of Filipino cultural heritage.

The National Historical Institute (NHI) is tasked to promote Philippine history and cultural heritage. It was created by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1, which President Ferdinand Marcos signed into law on September 24, 1972, two days after he declared Martial Law. It would interest us to know that the NHI's predecessor was the Philippine Historical Research and Marker Committee, created in 1933 through Executive Order No. 451, signed by the American Governor-General Frank Murphy.

The National Museum of the Philippines had an earlier beginning, in 1901, during the time when Howard Taft was America's first Civil-Governor of the Islands. It was initially instituted as an ethnography and natural-history museum. It is presently housed in a building constructed in 1918, designed by the American architect Daniel Burnham.

The other national cultural agencies worth mentioning here are the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the National Library, the National Archives, the Institute for the Filipino Language, to an extent the Department of Tourism, and certainly the Department of Education.

Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations

One must not lose sight of the sad fact that despite these national cultural agencies, cultural heritage recovery in the Philippines moves at a glacial pace. This is the reason why non-government organizations, people's organizations, and other civil-society groups have bonded together to assist in this vast effort. I would like to mention only a handful of them, starting with the Heritage Conservation Society that was organized in the early 1990s as a non-stock, non-profit organization advocating the protection and preservation of cultural and historical sites and settings. To date, they have sponsored projects involving the restoration of Philippine lighthouses and Philippine schoolhouses, called *gabaldon*, which were built during the American colonial period.

The Museum Volunteers of the Philippines was established in 1981, and its members focus on volunteer work in museums. The purpose of the group was to study the Philippines in its historical and Asian context, so as to promote friendship within the international community.

The Society of Ecclesiastical Archivists of the Philippines was launched in December 1999 as a free association of the Church's parish secretaries and archivists throughout the Philippines. It was registered with the Philippine SEC in 2003 and is now awaiting the recognition of the CBCP as a juridical person in Canon Law. Its aim is to assist dioceses and parishes conserve their archival heritage and holdings.

The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines created and continues to own, manage, and administer 80 percent of Philippine cultural heritage. It is said, as a matter of self-effacing humor, that the Filipinos lived in the convent for 333 years. More than three centuries of Spanish colonial history molded the Filipino in many ways. His entire culture, although radically Asian, is Hispanic. It is also said that the Filipino is a person operating with a Western construct expressing it through and in an Oriental body. And perhaps, more than the Spanish crown, it was the eminent, at times historically unsolicited, presence of the Spanish missionary orders—the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Recollects—that engendered a complex and colorful culture, one now in need of discovery and recovery. And it is these Filipino bishops and the 90 percent of the Philippine population who are Catholics who are the heirs to 300 years of Hispanization and Christianization in the country.

In light of this reality, it is easier to understand that the paradigm of heritage in the Philippine setting is Spain's material legacy and the Church's own religious patrimony in the country: the mission churches. These churches are also the most emblematic of all heritage expressions on the Philippine archipelagic landscape and in the Filipino psyche. However, these ecclesiastical edifices and their adjacent rectories are

not Hispanic or Spanish; they are Filipino! Although built during the Spanish colonial period and manned by the Spanish missionaries, Filipinos labored to build them using Filipino manpower and exploiting the natural resources for the materials with which to erect these temples of worship.

In a world that is rapidly losing the faculty to read signs and symbols, to interpret their meaning, these mission churches continue to stand for us as eloquent witnesses of our own tested history and as confident reminders of our mutual destination, bonded by a common Faith. The Church seeks to protect these at the institutional level, and this is the reason for the exhortation emanating from the Hierarchy to establish commissions or ministries directed at the pastoral care of the cultural heritage of the Church. This underlying motivation is best expressed by the Venerable Servant of God Pope John Paul II in his March 25, 1993, *motu proprio* Apostolic Letter *Inde a Pontificatus Nostri*, in which he wrote, “Indeed, by its very nature, faith tends to express itself in artistic forms and historical testimony having an intrinsic evangelizing power and cultural value, to which the Church is called to pay the greatest attention.” This explains the worldwide activities of the Holy See’s Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.

In the Philippines, this work on the pastoral care of the ecclesiastical cultural patrimony is stimulated by the Permanent Committee for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), and by the individual church commissions or committees of cultural heritage at the diocesan and parish levels, operating under the authority of the diocesan Bishops.

Conclusion

What we have seen are the significant efforts of individual specialists in music studies and musicology that, through their examination of different issues in their respective highly specialized fields of study, provide us with vital information in their areas of interest and a historical foregrounding for this international *Encuentro Filipino*. These research efforts are a metaphorical compound lens through which we obtain a better perspective on the many challenges and struggles cultural heritage advocacy and conservation face in the Philippines. Although we have stressed in this paper, and in this *Encuentro*, the study of Philippine musical and musicological heritage, we also need to consider that these constitute a major portion of the research being done on Philippine cultural heritage.

Closely associated with the work of individual researchers and practitioners are agencies that operate at institutional levels. These agencies supply a modicum of structure and bureaucracy, a sense of formality, to all these efforts in maintaining Filipino identity through the recovery and rediscovery of the cultural bonds that unite our nation.

Now, in what way can we characterize all these efforts? We look at them as a part of a movement seeking to bring together otherwise diffuse efforts in order to deter the collective memory loss that, in one way or another, afflicts us as a nation. Filipinos

have a high level of forgiveness; sadly, this level is directly proportional to forgetfulness. The recent political upheavals in the Philippines are witnesses to this fact. There are profound ramifications of this mental disorder of amnesia, and this collective amnesia motivates many elements within Philippine society, in government, business, and the civil sector, to rectify this glaring defect in the national psyche: we easily forget, and we tend to remember forgetting it.

As with all other Philippine institutions and agencies, the individuals and groups we have mentioned have one thing in common: they have maximum enthusiasm but minimum funds. Enthusiasm, as we know, is the daughter of intention. Filtered intention is realistic. It maps out a vision of the goal towards which actions progress. Misguided enthusiasm can lead to unsympathetic remodeling of churches, indifferent regard for the authenticity and integrity of the cultural object, and wanton loss and outright neglect of heritage in its many forms. Heritage practitioners, advocates, researchers, and workers are there to insure that the objective and accepted standards of heritage conservation are maintained. Otherwise, whatever good intentions there are and whatever enthusiasm has been generated will be wasted. We will continue to forget.

In the second part of my talk, we will look into the meaning and scope of the cultural heritage of the Church and examine the reasons why the Church protects, maintains, and promotes her cultural heritage. We will also explore the issues raised concerning pastoral care of the ecclesiastical cultural patrimony. These points, I believe, will help us empathize with cultural heritage in general and lead us to proposals for making cultural heritage alive in contemporary Philippine culture. This way, we can forgive the iniquities of purveyors of collective amnesia, and we will not forget, but rather remember them without bitterness of heart.

¹ *George Percival Scriven: An American in Bohol, The Philippines, 1899-1901*, On-Line Archival Collection, Special Collections Library, Duke University, in www.scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/scriven/diary8.html)

² “Porque era una ansi y hambre de oir las cosas de Dios, y deseo de aprender la doctrina tan grande, que en toda la noche no cesaban en sus casas, cantando y alabando a Dios, ya unos ya otros. Tarde y mañana, en el campo y en la iglesia, no se oía otra coasas que alabanzas del Señor”