

philippine studies

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

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Nicanor G. Tiongson

Philippine Studies vol. 46, no. 2 (1998): 135–150

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

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Nicanor G. Tiongson



For three hundred thirty-three years, Spain ruled the Philippine Islands—indirectly, through the Viceroy of Mexico and the Council of the Indies, from 1565 when Miguel Lopez de Legazpi arrived in Cebu in Central Philippines, to 1815 when the galleon trade, the lifeline between Mexico and the Philippines, was abolished; and directly from Spain, from 1815 to 1898 when the Filipinos declared their Independence from Spain.

For two hundred fifty years or two-thirds of the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines, Acapulco and Manila were directly linked by the galleons, which brought luxury goods from China to Mexico and Europe, and vice versa. The galleons brought to Manila Mexicans of many types and classes—*criollos*, *indios*, and *mestizos*. Rafael Bernal (1965, 109–10) tells us what their professions were:

Unos eran los oficiales del rey, miembros de la Audiencia, de la administracion publica y los comerciantes, a quienes podremos llamar los hombres de intramuros. Otros eran los clerigos, obispos, sacerdotes, misioneros miembros de las diferentes ordenes religiosas. Los terceros eran los "guachinangos," los hombres del pueblo, los soldados y marinos, anonimos, olvidados, absorbidos en su totalidad por la poblacion filipina.

(Some were officers of the King, members of the Audiencia, of public administration and merchants, whom we can call the people within the walls. Others were clerics, bishops, priests, missionaries who belonged to the different religious orders. The third were the common people, the town inhabitants, the soldiers and sailors, nameless, forgotten, completely absorbed into the general Philippine population.)

It was these Mexicans—and most especially, the Mexican friars perhaps—who introduced into the Islands, "las ideas, las palabras,

las maneras de vida, las artesanias y las artes" which were transplanted into an Asian context (109).

Although the last galleon sailed in 1815, the Mexican-Philippine relations did not end in that year. Many of the Mexicans, both lay and religious, who had entered the country before 1815 remained in the Islands, even as other Mexican religious and officials continued to come into the Philippines till the end of the nineteenth century. Through these men, more Mexican customs and traditions were introduced.

Vast and varied were the areas in which the cultures of Mexico and the Philippines met and mixed—flora, food and fashion, language and literature, religious beliefs and imagery, music and dance. In theater, similarities may be discerned between the *posadas* and the *panunuluyan*, playlets dramatizing the search for an inn in Bethlehem by Maria and Jose; the *pastolera* and the *pastores*, customs focusing on the adoration of the Christ Child by the shepherds; the *Colloquio de Herodes* and the *Tatlong Hari*, plays which reenact the search of the three Kings for the newly-born Christ child; the *pasion* and the *sinakulo*, which are both passion plays in verse; the *Judas* of both countries, which feature the image of the Iscariot being exploded with firecrackers on Holy Saturday evening (Mexico) or early Sunday morning (Philippines); the *moros y cristianos* and the *sayaw*, both of which dramatize the fight between Moors and Christians and the eventual triumph of the latter; the *Santiago* and the *kinabayo*, which depict Santiago coming to the rescue of the Christians who have been defeated by the Moors. Similarly, Rafael Bernal avers that a Jesuit from Cuernavaca, Mexico transplanted to Marinduque in the nineteenth century the tradition of the *moriones*, a playlet dramatizing the martyrdom of Longinus, the Roman soldier who was converted to Christianity after he witnessed Christ's resurrection (123). Finally, there might also be a connection between the *Colloquio de Santa Elena de la Cruz* and the *Colloquio* (also called *Arakyo*, *Tibag*, *Elena*), which narrate the story of how Santa Elena and her son, Constantino, searched for and found the cross of Jesus Christ.

Many, indeed, seem to be the similarities between Mexican and Philippine folk theater. This article discusses only three major dramatic forms, for which enough documentation from both Mexico and the Philippines was found: the *posadas* and the *panunuluyan*, the *pastolera* and the *pastores*, the *moros y cristianos* and the *sayaw*. The study traces the parallelisms between these forms—in subject matter, narrative structure, costumes, music, dance, audience, occasion, and other performance details. It does not, however, draw definite

conclusions about which form originated from what, because the data available to the writer do not as yet warrant such conclusions.

Posadas and Panunuluyan

First of the Christmas traditions, the posadas, a nine-day celebration which ends on 24 December, is a custom native to Mexico which was already being performed in that country by the end of the eighteenth century (Magana Esquivel 1958, 15). Like other festivities initiated by the Spanish Friars, this custom may have been introduced to take the place of the aztec feast of Huitzilopochtli on the same dates.

In Mexico, the playlet which reenacts the search for an inn by Jose and Maria in Bethlehem begins on 16 December and ends on 24 December, when the creche called *nacimiento* depicting the birth of Jesus is finally revealed. Every evening of this nine-day period, the faithful assemble in a procession with candles and little lamps, carrying the images of Maria and Jose and singing litanies in verse. The procession then stops in front of a designated house, whose doors are closed. In a dialogue of songs (accompanied by tambourines and string instruments) between the *santos peregrinos* outside and the houseowner, the travelers beg for admission into the house and are refused. After several importunings and after Jose reveals that the lady he is with is the *reina del cielo*, the gates are opened and the "travelers" and their companions are admitted into the house or the yard. The posadas ends with the breaking of the traditional *piñata*, a clay pot filled with fruits and sweets and covered with cardboard and "Chinese paper" to look like a star, a sheep or other animals. The pot is hung from the top and can be manipulated to go up and down. One by one, blindfolded little children are given a chance to smash the pot with a bat. When the pot is finally broken, all the children scramble for the goodies from the *piñata* (Arte Mexicano 1976, 70).

In the Philippines, the posadas finds its counterpart in the panunuluyan (literally, seeking entry) or *panawagan* (literally, calling out) and *maytinis* (literally, matins) of the Tagalog provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, and Cavite; and *Kagharong* or *Kagharong-harong* (literally, going to houses) in the Bicol provinces of Catanduanes, Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur. As in Mexico, the panunuluyan is a Christmas playlet reenacting the search for an inn by Maria and Jose in Bethlehem. It is said that a panunuluyan, performed for nine days from 16 to 24 December like the Mexican posadas, used to be

found in Bulacan, Bulacan. Today, however, most panunuluyan are performed only on the night of 24 December, from about seven or eight in the evening to twelve midnight when the mass is celebrated to dramatize Christ's nativity.

The most common type of panunuluyan is a procession with candle and brass band, featuring two *karos* (floats) or *andas* (biers) bearing the images of San Jose (in green and yellow, carrying a staff and wearing a wide-brimmed peasant hat) and the pregnant Birhen Maria (in blue and white, likewise wearing a hat and sometimes carrying a bag of clothes). Following the images are one male and one female singer and the brass band which plays slow *marchas* as the procession winds its leisurely way through the town's principal streets.

The procession leaves the church patio at about seven in the evening and goes to about three or more houses located in different parts of the barrio/town. At each designated house, the procession stops. To the accompaniment of the band, the male and female singers representing the Holy Couple sing a mournful plea to the *maybahay* (houseowners), begging them for a room for the night for Maria who is about to give birth. The dialogue, which is cast in the octosyllabic quatrains associated with the *korido* and called *hakira* or *romance*, is sung in the style of the *kundiman*, the native love song which is slow and sad:

San Jose:

O ginoo pong maybahay
Magdalita kami'y dungawin
Ampunin at kahabagan
Sa mahal mo pong tahanan.

Saint Joseph:

Dear sir who owns this house
Have pity, look out the window
Have mercy and let us in
Unto your beloved house.

Upang lumubay ang pagod
Naming magkasi at irog
At ang puyat ay umuntos
Sa mahal mong pagkukop.

So our tiredness may end
We who love and cherish each other
So we can recover sleep
Under your beloved care.

From the balcony of the house, the *maybahay* questions them:

Maybahay (Koro):

Tabi po't may itatanong
Saan sila buhat ngayon
Saan naman magtutuloy
Nitong gabing inyong layon.

Houseowner (Chorus):

Pardon me but we'd like to know
Where do you come from
And where are you headed
What seek you on a night like this?

After two or three exchanges of verses, the houseowners turn the couple away because they "have no room to spare." The couple bids the houseowners good-bye, the procession moves on to the next house, where a similar plea is made by the two. In this and in subsequent houses, they are again turned away because the couple are poor or because the real owner is not home or because it is dangerous to let strangers in at night (reasons may be improvised). A few minutes before midnight, the procession returns to the church, now full of people waiting for the mass. Here at the Gloria of the sung mass, the *belen* or nativity scene is unveiled/revealed at the altar to denote the birth of the Savior. (Tiongson 1975, 41-44; 326-28)

There are many variations of this basic structure of the panunuluyan. In some towns, the singers themselves are dressed in costumes like those of the images on the karo or andas. In others, there are no images, only costumed singers. In Catanduanes, the costumed singer playing Mary sometimes rides a small horse. Sometimes too, and this seems to be the older tradition, the verses are not sung but partly or wholly declaimed. Accompaniment may vary, from single guitar to ten-piece band/orchestra.

The most elaborate of all the panunuluyan is the maytinis of Kawit, Cavite, where the young couple costumed as the Birhen and San Jose ride a huge float, which in turn is accompanied by twelve other floats, depicting characters and scenes from the Old Testament, like Adam and Eve, the Immaculate Conception, Abraham and Isaac, Moses, King David, Queen Esther, Judith and Holofernes, the Prophet Amos; and from the New Testament, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the karos of the Birhen and San Jose, the Apparition of the Angel to the Shepherds. The very last float depicts Inang Pilipinas (Mother Philippines), a reminder of Kawit's historical preeminence (Philippine Independence was declared by Emilio Aguinaldo from his house in Kawit in 1898). Before midnight, the Holy couple come down from their float, walk to the church, ascend the stairs to an elaborate Bethlehem scene at the altar, and are led into the "cave" by "angels" in white costumes. At the Gloria, the curtains of the "cave" are drawn, revealing the Nativity scene, with the images of Maria and Jose wearing costumes similar to those of their live counterparts. The wooden angels descend from the "heavens," while live *angelitas* adore the Christ Child (singing songs as they shower him with flowers) and offer him fragrant *kamanyang* (incense), to the jubilant accompaniment of the orchestra.

In most towns, it is the custom to give *caridad* or gifts of fruits or sweets to those participating in the panunuluyan. It is possible that in the past, the panunuluyan featured the Philippine version of the piñata, the *pabitin* (literally, for hanging), a square bamboo trellis, hung with candies, biscuits and toys, which can be pulled up and down through pulleys and strings.

Pastorela and Pastores

Another Mexican Christmas tradition found principally in the states of Guajanato and Michoacan, Mexico is the pastorela, which has medieval roots in Spain and which the Spanish colonizers introduced to Mexico to illustrate the doctrines of Christianity (*Arte Mexicano* 1976, 70). The Mexican pastorela has two principal types. The first is the *pastorela grande*, such as *Los Siete Vicios* (1850) recorded by Vicente and Virginia Mendoza in 1948 in San Pedro Piedra Gorda, Zacatecas, (the Mendozas say that this play may be found in the areas from Zacatecas Durugo to New Mexico). This full-blown staged play with twenty two musical numbers features the struggle between the forces of good, represented by the hermit, the two shepherdesses and seven shepherds, and the angel, and those of evil, embodied in Luzbel and the Seven Vices (Pride, Avarice, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Jealousy, Sloth) (Mendoza 1948, 16). The second is the *pastorela chica*, which is principally a dance with songs performed by young men and women, in which may figure a host of devils, several San Miguels, hermits and the Holy Family. There are several versions of the pastorela chica, which is the pastorela that seems to be related to the Philippine pastores.

In Michoacan, the pastores dance quadrilles, wearing short, sometimes long, dresses (for females) or knee-length pants and long sleeved shirts (for males). Both sexes wear bands and sashes, and wide-brimmed hats festooned with flowers, ribbons and plumes. Luzbel and the devils, wearing masks and capes, appear and fight (in dance) with the hermits who wear conical hats. The devils try to convince the shepherds to give up their search for the Christ Child. But San Miguel and his army appear, battle with the devils and conquer them. The shepherds then proceed to Bethlehem, where they find the Holy Family. They then give their offerings to the Christ Child (*Arte Mexicano* 1976, 70; 184-90).

A simpler version of the pastores is found among the Tepehuas of Veracruz. On Christmas eve, the pastores execute the Danza Tampulan.

There are twelve shepherds, led by two *capitanes* who hold decorated arches about five meters high. The *pastores* carry the image of the Infant Jesus and lay it in front of the statues of Maria and Jose in the "house" prepared for the purpose, under the dome of an awning hung with stars to simulate the evening sky. In front of the manger, the shepherds dance the *tampulan* till dawn. Wearing conical hats and brandishing canes covered with Chinese paper and accompanied by violin and guitar, the dancers form two lines, weave in and out of these lines and execute turns under the direction of their capitan who is dressed as a woman and who uses a kerchief to signal instructions to the dancers. The dance also features a snake stuffed with sawdust which the shepherds "kill" to signify that they renounce evil and choose the good represented by the Christ Child (196).

In the Philippines, the *Pastores*, literally, shepherds, is a Christmas playlet dramatizing the shepherds' adoration of the Infant Jesus in Bethlehem. Today, there are two versions of the *Pastores*. In the Bicol provinces of Camarines Sur and Albay, the *pastores* are twelve girls and boys or young men and women. Shepherdesses wear full skirts, with short puffed sleeves and round necks, and wide-brimmed hats with ribbons and flowers, while the shepherds sport long-sleeved white shirts, breast and waist bands and decorated hats. Groups of *pastores* dress in uniform colors, usually red or blue or green. At midnight mass, these *pastores* dance in front of the Christ Child at the altar. During the rest of the Christmas season, from December 26 to the Feast of the Three Kings, the *pastores* groups wander through the town, caroling and dancing in front of different houses. To the accompaniment of guitars, violins, bass-drums and tambourines, the *pastores* sing a series of lively villancicos in both Spanish and Bicol, including one attributed to the National Hero, Jose Rizal, which goes this way:

Pastores a Belen
Vamos con alegria
Alli por nuestro bien
Al hijo de Maria
Alli, alli, tambien
Al hijo de Maria
Alli, alli, tambien
Vamos para Jesus
Alli tambien
Convidamos todos.

Shepherds to Bethlehem
Let us go rejoicing
There for our own good
To the son of Mary
There, to that place also
To the son of Mary
There, to that place also
Let us set out for Jesus
To that place again
We invite everyone.

Debemos, pastores, proceder
A ofrecernos al Emanuel.
Queso y miel
Tambor, la musica y la danza
Iremos al portal
Con nuestra extravaganza
Alli, alli tambien (2x)
Jesus, para Jesus
Convidamos todos.

Shepherds, we must proceed
To offer to the savior
Cheese and honey
Drums, music and dance
Let us go to the town gate
With our extravagance.
There, to that place
Jesus, for Jesus
We invite everyone.

With each song, the pastores execute different dance movements and patterns, waving their arms or holding them akimbo, or using handkerchiefs and *arko* (rattan arches trimmed with colorful paper) as principal props. For their performance, the pastores are gifted with money or foodstuff by the owners of the houses they carol.

A second version of the Pastores is found in Cebu, Bohol and Leyte. The version of Tolosa, Leyte, which was originally supervised by Jose Vivero (died 1956) and recently revived by Franklin Colasito, has four principal scenes. In Scene One, the pastores in ordinary dresses and wide-brimmed hats, sing and dance to a lively ditty, which says in part that they "are happy when the herd is well-fed" and sad "when we lose an animal" or "if one dies on the mountain or in the forest." Then in spoken dialogue, the shepherdesses Lia, Silpa, Raquel and Sara talk about the news they received that the Divine Word (Verbo) has been born. They end their scene with the opening song. In Scene Two, the leader of the shepherds, Menguillo, witnesses the apparition of an angel, who announces to him that the Messiah has been born and the shepherds must go and adore him. The pastores sing a Spanish villancico. In Scene Three, Satanás (with horns, black pants and huge bat wings) appears to the shepherds, and tells them not to believe the rumor about the Messiah. Menguillo counters by saying that the angel that brought this news was glorious while he, Satanás, has "wings like those of a bat." Lia drives Satan away, saying that "he will always be a snake, as in the paradise he destroyed." Satan leaves but promises to "destroy this Word." The pastores sing once again, enumerating the gifts they will bring—chestnuts and oranges, fattened animals, milk, candies and one violin. In the last scene, the shepherds kneel before the Holy Family, and offer their gifts.

Moros y Cristianos and the Sayaw

The dance called *moros y cristianos* has roots in twelfth century Europe, having been performed in Northern Spain at the wedding of the Count of Cataluña to the Queen of Aragon in 1150. In Mexico, it was first documented in 1524 or 1525, when it was performed to welcome Cortez in Coatzacoalcos (*Arte Mexicano* 1976, 125-26). In 1530 (Bernal 1967, 71) the natives in Tlaxcala were "dancing the *moros y cristianos* before large attentive audiences"—this a few years after the fall of Tenochtitlan.

Since the sixteenth century to the present, this dance spread far and wide, and is now found, among others, in the valleys of Mexico, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Morelos, Toluca and Oaxaca, as well as the states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosi and Veracruz (*Arte Mexicano* 1976, 125).

Given its age and its wide areas of diffusion, it is not surprising that the dance has developed many variations: the *moros y cristianos* proper, which is also known as *jardinero*, *pichilingues y cristianos*, *moros y español*, *moritas*; the dances featuring the apostle Santiago, warrior saint of Spain, which are called *santiagos*, *santiagueros*, *alchileos* or *el señor*; the dances where the *moros* have been replaced by the natives, such as the *conquista*, *danza de la pluma*, *malinches* and others which derive inspiration from the original *moros y cristianos*.

In general, the basic story of this playlet revolves around the conflict between the Moors and the Christians in the Middle Ages. Using texts in prose or verse, the play employs dance and music in the battle scenes or interludes. There is an exchange of ambassadors between the warring sides and heated arguments on the superiority of their respective gods. The play always climaxes with the open battle between all the Moors and Christians, ending invariably in the defeat of the Moors who then acknowledge the power of the Christian God. To help the Christians in their battles, any number of miracles may happen, including the intervention of saints and angels, and potentates of other kingdoms. *Castillos* or castles may be built for each side, with the Moorish one being blown up in the end. Costumes include capes, masks, and fantastic headdresses (especially for Moors).

In the Philippines, the dance *moros y cristianos* may have been performed as part of the *mojigangas* (masquerades) which were featured during important festive occasions, such as the arrival in Ma-

nila of the portrait of Ferdinand VII in 1825. Today, this dance survives in different parts of the Archipelago, usually performed on the feast of a town's patron saint. In Batanes, it is known as the *palo-palo* (literally, hitting each other with sticks), performed by children, young men and middle-aged men on the feast of San Jose on 1 May. In Ternate, Cavite, it used to be called *mardikas*, a dance performed before the image of the Santo Niño of Ternate. In Cabagan, Isabela, it was transformed into the *sambali*, a fight between the Christian Ibanag and the non-Christian Kalinga, performed on the feast of St. Dominic, the town's patron saint, on August 8. In Ibajay, Aklan, it is known as the *sayaw* (literally, dance), performed on the day of the feast of Santo Niño de Ibajay, Aklan. In Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte, the dance is known as the *kinabayo* (literally, using horses), performed in honor of the town patron saint, Santiago, on his feast day on July 25.

The sayaw of Ibajay, Aklan uses a short Cebuano text in verse dating from the middle of the nineteenth century, whose authorship is attributed to Marianito Dalisay Calizo (it is believed that the sayaw came from Cebu). Performed on the morning of the Third Sunday of January in honor of the Santo Niño of Ibajay, Aklan, this play begins with the two warring factions grouped on opposite ends of about half a kilometer long of cemented street. The Christians called Bisaya (autonym of the natives of the Central Islands of the Philippines who speak Ilongo, Cebuano and Waray) in black *americana cerrada*, decorated with epaulets, lanyards, waist and breast bands, black pants and white pershing caps, stand with their *pika* (spears) and *kalasag* (shields) in front of the town's church, while the *moros*, in red/pink pants, open vests, matching headbands (items of clothing associated with the Muslims of the Philippine south) stand with their spears and round shields in front of the *munisipyo* (town hall). The *Capitan* of the Bisaya leads his men in praising the image of the Santo Niño, which is enthroned on an altar in front of the church. Meanwhile, at the other end of the long street, the Sultan of the Moros decides to send two ambassadors to the Bisaya. The two *embahadores* march to the Christian side and demand the surrender of the image of the Santo Niño. The Bisaya staunchly refuse, so the ambassadors return to their sultan at the other end of the street. Rebuffed and angry, the Sultan now leads his men who brandish swords and shields, as they walk following an S-pattern on the straight road, towards the Christians. The Captain and his men prepare to

attack. In the middle of the road, Moro and Bisaya confront each other in two long lines, exchange threats, and fight to the lively music of a brass band. After this initial encounter, individual pairs of Moro and Bisaya engage each other and perform the sayaw, showing off their agility and skill in combat. In the end, the two armies confront each other once more, until the Moros kneel in defeat and agree to be baptized. Forming a long line, Bisaya and Moro move in pairs towards the altar of the Santo Niño in front of the church and cry "Viva Señor Santo Niño" in honor of the patron saint. The play, which takes about an hour, ends at noon. Audiences of all ages shuttle back and forth or cluster around the performers, as they follow the action of the street play.

Influence and Indigenization

Further research has to be done in Mexican and Philippine archives to establish without a shadow of a doubt the origins and objects of influence in the traditional folk theaters of Mexico and the Philippines. It is tempting to jump to the conclusion, as Rafael Bernal does in many cases, that the Philippine folk forms must have come from Mexico, since Mexico was colonized much earlier than the Philippines, and therefore, must have adopted and adapted Hispanic/Christian customs much sooner. The documents in Mexico speaking of the *posadas*, the *pastorela*, and the *moros y cristianos* are much older than the documents in the Philippines mentioning the *panunuluyan*, the *pastores*, and the *sayaw*, and the influx of Mexican friars into the Philippines—who became parish priests in the Philippine dioceses and therefore the principal decision-makers/influence in matters of religion, politics, economy and culture—is well documented through practically the whole Spanish colonial period (Bernal 1965, 110–15), while the reverse movement, namely, of Filipinos holding key positions in Mexico, still has to be established.

In spite of these reasons, however, prudence dictates that final judgements about influence be suspended until incontrovertible data are found to warrant these conclusions. For one thing, it is easy to fall into the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, which believes that the first phenomenon is the cause of the second, simply because the first happened before the second. Secondly, the lack of documentation, as in the case of the Philippine folk forms, does not necessarily

imply the non-existence of these forms, especially if one remembers that many of those who wrote on Philippine culture were transients or foreigners who were far from enthusiastic about folk and colonial forms of culture. Moreover, although it is as yet difficult to establish that items of Filipino culture were brought to Mexico by Filipinos or Mexicans and Spaniards who were in the Philippines, it is nonetheless possible that certain customs and traditions relating to these traditional forms might have been brought to Mexico and might have modified Mexican folk forms, through the Filipinos who came via the galleons and settled in Mexico. For example, I was surprised to discover (from a Mexican book) that the process of creating tiles or the *azulejos* (which now decorate many churches and houses in Mexico and are associated with the country) was introduced to Mexico from the Philippines. Similarly, it has been pointed out that some Mexican costumes may actually have been directly influenced by Philippine attire of the previous centuries. Finally, the presence of similar forms in the two countries may not be the result of one country's influence on the other, but of parallel developments, made possible—and probable—by analogous physical and /or social, political, economic or religious conditions.

The question of influence, however, is not half as interesting as the question of the imposition and indigenization of foreign culture, specifically, the process by which the colonial power evolved and/or imposed a culture which eventually coopted the indigenous beliefs of the colonized, and the reverse process by which the colonized imbibed and digested the alien forms, making it part and premise of a new cultural identity.

In the Philippines, as in Mexico, the religious customs and traditions in general, and the drama in particular, were put to the service of evangelization. Thus, many plays or playlets—among them the *posadas*/*panunuluyan*, the *pastorela*/*pastores*, the *Colloquio de Herodes*/*Tatlong Hari*, the *pasion*/*sinakulo* and the *Judas*—served to illustrate events in the lives of Christ and his saints, vivifying these events and pumping life and blood into Biblical characters who would otherwise be as intangible and distant as the dogmas discussed in Sunday sermons and catechism classes. Moreover, dramas with dances like the *moros y cristianos*/*sayaw* and their many variations, served to convince the natives that the European and/or the Christian will always have moral and military superiority over the non-European and/or non-Christians, because God himself will work

miracles through the saints and angels in order to ensure a European/Christian victory.

But dramas were not only meant to facilitate Christianization. They often were also performed on occasions originally devoted to the celebration of indigenous rituals held sacred by the natives, or in honor of Christian saints who were clearly meant to replace their native counterparts. In a word, Christianization, as a technique of colonization, meant the cooptation by the colonizers of the sacred as defined and practiced by the indigenous population. Thus, it has been suggested that the *posadas* must have supplemented the Aztec festival in honor of Huitzilopochtli on the same dates. In the Philippines, the sayaw of Ibayay, Aklan is held in January for the Santo Niño, in an age-old harvest festival which offers to the Christian image the fruits of the earth and the sea (vegetables, chicken, fish, eels, prawns) arranged into *estandartes* or festooned on the floats of different barrios. The same theme of pre-colonial animism is replicated in the May festival held in honor of San Isidro, patron of farmers, and the Santa Maria mediatrix for all requests, including requests for husbands, wives, children, health, wealth, victory in lotteries, cockfights and tribal wars.

But even if the new evangelists initially succeeded in "stealing" as it were the native gods and dressing them up as Christian saints, the colonized peoples eventually reclaimed their deities—or at least the sense of the sacred—through the process of indigenization. This process was as necessary as it was inevitable, considering that the lives of Christ and his saints, of Moors and Christians in Medieval Europe and stories of this nature, were quite alien to the natives and, therefore, had to be given a meaning viable in the context of the local culture. Thus, in Mexico, the variations of the *moros y cristianos* began to feature characters totally absent in the medieval stories—Negritos and Aztecs, Pilatos, Santito, Cain, Moctezuma and the Tastoanes. In the Philippines, and in Ibayay's sayaw in particular, the *moros* were equated with the actual Muslims of the Southern Philippines (the bane of the colonizers) while the *cristianos* became the Bisaya, the groups in Central Philippines who had been the victims of the Muslim piratical attacks and slave trade since the pre-Spanish times. On the other hand, in Cagayan valley in the North, the *moros* were transformed into the fierce pagan Kalinga, while the *cristianos* became the Ibanag, the lowland Christianized group which since time

immemorial was the object of headhunting sorties by the war-like Kalinga who lived on the Cordillera mountain range nearby.

A similar pattern of indigenization may be seen in other dramatic forms introduced in the Philippines by the Christian religion. The basic story of the panunuluyan, i.e. the search for an inn in Bethlehem by Maria and Jose, is a "timeless" story that is interpreted every year by performers according to the changing realities of the times. Costumes of Maria and Jose often change according to the latest Biblical movies, while the melodies played by the band incorporate current popular musical hits. Although the lines of the Holy Couple hardly change, the dialogue of the houseowner may be improvised. In Polo, Bulacan in 1983, one maybahay turned away Maria and Jose because "they might be the NPA rebels that the government is looking for," while a second one excused himself because life had become so hard, what with "the peso depreciating to P14.00 to a U.S. dollar" (it used to be ten before the Aquino assassination in 1983). Similarly, the dresses of the Philippine pastores may change in color, silhouette or material depending on current fashion, and only the wide-brimmed hat remains to identify them as shepherdesses.

There are scholars who would criticize this phenomenon as anachronism or even as a-historicism. And indeed they are. But viewed in another light, this process of adoption and adaptation could be seen as the instinctive strategy for survival of the native culture. In this process, the native culture takes the form imposed from the outside, empties it of the content and meaning that are bound to the foreign culture from which the form emanated, and proceeds to fill the form with native content and meaning.

This process of "dehistoricization" would definitely not be appreciated by or be possible among the Europeanized local elite who, given their colonial education, would naturally want to remake their native country in the image of the colonizing nation, if only to prove to the latter that the native elite are worthy of being treated as "citizens" equal to those in the "Mother Country." However, this same process is one that comes naturally to the greater masses of the colonized country who have not had the "opportunity" to study and to be Europeanized.

But, all things considered, it is perhaps in this "ahistorical state," namely, as dramas dehydrated of foreign content and refilled with the myriad meanings created by a dynamically changing society, that foreign forms can contribute most to the formation of a new native

culture. In this perspective, these dramas become valuable because they now provide the native artists with a new vocabulary of plots, characters, themes, costumes, sets and movements, which can be used as vehicles for expressing new visions or immediate reactions to the realities that impinge on local artists at different periods of the native history.

What is good about this process of "revitalization" is that it has been proven to be possible. For example, in the Philippines, the panunuluyan is not only invested with improvised dialogue. More than this, it has inspired young playwrights to create contemporary plays based on the panunuluyan characters, plot and theme. Such is the Christmas play of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) entitled *Ang Panunuluyan ni Birheng Maria at San Jose sa Cubao, Ayala, Plaza Miranda at Iba Pang Lugar sa Loob at Labas ng Metro Manila* [The Panunuluyan of the Virgen Maria and San Jose in Cubao, Ayala, Plaza Miranda and other places within and outside Metro Manila] (1979). In this play, the images of Maria and Jose come to life, come down from their karo and have to mix with contemporary Filipinos as they search for an inn. In Plaza Miranda, they come upon the urban poor and the society matrons who give gifts on Christmas for propaganda purposes. Led by Hesus, a child of the slums, the couple then move on to the shore area, where they learn of the plight of the *batilyos* (fish workers) who toil hard but end up enriching only the foreigners who own the huge trawlers, to the urban poor area, where the slum-dwellers tell Maria and Jose of the constant threat of demolition by the police, to the rural areas, where the farmers are always cheated of their shares in the harvest by the landlord, and to the factory, where workers remain casual employees for years so management can save "benefits" and so they can be dismissed immediately if they join the workers' union. In the end, Mary and Joseph—and the audience—realize that where the poor is concerned, much indeed has changed—for the worse—since the first Christmas in Bethlehem.

So entrenched are the Hispanic/Christian forms in Philippine life today that they have become part of the Filipino's cultural consciousness and his vocabulary for expression and communication. The more the Filipino is able to revitalize these traditional forms with messages that respond to contemporary national concerns, the more will these forms validate themselves as Filipino, the greater too will their contribution be to the definition of an identity unique to the Filipino.

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