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Texts and Documents

The Source of Nick Joaquin's "Doña Jeronima"

FLORENTINO H. HORNEDO

The Spanish Catholic past in the Philippines has been one of Nick Joaquin's favorite fields of interest.¹ He has also made use of material from that past either as inspiration,² or as material to be reworked into modern fiction.³ One such example is a legend associated with a cave along the Pasig River, and first recorded from oral tradition by Jose Rizal towards the close of the nineteenth century. Rizal called it "Doña Geronima La Encantada."

NICK JOAQUIN'S "DOÑA JERONIMA"

Nick Joaquin's short story "Doña Jeronima" was first published in the *Philippines Free Press* 1 May 1965 (pp. 9-11; 109-116), and was awarded the first prize in the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature in English for the year 1964-65.⁴

1. See Lourdes Busuego-Pablo, "The Spanish Tradition in Nick Joaquin," *Philippine Studies* 3, 2 (1955):206; James B. Reuter, "Roots, Sunlight and Rain," *Philippine Studies* 4, 3 (1956):461.

2. The Marian devotions, for example, of the Filipino Spanish Catholic past is a matter of common knowledge. Nick Joaquin has singled this out as one of his favorites, and the Virgin Mary as his inspiration and "first love." See "Nick Joaquin: A Portrait of the National Artist as Himself," from a taped interview by Eugenio Lacson and Eugenio Jose, in *Who* 3, 54 (25 April 1981):6-8; 12. His short stories "The Legend of the Virgin's Jewel," "The Legend of the Dying Wanton," "Guardia de Honor," the essay "La Naval de Manila," amply affirm this.

3. See F. Hornedo, "The Source of Nick Joaquin's 'The Legend of the Dying Wanton,'" in *Philippine Studies* 26 (1978):297-309. His "La Naval de Manila," and "The Beatas" are from the pages of the history of the Dominicans of the Province of the Most Holy Rosary.

4. The story has been published subsequently in Nick Joaquin, *Tropical Gothic* (St. Lucia, Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1972), 57-83; and in Kerima Polotan, ed. *An Anthology of Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards Winners, English Division, Vol. 3, 1960-65* (Quezon City: Bustamante Press, Inc., 1976), pp. 169-86.

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Cuentos y Leyendas de Filipinas

1ª Geronima (la encantada) Leyenda

Entre San Pedro Makati y Malapad nabato, a la orilla derecha del Pasig, existe una gruta cuya entrada de un perfecto arco ~~delata la presencia~~, delata la poderosa mano del hombre corregida por la naturaleza y el tiempo adornandola con un hermoso enrejado de lianas y enredaderas. La puerta esta tapiada y la gruta se va aljandose cada vez mas del rio o mejor dicho, el rio va aljandose cada vez mas de ella, puesto que en 1866 nuestra banca paraba aun casi rozando con su entrada. En aquel entonces, oi yo la siguiente leyenda acerca de esta cueva y de la que alli paso sus dias:

~~Un arzobispo de Manila habia tenido ciertos amores, habia casado a~~
~~habia dado por casado a~~

Un arzobispo de Manila habia tenido ciertos amores en su juventud con una doncella a quien el dio la palabra de casamiento. El futuro prelado se olvido pronto tal vez de su promesa, pues a poco entro en un seminario y se hizo sacerdote mas, no ahi la joven, quien se consagró

Facsimile of the original Rizal manuscripts of the Doña Geronima legend (page 1) found in the Filipiniana and Asia Division, National Library of the Philippines

fiel y celoso esperando la vuelta del olvidado amante.
Pasaron algunos años y la noticia llegó a oídos de la pobre
Gonzella que su amante era el Arzobispo de Manila.
Ella, triste de hombre y arrastrando los mil pelos del
traje de cutones, viajes que duraban seis y siete meses
también, se presentó en Manila a pedir cuenta de su
promesa a su infiel amante. Dicen que el Arzobispo
la recibió bien y se reunió como pudo dándole por mor-
ta la cuenta que aun hoy se ve. La imaginación de los
filipinos doró la leyenda de esta fiel amante supo-
niéndola encantada; de ella dicen que era una mujer
tan gruesa que necesitaba entrar de costado en su
gata, pues la anchura de la puerta no le permitía
penetrar en ella de frente. Pero lo que más ha llamado
la atención de los filipinos era su costumbre de arrojar
al río, después de sus comidas, su vajilla de plata,
retirándola después de él cuando la había menester.
(De aquí vendría su fama de encantada: acaso una
red tendida en el río, a manera de salambrar, le
sirviera a este propósito modo ingenioso y fácil de
limpiar los objetos de su uso.)

José Rizal

Facsimile of the original Rizal manuscripts of the Doña Geronima
legend (page 2)

"Doña Jeronima" is the story of a youthful romance between a Spanish youth and a girl named Jeronima. The romance fails because of the forgetfulness and the absorbing ambition of the man "in the days of the galleons." He becomes a friar, and then concurrent Archbishop of Manila and Governor General of the Philippines, just as he had aspired to be. Tracked down and brought to account for his youthful promise of marriage to Jeronima, he talks the woman into becoming an anchorite in a cave on the bank of the Pasig River. From this cave she passes into legend.

JOSE RIZAL'S "DOÑA GERONIMA"

A manuscript *leyenda* signed by Jose Rizal, and substantially identical to Joaquin's "Doña Jeronima" appeared for the first time in facsimile edition in 1962.⁵ An English translation by E. A. (Encarnacion Alzona) was also published in the same year.⁶ A year earlier (1961), which was the Jose Rizal centennial, a transcript of the MS,⁷ and a Tagalog translation were published.⁸

Although Encarnacion Alzona speaks of translating the legend into English using a "photostat copy" (presumably of the MS) in 1957,⁹ it appears that the *leyenda* became available to the public (who could read Spanish and/or Tagalog) only in 1961.¹⁰

The legend of Doña Geronima appears to have been a popular oral tradition during the second half of the nineteenth century, and in 1868 when Rizal was seven years old, he heard the story.

5. Jose Rizal, *Escritos de Jose Rizal, Tomo IX, 2a Parte: Facsimiles de los Escritos de Jose Rizal* (Manila: Comision Nacional del Centenario de Jose Rizal, 1962), pp. 846-47. *Facsimiles 2* henceforth. A slightly different version of the legend had been used by Rizal in his *El Filibusterismo* in 1891, chapter 3.

6. Jose Rizal, *Writings of Jose Rizal, Volume 3, Book 2: Rizal's Prose* (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1962), p. 102. *Prose* henceforth. A note to this translation says that the translation was made on 18 July 1957 from a photostat copy, presumably of the MS.

7. Jose Rizal, *Escritos de Jose Rizal, Tomo 3: Obras Literarias, Libro Segundo: Prosa* (Manila: Comision Nacional del Centenario de Jose Rizal, 1961), p. 119. *Prosa* henceforth.

8. Jose Rizal, *Mga Sinulat ni Jose Rizal, Ikalawang Aklat: Mga Akdang Pampanitikan sa Tuhayan* (Maynila: Pambansang Komisyon ng Ikasandaang Taon ni Jose Rizal, 1961), pp. 144-45. *Tuhayan* Henceforth.

9. When the Comision Nacional del Centenario de Jose Rizal was collecting and preparing all known writings of Rizal for publication on the centennial year 1961.

10. It is possible, of course, for Nick Joaquin to have had access to the original MS before this date, or any limited reproduction of it such as the "photostat copy" mentioned by Alzona in 1957. See *Prose*, p. 102, fn. There is no reason to suppose he did not read earlier the *El Filibusterismo* version.

He later wrote down the legend from memory.¹¹ His handwritten record, probably the first on paper, is at present contained in a volume of Rizal original MSS titled *Cuentos y Leyendas de Filipinas* (binder's title) which is in the Rare Books Section of the Filipiniana and Asia Division of the National Library of the Philippines.

THE SOURCE OF NICK JOAQUIN'S "DOÑA JERONIMA"

The known love of Joaquin for the Spanish Filipino past, the temporal circumstances of the 1965 publication of his story following the 1961 (Spanish and Tagalog) and the 1962 (facsimile and English) publication of the Rizal story, and the internal evidence of the total presence (except in accidental details) of the Rizal version in that of Joaquin point to Rizal as Joaquin's immediate source.

To show more clearly the substantial congruences as well as differences of the Rizal and Joaquin versions, the following is an itemized and chronologically sequenced summary of the "Doña Jeronima": the Rizal-Joaquin plot. In making this summary, the key events as narrated by Joaquin were arranged chronologically. Then the materials which are also found in the Rizal version were underscored. The result of this are the items from one to thirteen. Numbers fourteen and fifteen have been added to show that Rizal's text is present in Joaquin's not only in the plot but also in other details.

1. *A young Spaniard promises to marry Doña Jeronima, and gives her a ring as a token of the promise.*
2. *The young man leaves for another place, forgets his promise, becomes a priest, and then Archbishop of Manila, and concurrently Governor General of the Philippines.*

11. He probably wrote it sometime around 1890 when he showed marked interest in Filipino legends. He recorded and published "Mariang Makiling" under the penname Laong-Laan in 1890. See *La Solidaridad* issue of 31 December 1890. See *La Solidaridad*, vol. 2, 1980, trans. Guadalupe Fores-Guanzon (Q.C.: U.P. Press, 1973): 874-83. See also *Prosa*, pp. 92-98; for copy of draft, *ibid.*, pp. 318-32; *Facsimiles 2*, pp. 1034-76; and *Tuluyan*, pp. 124-33. In the draft written in Madrid on 23 November 1890, he says that he was working on traditions "transmitida de padres a hijos," specifically from "los campesinos de los pueblos . . . en la provincia de la Laguna . . ." He has not been that specific with "Doña Geronima."

3. While holding the post of Archbishop of Manila and Governor General of the Philippines, he is called to attend a council in Mexico; but he is shipwrecked on a barren island in the Pacific where he stays in abject poverty and solitude for a year.
4. He is rescued by a passing boat which has been led to his island by a strange shining cross in the sky.
5. He is brought back to Manila worn out in appearance and changed in spirit: no longer the proud prelate-politician, but a chastened penitent soul in search of inner peace.
6. Manila welcomes him as a holy man who has been rescued miraculously by the sign of the Cross; and his fame for holiness spreads far and wide.
7. *Doña Jeronima*, through a picture at a fair, comes to know that her lover is in Manila.
8. *She comes to Manila to bring him to account for his promise of marriage.*
9. *When they meet, Jeronima asks the Archbishop to fulfill his promise, showing him the ring, but he advises her to become a nun or a holy recluse.*
10. *Jeronima* at first vehemently refuses the Archbishop's advice, but later she changes her mind and becomes a holy anchorite in a cave along the Pasig River.
11. Soon after making her abode in the cave, the surrounding lands which have been accustomed to poor harvests suddenly become fruitful; and bats appear. *Jeronima* is manhandled, and accused of witchcraft before the Archbishop.
12. The Archbishop defends her, and she goes back to her cave in peace. She dies soon after.
13. The Archbishop falls ill, and dies a few days after *Jeronima*.
14. *Jeronima is remembered in legend as enchanted, and for washing her golden dishes (silverware according to Rizal) by throwing them in the river.*
15. It is said that on moonlight nights, people see the apparition of *Jeronima* and her lover sailing down the Pasig River, and when people pass the cave, they remember *Doña Jeronima*.

It is significant that when one reads the underscored material, one also gets the entire Rizal version. (Cp. text and translation below.)

There are, of course, other points where Joaquin and Rizal differ. The setting in time is unspecified by Rizal; Joaquin places it in the 'seventeenth century.'¹² Rizal's account implies that the lovers first met outside the Philippines, possibly Spain; Joaquin says that they met "in the dawn country upstream, where the Pasig flows from the lake, to the sunset land downstream, where it flows into the sea."¹³ Rizal's Doña Geronima is fat; Joaquin's is beautiful. Rizal's archbishop is simply a priest; Joaquin's is a member of a religious order.

CONCLUSION

Nick Joaquin's prize-winning short story, "Doña Jeronima," is an expanded and modernized version of a traditional legend heard from oral tradition by Rizal in 1868 and subsequently recorded in writing which was published in transcript and Tagalog translation in 1961, and in facsimile and English translation in 1962, and then adapted as a short story by Joaquin in 1965.

"DOÑA GERONIMA": ENGLISH TRANSLATION, AND THE RIZAL TEXT

The following translation and transcript is based on the MS at the Rare Books Section of the Filipiniana and Asia Division of the National Library of the Philippines.¹⁴ Although the 1961 transcript and the 1962 facsimile were used in the initial stages of the study of the text, actual investigation of the MS revealed that the

12. TG, p. 61. Joaquin's specific mention of the seventeenth century suggests that his archbishop-governor general is not a specific historical personage but a fictional type. In the list of governors general, only two seem to have been concurrently archbishops of Manila: Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta who was interim governor general in 1719-1721, and Archbishop Manuel Antonio Rojo del Rio, interim governor general in 1761-1762. Both were of the eighteenth century. Joaquin also mentions the activities of his archbishop-governor general such as defending Manila against Dutch (1646-47) and English (1762) invasions (See TG, p. 59). Only the Dutch invasion is consistent with the seventeenth century setting.

13. TG, p. 82. That means Jeronima came from the Laguna end of the Pasig River. The "bat country," (which is not in Rizal) is therefore upstream Pasig, or the banks of the Laguna de Bai.

14. The MS was made available to this writer by Carolina Afan, Chief of the Filipiniana and Asia Division of the National Library.

editor of the transcript had made changes in the Rizal text,¹⁵ and the facsimile edition showed crossed out lines which were impossible to decipher. The original MS was, therefore, placed against bright light and the crossed-out words recovered in the effort to assure that no important information is lost.

In the transcript following, the material Rizal crossed out in the MS is restored and enclosed in brackets, and when a word or words are not clearly decipherable a question mark (?) is placed immediately after. Asterisks mark the words originally used by Rizal and which were changed by the editor of the 1961 transcript, and the editor's version placed in the footnote. No attempt has been made to modify what Rizal wrote, the intention being to show not only what he finally decided to retain in his version of the legend, but also the evidences of method of composition, i.e., that he was writing from memory and not from dictation by an informant, that he was writing down a tradition of which he was a legitimate carrier rather than a cultural outsider recording oral tradition.

15. E.g. "su amante era el Arzobispo de Manila" is written in the transcript as "su amante habia llegado a ser Arzobispo de Manila . . ." Or, "esta fiel amante" is changed to "esta desdichada amante." The translations followed, of course, these emendation.

THE LEGEND OF DOÑA GERONIMA, THE ENCHANTED

TRANSLATION

Between *San Pedro Makati* and *Malapad-na-bato*, on the right bank of the Pasig, there is a grotto whose perfectly arched entrance, [decorated by a lace of lianas and vines], reveals the dull hand of man corrected by nature and time adorning it with a beautiful lace of lianas and vines. The entrance is hidden from view by a wall and the grotto is moving farther and farther from the river or better still, the river is moving itself farther and farther from it, since in 1868 our banca as it passed could still almost graze against its entrance. On that occasion, I heard the following legend concerning this cave and about her who spent her days there.

[A story is told of a certain Archbishop of Manila when young, had known (discontinued) had a certain love affair in his youth with someone to whom he had given promise of marriage.]

An Archbishop of Manila had had a certain love affair in his youth with a maiden to whom he promised marriage. The future prelate must have quickly forgotten his promise, for he shortly after entered a seminary and became a priest, but not so the young girl who remained faithful and was waiting for the return of her forgetful lover. Some years passed, and news reached the ears of the poor maiden that her lover was* the Archbishop of Manila. She dressed as a man and facing the thousand perils in voyages of those days, voyages that sometimes lasted six and seven months moreover, presented herself in Manila to bring her unfaithful lover to account for his promise. They say that the Archbishop received her well, and he excused himself as well as he could, giving her as a home the cave that one can still see today. The imagination of Filipinos gilded the legend of this faithful** lover, believing her enchanted; of her they say that she was a woman so fat that she had to enter her grotto sideways, for the width of the entrance did not allow her to enter normally (de frente). But what attracted most the attention of Filipinos was her custom of throwing into the river, after her meals, her silverware, retrieving it later when she needed it. (From here must have come her fame as enchanted: perhaps a net stretched out in the river, in the manner of a *salam-baw*, served her this purpose, an ingenious and easy way of washing her utensils.)

Jose Rizal

*"era" (was) in the original; "habia llegado a ser" (had become) in the transcript of 1961.

**"fiel" (faithful) in the original; "desdichada" (unfortunate) in the transcript of 1961.

THE TEXT

Da Geronima (la encantada) Leyenda [sic]

Entre *San Pedro Makati* y *Malapad-na-bato* a la orilla derecha del Pasig, existe una gruta cuya entrada de un perfecto arco [adornado por un encaje de lianas y enredaderas], delata la prosaica mano del hombre, corregida por la naturaleza y el tiempo adornandola con un hermoso encaje de lianas y enredaderas. La puerta esta tapiada y la gruta se va alejando cada vez mas del rio o mejor dicho, el rio va alejandose cada vez mas de ella puesto que en 1868 nuestra banca pasaba aun casi rozando con su entrada. En aquel entonces oi yo la siguiente leyenda acerca de este cueva y de la que alli paso sus dias:

[Cuentose de (?) que cierto Arzobispo de Manila cuando (?) joven, habia conocido a (discontinued) tenia (?) ciertos amores en su juventud con una a quien habia dado promesa de matrimonio.]

Un Arzobispo de Manila habia tenido ciertos amores en su juventud con una doncella a quien el diera palabra de casamiento. El futuro prelado se olvido pronto tal vez de su promesa, pues, a poco entro en un seminario y se hizo sacerdote, mas no asi la joven, quien se conservo fiel y estuvo esperando la vuelta del olvidadizo amante. Pasaron algunos años y la noticia llevo a oidos de la pobre doncella que su amante era el Arzobispo de Manila. Ella, vistiose de hombre y arrostrando los mil peligros de los viajes que duraban seis y siete meses tambien, se presento en Manila a pedir cuenta de su promesa a su infiel amante. Dicen que el Arzobispo la recibio bien y se excuso como pudo, dandole por mora [da] la cueva que aun hoy se ve. La imaginacion de los filipinos doro la leyenda de esta fiel amante, suponiendola encantada; de ella dicen que era mujer tan gruesa que necesitaba entrar de costado en su gruta, pues la anchura de la puerta no le permitia penetrar en ella de frente. Pero lo que mas ha llamado la atencion de los filipinos era su costumbre de arrojar al rio, despues de sus comidas, su vajilla de plata, retirandola despues de el cuando la habia menester.

(De aqui vendria su fama de encantada: acaso una red tendida en el rio, a manera de *salambaw*, le sirviera a este proposito, modo ingenioso y facil de limpiar los objetos de su uso.)

Jose Rizal