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Philippine Colonial Sculpture: A Short Survey

FERNANDO ZOBEL DE AYALA

THIS preliminary survey appears in preparation for a full-length, illustrated book on the subject. I want to expose a few general ideas about this unexplored field and, by so doing, to create interest and to attract advice, criticism and more material before publishing a finished work.

Philippine colonial statuary compares quite well with the popular art of the world both aesthetically and technically. It has a distinct appearance that makes it easy, with a little practice, to distinguish from contemporary works produced in Europe and Latin America. Its harmonious fusion of local, European and oriental elements is pleasing and interesting in its own right, and may well hold the key to a problem that has much concerned students of Philippine art: is there such a thing as a Philippine style and, if so, what are its characteristics?¹

I wish I had enough room to make a detailed acknowledgement of help received. Without exception the large num-

¹ This problem falls beyond the scope of my study but I suggested a possible approach in my article, "Filipino Artistic Expression" *PHILIPPINE STUDIES* I (Sept. 1953) 125-130. At that time I was searching for the proper type of analytic material. I think that colonial statuary meets the requirements but I hesitate to attempt the analysis until I have examined many more statues.

ber of collectors and scholars I approached reacted with real generosity and enthusiasm. I hope to thank them individually in my larger work. I want to mention, though, that Arturo R. Luz and Emmanuel Torres helped a great deal in giving shape to many of the ideas I express. I also want to mention the kindness of Roger S. Keyes and Michael D. Dobry who made a very successful trip to Ilocos in search of material. Finally I owe thanks of His Excellency, Ambassador George Clutton, for prodding me into this project.

SCOPE

Philippine colonial sculpture, for the purpose of this study, is limited to work produced in the Philippines during the Spanish regime, that is to say, from 1565 to 1898. The term "colonial" presumes a specifically Spanish or occidental influence, whether in technique or iconography. I therefore exclude, despite its fascination, the traditional pagan or Moslem sculpture of the Philippines although most of its existing pieces seem to have been made during the period under discussion. I interpret the term "sculpture" in its broadest sense to include all representational or symbolic three-dimensional objects, regardless of size or material, excluding only those whose character and design are purely ornamental, such as formalized decoration on furniture, jewelry, architecture and so forth. These deserve a separate study for the light they cast on the sources of Philippine iconography and for their intrinsic interest as handsome designs.

NATURE AND USE OF COLONIAL STATUARY

A demand for religious imagery resulted directly from the Spanish conversion of the Philippines to Christianity in the sixteenth century.

Spanish soldiers, sailors and missionaries brought statues with them to the Philippines. They also brought picture books and prints. All served as models for a newly converted population that combined devotion with a generalized skill in carving. My guess is that relatively few carvings were imported

during the seventeenth, eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries because ship space was extremely valuable and skilled workers could execute statues of high quality in the Philippines with materials better and cheaper than those obtainable in Spain. Two exceptions must be made. A very large proportion of the most famous images in the Philippines are either European or Latin American. This proportion only means that many images owe their individual fame to their early arrival in the Philippines. The earliest images, naturally, were brought in from abroad. The second exception applies to images of the most important, "official" sort; images meant for new churches or for the use of the very wealthy. In such cases the glamour that surrounds any imported product proved irresistible even when a comparable or superior local product was available. This need not surprise us; the same situation exists today.

The most popular statues, imported or local, popularized by illustrations and prints, became the inspiration for thousands of more or less imaginative local reproductions. These last are our principal concern.

The demand for Philippine religious statuary lasted well into the nineteenth century. Then transportation became cheap and so did religious imagery mass-produced in Europe and America. Both factors combined to bring "imported" statues, once the privilege of the few, within the means of any pocket. That was, for all intents, the end of Philippine religious sculpture. The first signs of a revival in the idiom of the twentieth century can be perceived. I hope it is not a false alarm.

Philippine sculpture served two principal purposes. The first was the furnishing of churches and convents, which gave rise to an *official* category. Its usual characteristics are large size, permanence of materials and a deliberate though not always successful effort to stick closely to European models. The most skillful artists were chosen for this type of work, which was presumably carried out under a good deal of supervision especially in matters of iconography. Despite this, as in every art, much was left to the imagination of the artist

and non-occidental influences are by no means difficult to detect. Naturally, the earliest examples or those produced in remote areas, by placing a maximum strain on the artist's imagination, are the most original. The carvers in the big towns developed an astonishing mechanical skill which, with time, resulted in increasingly accurate and lifeless reproductions of Spanish models. By the beginning of the twentieth century these professionals had reached a peak of technical perfection: they could make a fine piece of hand-carved wood look exactly like a machine-made plaster cast. What happened after that is economic history.

Sculpture also supplied small images for worship in the home. Users either "made their own" or dealt individually with craftsmen whose ability varied all the way from the barely competent to the highly sophisticated. I call these statues *informal* to distinguish them from *official* productions. They are sometimes so crude as to be almost entirely autochthonous, but they are more usually typified by some reflections (at times a very vague one indeed) of European and Philippine *official* models. Despite their generally accurate iconography, the stylistic and qualitative variety of these pieces is staggering. Personally I find these *informal* statues of infinitely greater interest than the *official* pieces.

I have found no evidence of secular sculpture before the middle of the nineteenth century.² Obviously there was little interest in descriptive or purely aesthetic objects.

The turn of the century, characterized by intellectual ferment of every sort, finally saw the appearance of a deliberately

² Minor bits of secular sculpture certainly exist. Their purpose is decorative, their nature incidental. By this I do not mean to belittle their considerable charm or their interest for the historian and sociologist. For instance, a large wooden chest of drawers in the Luis Ma. Araneta collection is profusely decorated with genre scenes. Elsewhere tiny blown glass figurines, generally decorating *Belens*, show people in fancy or every-day dress, animals, flowers etc. Purely genre scenes made up of these figures also exist. They seem to date from the early half of the nineteenth century. The F. R. Hidalgo collection has a superb example. According to Mr. Hidalgo these figures were made in the old Bilibid prison.

secular sculpture of an *école des beaux arts* sort. The sculptors who produced these items have been studied in some detail elsewhere.³ Their contribution marks the end of the colonial style and, except where they produced religious imagery, I have tried to forget their existence.

We can reasonably assume that a school of painting, paralleling colonial sculpture in purpose and style, developed in the Philippines. If so, most of its examples have vanished, but the few that still exist seem to support the stylistic assumption. If a history of Philippine colonial painting is ever written I suspect that the inevitable gaps will have to be filled by inferences drawn from contemporary sculpture.

THE CRAFTSMEN

I am told that documents exist which refer to images in the Philippines actually carved by Spanish churchmen. I have also heard of documentary reference to religious carvings by Sangleys (local Chinese). Although I have not succeeded in tracking down the references, I have no reason to doubt the information. It stands to reason that some Spaniards and some Chinese must have made some statues. It also stands to reason that some statues were made by Filipinos—probably a very large proportion. I am not sure that it is possible to separate them at this early stage. I have never seen a signed statue, and the presence of typically Spanish or Chinese craft conventions tells us a great deal about the influences on Philippine art but tells us nothing at all about the nationality of the individual craftsmen who produced it. I really don't think it matters very much. We must not let our own passport-orientation blind us to the obvious fact that an eighteenth century Tagalog peasant was infinitely closer spiritually to a Spanish contemporary than to a Moro fisherman. The important thing to keep in mind is that Filipino, Chinese and Spanish craftsmen created a style distinct from contemporary styles in Spain, Latin America, and China. The same reasoning that calls El Greco a Spaniard,

³ Individual biographies of the most prominent ones can be found in E. Arsenio Manuel's *Dictionary of Philippine Biography* Vol. I (Filipiniana Publications, Quezon City 1955).

Juan Gris and Miró, Frenchmen, and William de Kooning, George Grosz, Piet Mondrian, Americans, makes me lump the artists who made our statues under the general label of Filipinos.

In brief, we know very little about these sculptors. We don't know their names, their nationalities, where they lived, how they worked, or how much they got paid. For the time being we only know as much as we can infer from their anonymous works, and that is almost nothing. Determined research can probably fill in this blank.⁴

MATERIALS

The Philippines being phenomenally rich in trees, it is hardly surprising that wood should have been the favorite material for sculpture. The exuberance of available choice, however, creates a peculiar problem for us. It is easy for a practised eye to recognize the relatively few woods used in occidental art. Philippine sculptors employed hundreds of different varieties of wood and even lumbermen, builders and furniture makers have thrown up their hands when I asked them to identify types of wood used in given statues.⁵ I think the art historian's purpose is well enough served, for the time being at least, by dividing woods into hard, medium and soft.

By *hard* I mean woods that take a very high polish, resist scratches by ordinary tools and are too heavy to float in water. Examples: kamagong, molave, balaon.

By *medium* I mean woods of the sort used in making furniture, strong but relatively easy to cut, capable of smooth

⁴ I'd like to propose this as a good field for study. The obvious place to look is in parish records. For instance, a quick glance at the Tanay records showed me a few prices paid for statuary in the 1700's, but not the names of the carvers. I repeat, though, it was only a glance at one out of a whole pile of bound records going back to the 1600's. My time, unfortunately, is very limited. I hope some bibliophile will take the hint, and explore not only parish records but the general literature on colonial Philippines for references to art.

⁵ The answer, of course, lies in micro-analysis. I owe this very sensible suggestion to Mr. David M. Consunji. I hope someone qualified will find this a worthwhile project.

finish, too hard to dent with a fingernail. Examples: narra, tanguile, apitong.

By *soft* I mean lightweight, porous woods ranging roughly from the hardness of pine to the softness of balsa. These woods can be dented with a fingernail. Examples: batikuling, dapdap, lanete, white lawaan.

All three types of wood were used in colonial sculpture, with a preference for the very hard and the very soft, depending, I suppose, on which was more important: permanence or ease of execution.

With the exception of some large hardwood sculptures left plain, one can safely say that most wooden images were either painted or stained. In the case of painted statues a gesso base appears to have been customary.⁶

Ivory, presumably imported from China,⁷ was another highly popular material particularly because it lends itself to great refinement of detail. Many small images of early appearance were entirely carved in ivory. However the greater number are made up of ivory heads, hands and sometimes feet, pegged into wooden bodies or wooden frames. The wooden bodies are sometimes elaborately carved and painted,

⁶ Here again is another field for detailed study. An analysis of the paints used by Filipino sculptors would not only be interesting in its own right but would shed a good deal of light on Philippine colonial painting, of which very few examples have survived. Unfortunately most of the *official* type sculptures have been repainted several times. Popular style statuettes have often retained their original paint or stain. My guess, based principally on appearance (and therefore suspect), is that the pigments and binders used in most of these were of local manufacture.

⁷ This brings up a problem regarding the small unattached ivory heads and hands used for images in the ornate style, viz. was the ivory brought from China and carved in the Philippines, or was it carved in China and sent over as a finished product? There is no conclusive evidence for either side and good arguments for both. My own guess is that they were carved in both places. Again, the important point to keep in mind is that, regardless of provenance, these heads and hands turned into recognizably *Philippine* statues; not Spanish statues, much less Chinese ones.

but often they are quite rudimentary and serve only as a frame on which to drape cloth vestments. Ivory heads and limbs were usually colored and fitted with glass eyes. The most ornate examples, following the Spanish fashion, were further enriched by wigs and eyelashes made of hair (sometimes human), by glass tears when required, and by all sorts of jewelry and ornaments made of metal, glass, and precious or semi-precious stones.

I have not yet found any figures made of bone, a material very popular in Spain. Perhaps plentiful ivory—a much handsomer and nicer material to carve—made the use of bone unnecessary.

Stone sculpture is surprisingly scarce. Most of it is found closely allied to architecture, on church facades for instance. Soft stones were used by preference: volcanic tufa or hard adobe. Despite the existence of local marbles I have never seen colonial imagery executed in this material. Strangely enough I have not seen any ceramic images either, although it would appear to be a logical material with which to mass-produce popular statuettes.

Metals as far as I can tell were not used for large figures with the exception of the bronze statues of Charles IV and Isabel II which stand respectively in front of the Manila cathedral and the Malate church. They need not concern us here.⁸

Metal was principally used in making small objects such as medals, amulets, small crucifixes and so on. Also in making ornaments such as wings, crowns, haloes, for large figures. Some of these items were cast. The majority were cut, sometimes embossed, and further decorated by etching or engraving. Among the metals used I have identified gold, silver, brass, copper, tin and lead. The list can probably be extended.

⁸ These large statues were cast in the Philippines by Spanish artillery technicians. They are completely Spanish stylistically and appear to bear little relation to the subject of this study. I might mention in passing that technically these two statues are wonderfully competent in technique.

Blown glass was used in making the tiny figurines sometimes used to decorate arrangements of larger religious images.⁹

Cloth, often richly embroidered with gold and silver thread, was and is still used in dressing some images. Frequently such figures had mere frames instead of bodies, the frame being hidden by the costume draped on it. In such cases cloth properly became a sculptural material rather than decoration added as an afterthought.

CHRONOLOGY

I have never seen a clearly dateable colonial statue. By this I mean a statue dateable *per se*, without reference to separate records. Dating by style is dangerous for several reasons: (a) The period under discussion is a relatively short one; (b) the religious nature of the statues encouraged a strongly conservative approach; (c) the culture-lag between Spain and the Philippines was very great, principally the result of geographical distance;¹⁰ (d) the dating of those figures that fall into a popular category becomes hopelessly confused when all the above factors are further underlined by the naive sculptor's comparative lack of skill.

Research, especially into parish records, will eventually give us some basis for chronological attribution. Meanwhile caution suggests that the issue be left pending, and that our images be studied principally on the basis of style.

STYLE

Philippine colonial sculpture can be divided into three reasonably distinct styles: (a) popular; (b) classical; (c) ornate.

⁹ See footnote No. 2.

¹⁰ An example: the obviously 17th century facade of the Morong church was actually built in the 19th century. There is no reason to believe that the builders were being romantically antiquarian. They merely put up the sort of facade they liked and knew how to build. It is a very handsome facade at that. But it is two hundred years out of fashion. Unfortunately the example chosen is not entirely typical. If it were, our troubles would be over. We would simply date stylistically and add two hundred years.

Depending on their use, examples of each style can be found both in the *official* and in the *informal* manners previously described. Obviously, popular statues in the *official* manner are bound to be quite rare, but they exist.¹¹

I will try to describe what I mean by each of the three styles.

(a) *Popular Style*. As its name implies this is the style of relatively uneducated, unsophisticated sculptors. This style includes, I feel certain, a good deal of work by non-professional carvers—private individuals who wanted an image for their house and went right ahead and carved one.¹²

Popular religious images the world over have certain characteristics that also apply to our Philippine examples. These include a correct and emphatic iconography reduced to barest essentials, faulty and highly formalized anatomy, a tendency to compose symmetrically and within the limitations imposed by the easiest possible materials, a general technical awkwardness balanced by exuberance of color and a wealth of painted and formalized detail; finally anachronism of feature, costume and ornament, all of which tend to reflect the appearance of everyday life. Popular sculptors are barred by their lack of skill from making close copies of ordinary models. Circumstances force them to fall back on their imagination within the limitations of their craft, a situation that fortunately produces the most wonderfully unexpected results.

Naturally, most of the Philippine statues in the popular style fall into the *informal* category; in other words they are

¹¹ Example: the carved columns that support the choir of the Morong church. They depict heads of either snakes or wild boars. One of the troubles with popular art is that identification of the object depicted is made difficult by lack of skill.

¹² This is by no means a general rule. For instance, the Luz collection suggests that a single popular sculptor in Bacolod carved a very large number of almost identical figurines of St. Vincent Ferrer. Despite their crudity (and considerable charm) it is quite obvious that the sculptor was a real professional.

quite small and were principally intended for use in private homes. The sculptors usually worked in the softest, most easily carved woods. Color, when preserved, is almost blindingly strong.¹³ These figures combine vaguely oriental features and proportions, Spanish iconography, and strikingly original color to produce a unique and surprisingly powerful art form.

(b) *Classical Style*.—I use the word “classical” in the same sense that we call early Philippine colonial architecture “classical” to distinguish it from the Antillan style which, while still colonial in flavor, departs radically in appearance and in materials used from earlier works.¹⁴

The colonial style is essentially derivative. Its sculptors had enough skill to preserve much of the flavor of Spanish and Latin American models, and these models range in style from the renaissance to the rococo, with special emphasis on the baroque. Philippine classical also shows a strong Chinese

¹³ This “wild” color scheme, curiously enough, has been unwittingly revived by many of the Philippine modern painters: particularly H. R. Ocampo, Vicente Manansala, Victor Rodriguez and others. It is characterized by the use of maximum intensities, a generally warm range, deliberately violent clashes of complementaries and a unique insistence on purples as well as a very high proportion of yellow in the reds and greens. The Moros and the Bajaw use a similar approach to color. All this makes me suspect that a typically “Philippine color scheme” exists and that it is closely related both to the peculiar glare of Philippine sunlight and to the astonishing chromatic brilliance of the Philippine landscape, a brilliance that registers only when the sky is overcast, or during sunset and sunrise, when glare is largely eliminated.

¹⁴ This is hardly the place to discuss Philippine colonial architecture but a quick glance may help to clarify related artistic issues. The “classical” style, which includes Paul Kelemen’s “earthquake Baroque,” is generally of stone, with very thick bearing walls, often elaborately buttressed. Churches and secular buildings in this style often served a secondary purpose as fortresses. The “Antillan” style, also found in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam etc. reached its peak of decorative exuberance in the Philippines. Typical Antillan buildings are made of wood. Walls do not serve a structural function. Sliding windows are made as large as possible to invite the breeze in contrast to the tiny windows of classical buildings, which depend on thickness of walls for coolness. The typical Antillan building is light and airy and, especially at night, looks like a gigantic bird cage.

influence, particularly in the use of decorative motifs and in such matters as features, anatomical proportions, use of drapery and human stance. Finally there is a stylistic element, different from the Chinese and the Hispanic, which I think can correctly be called purely Filipino. This one is difficult to describe except in terms of color, but it goes much farther than just being a specific color scheme. It is seen most purely, of course, in popular statuary. The three elements mentioned, harmoniously combined, make up the classical style.

Obviously the classical is a very broad category. It is the "typical" Philippine colonial style and it flourished during the entire Spanish period excepting only the earliest and the last decades. It includes every size and type of statue and employs every sort of material.

Being so broad, the classical style lends itself readily to sub-classification, particularly on the basis of its influences. Although most influences are present in each statue, some naturally predominate over others. However, I do not think I should attempt such a sub-classification until I have seen many more statues. The few hundred I have studied are hardly sufficient for so detailed a statement.

(c) *Ornate Style*.—This style is subject to the same influences as the classical plus a hefty dose of Spanish baroque and romantic "realism." As its name suggests, it differs from the classical principally in its elaboration. The ornate artist appears to be more interested in richness and realism of detail than in communicating an iconographical concept.

The ornate style has two important general categories that deserve separate mention:

(1) *Ornate ivories*: These statues generally have ivory heads, hands and sometimes feet. The ivory parts are further embellished with paint or stain, with glass eyes, with wigs, sometimes with eyelashes, glass tears, etc. Exquisitely detailed carving is the rule. The bodies of these figures are generally a

wooden framework covered with costumes of cloth, usually heavily embroidered with gold and silver thread. Crowns, haloes, attributes such as rosaries, swords, orbs etc. are generally of metal, often gold, silver, or silver gilt, and are further enlivened with paste or real jewelry, seed pearls being especially popular.¹⁵

(2) Ornate wood sculpture: these objects attempt to copy, as closely as possible, the effect of imported statuary. The use of wood is carefully disguised by many superimposed layers of gesso and paint. High realism is attempted in the carving and is sometimes (quite seldom) reinforced by the use of wigs. Glass eyes are very common. A slick, plaster-of-Paris effect is often successfully achieved.¹⁶ Soft woods are most commonly used.

The ornate style is the only one we can date with any certainty on purely stylistic grounds. None of it can be much earlier than the middle eighteenth century and I rather suspect that the mass of it was produced well after 1800.

The ivories are rather original (although perhaps too "fussy") in effect and present many interesting aesthetic problems. I confess I find the wooden figures very boring. The fact that the material employed is so thoroughly disguised gives them a feeling of artistic dishonesty. The skill of these sculptors permits them to make exact copies of second-rate models and these, unfortunately, predominate. Nevertheless these sta-

¹⁵ The student must be careful to avoid confusion in those instances where a classical ivory statue has been dressed and decorated by the owner with wigs, clothes etc. until it looks, at first glance, like an ornate one. The wig is generally the give-away. Very few genuinely ornate statues have carved hair under their wig. Conversely, I have yet to see a classical statue without carved hair. Glass eyes are not significant: they are often found in classical statues both ivory and of wood. The presence of eyelashes, however, is a clincher: it is typically and exclusively a part of the ornate approach.

¹⁶ Again, a word of caution: many handsome classical figures have been later gessoed and heavily repainted, and sometimes wigs have been added. This sort of statue can be easily confused with an ornate figure.

tues cannot be overlooked as even the worst of them show some trace of a Philippine style.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The pictures that follow give a general idea of the appearance and stylistic range of Philippine colonial sculpture. Rather than show a variety of iconographic subjects I decided to concentrate on the image of the Immaculate Conception, partly because this image was the earliest to attract the special devotion of the Filipino people and partly because, resulting from the above, I had a very generous choice of examples at my disposal.¹⁷

The Immaculate Conception, iconographically speaking, is a contemplative Virgin in prayer. Her earliest representations date back to the *Beatos* of tenth century Spain where she is shown as the pre-existent or Apocalyptic Virgin, "a woman that wore the sun for her mantle, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars about her head."¹⁸ By the fifteenth century the image of the Immaculate Conception had evolved to the representation familiar to us today: a young Virgin with flowing hair, clothed in gleaming white with a blue mantle, hands joined in prayer, crushing a snake (the serpent of Genesis 3.15) and standing on a crescent moon—and sometimes on an orb as well. Sometimes images are quite properly provided with a sun and an aureole of stars, which are part of the apocalyptic imagery. Representations are found with or without crowns, the propriety of either depending on the nature of the individual image. I won't attempt to describe the great variety of symbolic and ornamental embellishments

¹⁷ I regret the omission of examples of popular and ornate sculpture in the official manner. The first is a very rare combination and I simply couldn't find an appropriate photograph. The second can easily be imagined by anyone acquainted with commercial religious imagery.

¹⁸ Apocalypse 12. *The New Testament* (R. A. Knox translation, London 1948, Vol. III p. 430).

that often surround images, often with the object of particularizing them, often simply because they look well.¹⁹

The popularity of the Immaculate Conception in the Philippines is hardly surprising. Many of the oldest and most famous images in the country are of the Immaculate Conception, including the very first among them, Nuestra Señora de Guia.²⁰

These famous images, being among the earliest known in the Islands are, almost without exception, of foreign make. From the point of view of Philippine sculpture their importance lies in the inspiration they provided. I have not reproduced any of them as their pictures are relatively easy to find.

The photographs that follow are arranged by style. I have not attempted a chronological classification.

¹⁹ A fascinating and quite detailed account of the evolution of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception can be found in Trens *María: Iconografía de la Virgen en el arte español* pp. 55-189.

²⁰ N. S. de Guia was found in a pandan grove by one of Legaspi's soldiers on 19 May 1571. The early Filipinos worshipped her as an idol before the coming of the Spaniards. Her provenance is disputed, some holding that she reached these shores as a result of shipwreck, others that she was brought by Chinese converts resulting from the fourteenth century mission of Fr. Odorico de Podernone to Fukien province. See: Congregantes Marianos *La Virgen María venerada en sus imágenes filipinas* pp. 1-11.

Other famous Philippine images that derive from the Immaculate Concepcion include N. S. de Caysasay (Taal, Batangas), the Purísima of Tanay (Rizal), N. S. de Antipolo also known as N. S. de la Paz y Buen Viaje, N. S. de Nasalambao, of particular interest because its iconography includes a fish net (Obando, Bulacan), N. S. de la Peregrina (Sampaloc, Manila), N. S. de la Buena Hora (Quiapo, Manila) and N. S. de Guadalupe (S. Nicolas, Cebu).



Angel riding on Chinese sea-lion decorating one of the beam-supports of the choir in the church in Aringay, La Unión. Free rendering in pen and ink by the author.

This is a highly formalized version of the Virgin of Caysasay, the original of which, having been discovered in 1811 floating in the Pandipit river, is shown standing on a ship hull instead of the usual crescent moon of the Immaculate Conception's iconography.

Images like this one were at one time common in Batangas judging from the number of examples that have survived. Affection has rubbed away most of the details of these figurines, replacing form with a high polish.

Soft wood statuette in the popular style, 18 cm. high. The robe was originally painted dark red with a floral design. Found in Lipa, Batangas, Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.





At first glance the brutal simplicity of this figure suggests a fetish or an idol rather than the Christian symbol of purity. However, if one mentally restores the wig (notice the slit to hold the wig's string in place) an expression of grave dignity and even tenderness begins to emerge.

Soft wood statuette in the popular style, with traces of paint. 25-1/2 cm. high. From barrio Betis, Guagua, Pampanga. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.

The smooth and gently rounded symmetry of this image effectively conveys a mood of quiet peace. Less easily explained is the "Chinese feeling" it produces. The treatment of the eyes may be a small contributing factor, but actually none of the obvious Chinese artistic conventions are respected or even suggested.

Polychromed statuette in soft wood, popular style. Its brilliant colors include a cream complexion with black hair, blue green cloak with scarlet lining, pink robes and a dark red base. 37 cm. high. Found in Bicol, Negros Occidental. From the Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.





This strongly designed, brilliantly colored image, with its strange anatomical proportions, is typical of popular statuettes found around the Bacoled area. The appearance of these images is so distinct that the student is tempted to assume the existence of a single, very prolific sculptor who once lived in Negros Occidental.

Soft wood statuette painted in light blue, white, gold, brown and orange. Found in Bacoled, Negros Occidental. From the Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.

◀ Bacoled popular figurines, usually squat and heavy when seen from the front are often of surprising gracefulness in profile. This example also has the characteristically brilliant color of the region: orange face, bright blue cloak on white robe, yellow crown, green cloud, red base. This statue never had a crescent—an unusual feature.

▶ Painted soft wood statuette in the popular style from Bacoled, Negros Occidental. 33 cm. high. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.



This figure, stiff and prim under its enormous crown, comes to life through the use of color: an orange face, a gold and red crown against blue-green; red dress with gold trim; blue-green cloak; yellow cherub on a green globe resting on a red base; orange crescent.

Medium hard wood statuette, polychromed. Popular style verging on classical. 38 cm. high. Found in Bacolod, Negros Occidental. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.



The ship hull which replaces the usual crescent identifies this veiled Immaculate Conception as Nuestra Señora de Cayasay, patroness of Taal, Batangas. The nun-like costume is decidedly unusual, as is the strangely static treatment of the robes. Medium hard wood statuette with traces of gesso, 34 cm. high. Popular style. Found in Lipa, Batangas. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.






This figure shows a curious mixture of renaissance and baroque influences, particularly in the contrast between the style of the clothes and the manner of their treatment. The sun is iconographically unusual though correct. A crescent used to form part of the globe. The back of the figure is hollowed out; it probably once held a relic.

Statue, classical style. Soft wood with traces of paint, 44 cm. high. From Angeles, Pampanga. Luis Ma. Araneta collection. Photograph by Nap. C. Jamir.



Arched Virgin, bareheaded, standing on Chinese clouds. The crescent has been lost. 

Hollow ivory statuette, classical style, 19-1/2 cm. high, from barrio Betis, Guagua, Pampanga. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.

An unusually complete piece of iconography. Notice the serpent, the halo, both unusual in this kind of image.

We can guess that the sculptor used a crude local engraving as his model because the Virgin's cloak, which is usually (and most conveniently) draped over the left arm is here draped over

the right. Mirror-images are common in popular engraving. Holy pictures were printed in the Philippines as early as the XVIIIth century.

Barcelonnette panel, classical style, hard wood with traces of gesso, 42 cm. high. Found in Barrio Betla, Quezaltenango, Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photo.



This veiled figure standing on formalized clouds with a cherub again suggests, irresistibly, a Chinese figurine, and an ivory one at that, due to the curve of the body. As usual only the holes that once held the crescent are left.

Polychromed soft wood, repainted. Classical style. 34-1/2 cm. high including base. Provenance unknown. Author's collection and photograph.





▲ The silhouette of this bareheaded Virgin almost suggests ceramics rather than wood. Hands and crescent were lost. The plug under the right arm indicates the probable position of a sun.

Statuette, classical style. Medium hard wood with traces of gesso. 35 cm. high. From Betanquer. Author's collection and photograph.

The Apocalyptic Virgin surrounded by her attributes with the Holy Spirit above and a human-faced serpent underneath. This type of representation preceded the familiar iconography of the Immaculate Conception and was particularly popular in Spain during the XVth century. It is known as a "Virgo tota pulchra," the much later example here, which combines Christ's clouds with the angel's garlands of late gothic drapery, is one of the glories of Philippine sculpture.

Polychrome retable in hard wood, classical style, 300 x 100 cm, without frame. Fusing church. Rural province. Photograph by Nap.







The dryness of this symmetrical, almost hieratic composition is relieved by the wonderfully warm and human expression of the face. Despite the fact that both crescent and hands were lost, this easily remains one of the finest existing pieces of colonial sculpture.

Statue, classical style, hard wood with traces of paint, 37-1/2 cm. high. Provenance unknown. Luis Ma. Arana collection; photograph by Nap. C. Jamir.

This figure, almost without Chinese influence, shows the use of a late renaissance model and considerable skill on the part of the sculptor who, nevertheless, has subtly shortened the human proportions. The crescent has been lost.

Statuette, classical style, medium hard wood, 45 cm. high. From Barrio San Toribio, Lipa, Batangas. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.



Crowned Virgin standing on a globe with a highly formalized serpent bearing an equally formalized fruit. The crescent has been lost. This model was evidently a popular one. Several almost identical pieces, probably executed by the same sculptor, have been found in Batangas.

Statuette, classical style, medium hard wood with traces of paint, 43 cm. high, from Lipa, Batangas. Arturo R. Luz collection. Author's photograph.



Panels such as this generally served as the centerpiece of a small retablo attached to a side-altar. The belt on this image—its only unusual feature—identifies it as an Augustinian image, probably Nuestra Señora de la Correa (Virgen de la Consolación) of Intramuros.

Hard wood panel in relief, stained, frame separate, 62 x 44 cm. classical style. Provenance unknown. Luis Ma. Araneta collection. Photograph by Nap C. Jamir.







Another Virgin of Caysasay standing on her ship, this time, however, is overpoweringly influenced by the Chinese tradition that at first glance the figure looks like an ordinary Kwen-Yin an impression underlined by the soft curves of the drapery.

Medium hard wood statuette, unpainted, 32 cm. high, Classical style, Found in barrio Betis, Guagua, Pampanga. Arturo R. Luz Collection. Author's photograph.

An unusual crowned
image dressed in
bedice, heavily
fringed and flowered
pink robes and a
gracefully undulated
dark green cloak
symmetrically draped
over both arms. The
back of the figure
is completely blank.
Its crescent at the
base has been lost.
Statuette, classical
style, polychromed
soft wood, 39 cm.
high, from Batangas.
Edward T. Brennan
collection. Author's
photograph.





The proportions of this statue are so unusual—the extra long neck, the enormous eyes—that one is almost tempted to reject it as Philippine work. I show it partly as an artistic puzzle, partly because the formalized elegance of its proportions demand that it be shown in hopes that someone will shed light on its provenance.

Ivory face and hands, tinted. Wig. Robes and crown are probably later additions. Classical style [7] Height approximately one meter. Baseng church, La Union. Photograph by Dr. Benito F. Legarda Jr.

A late representation of the Apocalyptic Virgin. Notice how the use of real clothes, by hiding the twisted shape of the statue underneath, manages to give this originally emotional figure an assumed air of placid repose.

Statuette in the ornate style. Ivory face with wig and glass eyes; ivory hands; gilt metal sun, moon and halo with ten stars. Clothes of brocade, lace and embroidery. Wooden body concealed. Wooden orb with serpent and stand painted and gilt. 56 cm. high. From the Teresa Crisólogo collection, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. Photograph by Roger S. Keyes and Michael D. Duhr.





Nuestra Señora de Guila, readily identifiable by the palm leaves of her richly gilt stand. A late version of the eldest and one of the most popular images in the Philippines.

Statuette with tinted ivory head and hands, glass eyes, wig, gilt crown and halo with twelve stars, cloth robes embroidered with gold thread. Wooden body and stand, the latter gilt. Ornate style, 68 cm. high with stand. From the Mariano S. Florentino collection, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. Photograph by Roger S. Keyes and Michael D. Dobry.



The crossed hands and swirling robes of this image bring to mind, however coarsely, Murillo's "Parish."

Ivory head with glass eyes and wig; ivory hands. Soft wood body polychromed and gilt; 34 cm. high. From the collection of Dr. Jose N. Larra, provenance unknown.

Statuette. Ornate style.





The ornate style ends on a note of confusion. The natural, almost prosaic appearance of this typical late figure seems to contradict its supernatural symbolism. The material of the statue becomes a puzzle in its own right. Is it plaster? Is it ivory? painted wood? Does it make any difference at this point?

As a matter of fact it is ivory, painted and gilt. Ornate style. Glass eyes. Gilt metal halo. Artificial flowers. 20-1/2 cm. high. The whole arrangement is preserved under a glass dome. From the collection of Dr. J. P. Celis. Probably made in Manila towards the end of the nineteenth century. Photograph by the author.





Another Virgin of Caysay standing on her ship, this time, however, so overpoweringly influenced by the Chinese tradition that at first glance the figure looks like an ordinary Kwan-Yin an impression underlined by the soft curves of the drapery.

Medium hard wood statuette, unpainted, 32 cm. high. Classical style. Found in barrio Betis, Guagua, Pampanga. Arturo R. Luz Collection. Author's photograph.

An unusual crowned
image dressed in
bodice, heavily
fringed and flowered
pink robes and a
gracefully undulated
dark green cloak
symmetrically draped
over both arms. The
back of the figure
is completely blank.
Its crescent at the
base has been lost.
Statuette, classical
style, polychromed
soft wood, 39 cm.
high, from Betangas.
Edward T. Brannen
collection. Author's
photograph.





The proportions of this statue are so unusual—the extra long neck, the enormous eyes—that one is almost tempted to reject it as Philippino work. I show it partly as an artistic puzzle, partly because the formalized elegance of its proportions demand that it be shown in hopes that someone will shed light on its provenance.

Ivory face and hands, tinted. Wig. Robes and crown are probably later additions. Classical style (?) Height approximately one meter. Basing church, La Union. Photograph by Dr. Benito F. Lagarda Jr.

A late representation of the Apocalyptic Virgin, *Notice* how the use of real clothes, by hiding the twisted shape of the statue underneath, manages to give this originally emotional figure an assumed air of placid repose.

Statuette in the *ce-
note* style. Ivory face
with wig and glass
eyes; ivory hands;
gilt metal sun, moon
and halo with ten
stars. Clothes of
brocade, lace and
embroidery. Wood-
en body concealed.
Wooden orb with
serpent and stand
painted and gilt. 56
cm. high. From the
Terese Crisólogo col-
lection, Vigan, Illo-
cos Sur. Photograph
by Roger S. Keyes
and Michael D. De-
bry.





Nuestra Señora de Guila, readily identifiable by the palm leaves of her richly gilt stand. A late version of the oldest and one of the most popular images in the Philippines.

Statuette with tinted ivory head and hands, glass eyes, wig, gilt crown and halo with twelve stars, cloth robes embroidered with gold thread. Wooden body and stand, the latter gilt. Ornate style, 68 cm. high with stand. From the Mariano S. Florentino collection, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. Photograph by Roger S. Keyes and Michael D. Dobry.

The crossed hands and swirling robes of this image bring to mind, however remotely, Murillo's "Purísima."

Statuette, Ornate style.

Ivory head with glass eyes and wig; ivory hands; Soft wood body polychromed and gilt; 38 cm. high. From the collection of Dr. Jose N. Lerma, provenance unknown.





The ornate style ends on a note of confusion. The natural, almost prosaic appearance of this typical late figure seems to contradict its supernatural symbolism. The material of the statue becomes a puzzle in its own right. Is it plaster? Is it ivory? painted wood? Does it make any difference at this point?

As a matter of fact it is ivory, painted and gilt. Ornate style. Glass eyes. Gilt metal halo. Artificial flowers. 20-1/2 cm. high. The whole arrangement is preserved under a glass dome. From the collection of Dr. J. P. Celis. Probably made in Manila towards the end of the nineteenth century. Photograph by the author.

APPENDIX I

Collections of Philippine Colonial Sculpture

The best way to see *official* statues is to visit churches, particularly in the provinces. A good deal of material was destroyed in Manila during World War II but there is plenty left for the student, especially in San Agustin, Santa Ana, San Francisco del Monte and Parañaque.

Statuettes in the *informal* manner are elusive. Unless one has the time and patience to track down individual items from house to house the best course of action is to visit private collections.

To the best of my knowledge the public and university museums have nothing. I hope this article will help to correct the situation.

Private collectors have done a magnificent job, first in drawing attention to the field, then in selecting and preserving some of its finest examples from probable destruction. This destruction caused, not by malice, but by ignorance and neglect is painfully evident everywhere. A brief listing of the more important private collections may be of use to scholars. Unless mentioned otherwise, all collections are located in Manila.

The Luis Ma. Araneta collection is unquestionably the most important in existence, whether in sheer size, range of style, or general quality of individual pieces. It is particularly rich in retables, large wooden statues, and in solid ivory statuettes. Condition is superb throughout. I hope that this magnificent collection will eventually get catalogued.

Dr. Jose Lerma's collection is slightly smaller but being one of the earliest made, it includes examples of extraordinary interest. Items were carefully chosen and include a wide range of material. However, almost everything has been thoroughly re-

painted and restored. An attractive illustrated booklet exists describing the collection in general terms.

Another important "pre-war" collection belongs to Dr. Felipe Resurrección Hidalgo. This one is strong in classical wooden statues and includes an astonishing ivory crucifixion with blown glass figures. There are a few retables but these have been repainted. Quality is high throughout.

The distinguished painter, Arturo R. Luz, has brought together the finest and largest existing collection of wood statuettes in the popular and classical styles. As might be expected, quality and condition are superb. This is the only collection where the original coloring of popular statuary can be seriously studied. The collection also includes a few early ivories.

Richly costumed, jewelled, and bewigged ivories in the ornate style can best be seen in the Syquia-Quirino and Crisólogo collections in Vigan. Máximo Vicente of Manila has brought together a number of ivory heads and hands of all types.

Many small collections and individual statues of merit exist in Spain and the Philippines. The smaller collections of interest are those of Dr. José P. Bantug, Da. Gloria Zóbel de Padilla, the Paterno family, Dr. Jesús P. Celis, the Locsin family of Silay, the Pardo de Tavera family, the Asa museum, the Gálvez Art Gallery and finally, my own rather small one. I should like to have my attention drawn to other collections or to fine individual pieces I may have overlooked.

I also want to mention the great pre-war collections formed by Dr. José P. Bantug and by the Most Reverend Mariano Madriaga, Bishop of Lingayen-Dagupan. Both were destroyed during World War II. The effort they involved and the example they presented deserve to be remembered with considerable gratitude.

APPENDIX II

Bibliography of Philippine Iconography

I have found nothing on Philippine colonial sculpture *per se*. I list books and articles that I found useful in writing this article, making a few comments that may be of use in guiding possible students of this field:

(A) LITERATURE THAT TOUCHES ON PHILIPPINE SCULPTURE.

1. Bantug, Jose P. "Philippine Ancient Arts" (in Galang pp. 171-201. New edition Vol. VII pp. 29-32. See no. 3 *infra*) illus.

A fine set of illustrations of colonial work of all sorts, much of it destroyed during World War II and closely related to our subject. General text. No measurements or descriptions.

2. Congregantes Marianos de los colegios de la Compañía de Jesús en Manila. *La Virgen María venerada en sus imágenes filipinas*. Manila. 1904. 190 pp. illus.

Detailed historical notices, often illustrated, of the principal Marian images in the Philippines. Some images are described. An extremely useful book.

3. Galang, Zoilo M. *Encyclopedia of the Philippines*. Vol. IV "Art." Manila. P. Vera. 1935. 560 pp. illus.

Pertinent articles are separately listed. A new edition has recently been put out with 2 volumes on art: Manila 1953, Vols. VII and VIII.

4. *Golden Jubilee Souvenir Program 1907-1957 Our Lady of the Rosary of "La Naval" of Manila*. Manila. 1957. 95 pp. illus.

Some biographical material on "La Naval" not easily found elsewhere.

5. Lerma, Jose. *A Treasury of Art and Relics of the Past Four Centuries in the Philippines*. (Manila. Benipayo Press. Probably 1957). 24 pp. illus.

Photographs of some of the principal items in the collection, sometimes with attributions and provenance. General text. No descriptions or measurements.

6. Perales Francisco. "Retablos en Manila." *Hispanidad* Year 2, No. 13 (Manila, U.S.T., January 1941) 14-18.

5 pictures of retables in Intramuros now destroyed. Appreciative text. No descriptions.

7. Perales, Francisco. "Retablos de la Pasión en Filipinas." *Hispanidad* year 2, No. 16 (Manila, U.S.T., April 1941) 13-23.

23 photographs of carvings in the pre-war Bantug collection, now destroyed. No explanatory text.

8. Repetti, W. C., S.J. *Pictorial Records and Traces of the Society of Jesus in the Philippine Islands and Guam Prior to 1768*. Manila. Manila Observatory. 1938. 115 pp. illus.

Useful book, highly illustrated, that permits the dating of certain images. No descriptions of materials, size or technique.

9. Reyes, Pedro O. et al. *A Pictorial History of the Philippines*. (n.p., n.d. but probably Manila 1945-1955) 512 pp. illus.

Pages 266-274 reproduce, in very bad printing, famous colonial images, mainly taken from "Congregantes Marianos" (No. 2 *supra*). General text but no descriptions.

10. Romuáldez, Norberto. "Filipino Culture." (In Galang pp. 66-85. New edition Vol. VIII pp. 8-22. See no. 3 *supra*).

Generalities on sculpture.

11. Rosa, Fabián de la. "Brief History of Plastic-Graphic Arts in the Philippines." (In Galang pp. 35-40. New edition Vol. VII pp. 1-20. See no. 3 *supra*).

Vague generalities on colonial sculpture. The author feels that "the calling of the painter and the sculptor in the colonies of Spain was made difficult because of the interference of a class of individuals well-known for their systematic bigotry in opposition to the independence of art." Personally, I find it hard to imagine what this "independent art" could have looked like in the 17th-18th century Philippines. I don't think it ever existed except for decoration and for pagan religious art. Art is notoriously hard to control or suppress. Frankly, I think the Church definitely encouraged art in the colonial period. I fail to see how any other conclusion is possible to anyone acquainted with the field.

12. (Sapiña, Rev. Mariano) *The History of the Augustinian Monastery of Santo Niño of Cebu*. (n.p., n.d. but probably Manila before 1930-1940) 59 pp. of which 38 are plates.

Interesting illustrations of Philippine ornamental woodcarving and of important early imported statues.

13. Zaide, Gregorio F. *Catholicism in the Philippines*. Manila. U.S.T. 1937. 239 pp. illus.

Pages 159-163 touch on late religious carvings in a general way.

14. Zóbel de Ayala, Fernando. "Filipino Artistic Expression." *PHILIPPINE STUDIES* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sept. 1953) 125-130.

A possible approach to the definition of the Philippine style.

15. Zóbel de Ayala, Fernando. "Silver Ex-Votos in Ilocos." *PHILIPPINE STUDIES* Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sept. 1957) 261-267 illus.

Related subject. No detailed descriptions or measurements.

(b) GENERAL LITERATURE OF USE TO THIS STUDY.

16. Subias Galter, Juan. *El Arte popular en España*. Barcelona. 1948.

Chapter, illustrations, on Spanish popular imagery.

17. Kelemen, Paul. *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America*. New York. 1951.

Excellent text and illustrations on related material. Several illuminating comments on Philippine architecture and on the general lack of information in regard to Philippine colonial art.

18. Mâle, Emile. *L'Art religieux apres le Concile de Trent*. Paris. 1932.

This masterpiece of art history requires no description. It covers the period.

19. Trens, Manuel. *María: Iconografía de la Virgen en el arte español*. Madrid. 1947.

An extremely thorough, well-illustrated book on Spanish Marian iconography. Very useful.