

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

The Philippine-American Cultural Center

Dalmacio Martin

Philippine Studies vol. 8, no. 4 (1960): 827–833

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

yet combed; wool already combed and worked into skeins; a mirror in a wooden case with a highly polished parchment cover; a necklace; and several little amulets for protection against the Evil Eye. And down at the very bottom of all this feminine gear was a bundle of papyri written upon and folded over so as to make it fit into the skin bag.

That was the final discovery of the archeological explorations. At the time Mr. Yadin delivered his talk, the finds were still under study and no definite conclusions had been reached as to their nature or date. The papyri were still in the process of being unfolded and deciphered.

JOSEPH J. KAVANAGH

The Philippine-American Cultural Center

Lincoln Square in New York City reminds every visitor to that metropolis of what money, used properly, can do to encourage art and culture. Most big cities abroad have similar centers or places where the best and the finest in the people's cultural heritage can be treasured, developed and transmitted from one generation to another.

Manila has long been pointed out as one of the most backward cities when it comes to the presentation of art and the preservation of our cultural accomplishments. A city of almost two million people, Manila should, if it were the capital of a more progressive country, be able to boast of several museums, art galleries, public libraries, theatres (not just cinemas), parks, and the like. The small city of Copenhagen, with about half a million inhabitants, has over twenty different museums and galleries, two big theatres and two big public libraries, not to mention the 7-hectare recreation park in the heart of the city.

This story of our prospective cultural center can very well begin with the exchange of diplomatic notes begun during the administration of President Quirino and concluded during that of President Magsaysay. President Garcia was the Secretary of Foreign Affairs when the agreement was signed. The subject of the agreement was informational media of U.S. manufacture, that is, periodicals, books, textbooks and other articles which may be used to convey information. It enabled U.S. producers of such media materials to continue sending their products to the Philippines. The U.S. Government guaranteed

payment in dollars, even though the Filipino consumer paid for them in pesos. Thus the agreement facilitated currency convertibility from pesos to dollars with respect to this item, and made it unnecessary for the Central Bank to draw from its carefully husbanded dollar reserves to pay for media materials from the U.S.

IMG is active in nine other countries: Burma, Indonesia, Israel, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, Turkey, Vietnam and Yugoslavia. Where a country has improved economically to a point where the program is no longer necessary, such as in Taiwan, Chile, Austria, France, Germany, Holland, Italy and Norway, the IMG is discontinued.

To get this world-wide program started about eleven years ago, the United States Congress voted a revolving fund of \$29 million. Because of the operations in the Philippines of several U.S. agencies and installations, the pesos which American dollars have acquired through the program were easily put to good use.

There is a provision, however, in the original agreement to the effect that if in any one year the total volume of media exportation to the Philippines by American producers exceeded \$2.7 million (the computed annual average during the five years prior to the agreement), the excess, which will of course be in pesos, "shall be available to the Government of the United States of America for expenditures in the Philippines for such educational, cultural, informational or other activities as are proposed by the Government of the United States of America and approved by the Government of the Philippines." After the Program got under way here, and with the policy latterly adopted by the Central Bank of channeling all book and magazine importation from the United States through IMG, the first unencumbered year netted an excess of ₱1.7 million.

So much for the money-raising part of the IMG agreement. The matter that will probably interest the reader of this account is the succession of formal plans for the utilization of the excess pesos, approximately ₱1.7 million the first year and approximately ₱1.4 million the second year. The exact total for the two years was ₱3,257,367.35. There was definite agreement from the very beginning that the money should be used for worthy educational and/or cultural projects in the Philippines.

The first formal presentation of the Americans' idea on how the IMG pesos should be utilized was on May 26, 1958. At that meeting of the IMG Committee, attended by Messrs. Wayne Conner, Michael F. Cross and William H. Morris of the U.S. Embassy, it was proposed that the first-year accrual of about ₱1.7 million be used, first, to form a large public library to serve the Philippines, and, secondly,

to support a program of teaching English. It was further proposed that the project be bi-national in scope and control.

The Secretary of Education, under whose general supervision the IMG has been operating since its inception, was of the firm belief that instead of a bi-national project, one which would be distinctly Philippine and administratively in Filipino hands should be undertaken. It was thought that this would be the best way to eliminate possible sources of future difficulties. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs gave his full support to this idea.

On July 8, 1958, a meeting was called by the Secretary of Education at which were present all the members of the IMG Philippine Committee as well as three officials of the U.S. Embassy in Manila. This is how the Secretary of Education proposed that the P1.7 million should be used:

1. Libraries under the supervision of the Department of Education, the University of the Philippines Library, the Bureau of Public Libraries, the Institute of Science and Technology, public-school libraries (50%).

2. Science teaching and science equipment (20%).

3. Adult education projects (10%).

4. An expanded audio-visual project (10%).

5. Teaching of English (10%).

6. IMG administrative expenses (to be deducted from the other items).

Hope was also entertained that some of the peso accruals might be converted into dollars so that such items as science equipment, books for libraries, etc. (asked for by the Philippine group) might be procurable at the sources abroad.

The discussion ended in a stalemate. The officials of the American Embassy wrote on September 12, 1958 that the projects "most likely to obtain the approval of the Congress of the United States are those of a capital nature and of lasting physical value to the host country and definitely not budgetary in nature." In other words, the Philippine proposal of July 8 was not acceptable. A week later, the American Embassy officials submitted a revised proposal for a cultural center in Manila. This would consist of a building whose design "will provide a worthy addition to the Manila skyline and...[which] will be entirely self-supporting from a financial standpoint." It was thought that the proposed center would: (1) provide offices and meeting rooms for more than twenty cultural organizations in Manila; (2) provide central secretarial and publicity services for these organizations; (3) provide an auditorium for theatrical and musical

performances, lectures, etc., with a seating capacity of 1,100; (4) include an exhibition hall or gallery; (5) provide work rooms for art classes or demonstrations and music rehearsal rooms; (6) be equipped to show educational and art films; (7) have a well-stocked public library.

The Philippine panel, in turn, presented a counter-proposal which was a revision of its earlier suggestion. It was proposed that the IMG funds be spent as follows: (1) 20% for the improvement of English teaching in the Philippine; (2) 40% for the improvement of libraries under the supervision of the Department of Education; and (3) 40% for the establishment of a Language Arts Center. The old University of the Philippines compound on Taft Avenue, consisting of 11,000 square meters, was mentioned as a possible site for the Center.

This counter-proposal was submitted in October 1958. The answer from the American Embassy came in less than a month. In summary, the Embassy outlined that: (1) the project to be undertaken should not be in conflict with the work of earlier organizations; (2) it should not conflict with the activities of other USA agencies like the ICA; (3) it should be a project using pesos mainly; (4) it should be under a bi-national civic organization, without direct legal control by either government; and (5) it should appeal to the U.S. Congress as something significantly different and relatively permanent in nature.

The cultural-center idea, "bi-national in purpose, scope and control... seems to meet these conditions the best... Such a center would be devoted to encouraging stronger links between the Philippines and the United States." The project, the answer continued, should aim at self-support. It should be non-profit and should not be subject to taxation. One major point was stressed: the project should not be under the direct control of either government.

On the same date, the U.S. Embassy submitted to the Department of Foreign Affairs Note No. 478 formally proposing the construction of "a building to house a cultural center in Manila, which shall be bi-national in purpose, control and operation."

Some time before this, an unofficial report from a Philippine source in Washington stated that the bi-national center might be assigned \$200,000 and an international school, to which Filipino and Asian students would be admitted to study Western culture and civilization, might receive \$600,000 of support. But this was, it was stressed, an unofficial plan from certain American quarters in that capital.

By December of 1958, it was clear to the officials of the Department of Education that the cultural-center idea might be the best line of action to pursue. A conference was held with officials of the University of the Philippines on December 10. This was because the University of the Philippines then had a plan for building a ₱1.5 million auditorium. How could this IMG peso fund help in the financing of the multipurpose U.P. auditorium? Complete accord was reached with the University authorities as to the bi-national purpose and scope of the Diliman auditorium, but not as to the operation thereof. The University, under its charter, would have to be the administering authority if the center was to be built on the Diliman campus. The Philippine panel saw some advantage in this idea since it would solve the problem of operational expenses for an indefinite future time. The President of the University expressed willingness to recommend to his architects all reasonable changes which might be proposed in order to make the auditorium serve the ends sought by the U.S. Embassy.

In the meeting with the American officials held on December 17, 1958, presided over by Secretary Serrano and attended by Ambassador Bohlen, the cultural-center idea was formally accepted by both panels. The only matters left to be settled were: the location of the center, the details of the bi-national control or management, and the manner of self-support for the center after its establishment.

On February 13, 1959 the Secretary of Education called a meeting and requested U.S. Embassy officials to attend. At that meeting the Secretary indicated that a site could easily be had on Taft Avenue. A ₱200,000 building had already been planned by the Philippine Government. The site alone would cost a few million pesos, and since it would be made available without cost to the center, the ₱1.7 million of IMG funds would be left intact for an impressive building plus equipment. The control and the management of the center continued to be an unsettled point.

When it was bruited about that certain quarters in Manila had proposed the abrogation of the IMG Agreement, presumably inspired in part by the inability to reach complete accord on the use to be made of the ₱1.7 million fund, the Philippine Bookdealers Association and the Filipino Printers Association submitted separate memoranda recommending that the Agreement be retained. The general public had also begun to show concern for the continuance of the IMG Agreement.

About three months passed by. The end of February 1959 marked the termination of another fiscal year for IMG. Another accrual of roughly ₱1.4 million was reported officially, raising the total sum to ₱3,257,367.35. On August 7, 1959, the IMG committee approved a

resolution requesting the representative from the Department of Foreign Affairs on the committee to look into the feasibility of an early continuation of the discussions between the two governments.

A cabinet reorganization resulted in the appointment of a new Secretary of Education. On October 8 a meeting was called by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs to resume the discussions. A new exploration of all the phases involved was made. The basis of the new discussion was Note No. 273 of the U.S. Embassy dated September 25, 1959. The bi-national character of the management of the center was reiterated and the wish expressed that this be through a non-governmental board of trustees composed of eleven people in no way connected with the national governments of either country. The nomination for the membership would be made by four well-known Philippine civic organizations and four equally well-known American civic organizations in the Philippines. The note specified that the site would be in downtown Manila, but it was later agreed that it could be in Quezon City. A maximum of two million pesos was set for the construction of the Center. It was thought that the balance might be used to support professorial chairs in a university to be determined later, literary activities for writers, scholarships for graduate students in Philippine institutions, seminars and related activities in the teaching of English, subsidies in the field of art and music, and supplementation of funds for the completion of memorials of national significance.

As a result of the meeting of October 8, a Note from the Department of Foreign Affairs was sent to the U.S. Embassy wherein the Philippine Government accepted the main ideas of the U.S. Embassy. In addition, the Philippines proposed that the priorities in regard to the supplementary projects should in all instances be determined by agreement between the Department of Education and the U.S. Embassy.

One important item of the agreement was the matter of tax exemption for the activities and facilities of the project. On May 4, 1960, the Cabinet, through the representations of the Secretaries of Education, Finance and Foreign Affairs, acted favorably in support of this recommendation. The second big point, the site, was formalized by Presidential directive setting aside a portion of a ten-hectare site in Quezon City Park.

The members of the Board of Trustees of the Center, now duly incorporated, are the following: Vidal A. Tan (chairman), Benito F. Legarda, Bibiano L. Meer, Antonio Quintos, Mrs. Pura K. Ledesma,

Father Horacio de la Costa, S.J., Mrs. B. R. Baker, Earl Carroll, Newland Baldwin, Charles Robert Butler, R. W. Pockmire. It was hoped that this bi-national membership of the Board would provide a representative cross-section of Philippine-American cultural activities.

DALMACIO MARTIN

Theology for Sisters

Last Ascension Thursday in Baguio His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines (Archbishop Siino) conferred on some thirty Sisters diplomas testifying to their successful completion of a four-summer course in theology. The school which they attended is affiliated with the Regina Mundi Pontifical Institute established in Rome by the Sacred Congregation for Religious to promote the more perfect formation of Sisters in the sacred sciences.

The school has been functioning quietly and efficiently for the past four summers with a total enrollment of about 90 Sisters, drawn from at least twenty different religious congregations working in the Philippines. Its aim is to give the Sisters as solid a foundation as possible in theology to enrich both their own personal lives and their teaching apostolate. Since many of the Sisters have already acquired degrees in various branches of education and are veterans of the classroom, they come to the summer courses with the background that enables them to profit from a course necessarily crowded with rich matter.

The Baguio Summer School is part of a world-wide movement fostered and encouraged by Rome to bring Sisters into contact with the original sources of theology. Canon Law provides specific legislation in great detail for the intellectual formation of the clergy but is almost silent on the intellectual formation of Sisters. Working out an analogy of law, modern writers are starting to spell out the ideal plan to be followed from postulancy onwards which would enable Sisters to work for academic degrees in accordance with their talents. The Sisters themselves, as is only right, are among the leaders in the movement, especially those Sisters who have had the advantages of higher studies in various fields. It is hoped that what was once extraordinary in the intellectual formation of Sisters will become routine procedure.

The course given in Baguio included as background matter four units in Philosophy and one in Sociology. The remainder of the