Philippine Painting (1521-1821) and the Politics of Colonial Visualities: Relocating the Colonial in Southeast Asian Art History

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Writing on the "indigenous states" of Southeast Asia, an American anthropologist G. Carter Bentley posits that the locus "Southeast Asia" has "traditionally" comprised the "interstices between China and India, and [was] designated by such terms as Indonesia and Indosinesia". Furthermore, it has been "accepted as an integral region largely for political reasons...as a theater of operations in World War II". (Bentley 1986, 275)

From the point of view of geopolitical culture, the category is specifically organised in such manner as to render a shifting landscape of boundaries - "sometimes including Ceylon, the Andaman Islands, the Nicobars, Assam, Yunnan and other parts of South China, Hainan, and Taiwan while the Philippines have sometimes been excluded". (Bentley 1986, 275)

Such inclusion or exclusion of certain cultures does not only demystify the "naturality" of the category, enabling us to reconstruct it within a new structure of theoretical orientations, but also brings to our attention the problem of viewing Southeast Asia from an art historical perspective. The concept of culture is central in this foregrounding of art history: it situates "Southeast Asia" in the context of processes through which it assumes "indigenous states" and the other encounters which deconstruct these states. This paper is predisposed to question the use of the term "states": the political formation of the bureaucracy of government, as in the State, and the ontological basis on which the identities of its cultures, as in states, supposedly rest.

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Bentley compares Southeast Asia to the "precocious" empires of East and South Asia, and discusses how the region has been construed as a "cultural and political backwater, its people as receptors rather than creators of their own histories". (Bentley 1986, 275) He argues that such mindset can be traced to "diffusion theories which attributed Southeast Asian 'civilisation' to exogenous forces" and, in fact, "helped European colonial regimes justify their imperial tutelage in the region". (Bentley 1986, 275) This kind of imperialism, however, is not to be seen as necessarily western:

Moreover, the monumental relics of, for instance, Yasodharapura (Angkor) in

Cambodia, Pagan in Burma, and Borobudor in Java, all incorporated religious motifs from South Asia; Vietnamese rulers had meticulously copied Chinese administrative forms; and ancient Sanskritic and Chinese textual references naturally emphasised Chinese and Indian features in the region. (Bentley 1986, 275)

In other words, the mentality molding "Southeast Asia" has been largely sustained by the question of "whether Southeast Asian states were creations of Indian or Chinese imperial conquests, settler colonies, or political processes initiated by foreigners amid culturally stagnant Southeast Asian populations". (Bentley 1986, 275) Still, while "new archaeological and ethnographic evidence has made both diffusion and simple evolutionary explanations for Southeast Asian state formation untenable", (Bentley 1986, 276) we need to grapple with the implications brought by the knowledge which has formed, and continues to form, the cultural contours of Southeast Asia in a rapidly changing world economic system. A distinctive feature of this Southeast Asian topography is colonial history, a conjuncture in time and space that can competently discuss the ways in which the "indigenous states" of Southeast Asia and colonial cultures would transact or negotiate the terms of post-colonial imperatives.

Colonial History

In conjuring the shapes and spaces of this colonial history which entangle Southeast Asia in the network of world politics, the paper seeks to reevaluate the inscriptions of the colonial in Southeast Asian art and culture, and the present-day problems confronting Southeast Asia.

We are referring, of course, to a contemporary Southeast Asia that continues to struggle against lingering colonialities, and restructure the strategic interventions of its hyphenated identities. Such an undertaking coheres with the attempt at tracing encounters between an indigenous Southeast Asian culture, on the one hand, and a hegemonic colonial culture arising from conversion and conquest, on the other. The overriding concern points to a possible theorisation of Southeast Asian colonial art history, from its "beginnings" to the institutionalisation of academic structures and cultural apparatuses which have produced knowledge systems on colonial aesthetics and power relations. The formation of these institutions - which include schools, religious agencies, secular patrons - had made possible diverse articulations of colonial culture. The legacies of this culture, which encompass visualities and ways of seeing, resonate through, as they are challenged in, current academic curricula, pedagogical initiatives, and art world practices.

This paper tries to account for the production and process of change within the colonial disorder and its repercussions in the present and the future: What kinds of relationship ensue from colonial interactions? What forms of power relations are contracted through this relationship? To a region ravaged by colonialism and global capitalism in the uncertainty of "newly industrialised" development, the question of struggle and power remains salient in the discussion of art and culture. How do Southeast Asian cultures hold out in the face of colonial and global maneuvers? What are the responses, and what sort of space is constructed by supposedly native cultures in the matrices of colonial/multinational "dominative" practices? Surely, it is not only the latter that control the terms of the contract; the former crucially inform the outcome of the negotiation. This paper explores

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such a dialectic, using Philippine colonial art history as trajectory, to highlight the political economy of colonial culture, and to render relevant the critique and subversion of coloniality in post-colonial times.


Intramuros Administration

Of the various theoretical methods available to the contemporary art historian, it is the confluence of cultural studies and new history that proves to be most useful and feasible in analysing the intricate relationships among the four operative terms in the category of Southeast Asian Colonial Art History: Southeast Asia, Colonial, Art, and History. In cultural studies, the shift from the formalistic aesthetic object to cultural practice is necessary in reframing the theoretical picture of art history. The cultural practice category specifically entails a cultural discourse which enables as well as limits the articulation of a history that is transcoded in art. It likewise re-engages the subject-readers of discourse and the modes of reading through which they make sense of society, and so produce the discourse which makes that society intelligible. At the crux of such a conceptual operation is art history's capacity to lay bare the device of culture in structuring the world and the ways of changing it, and to deconstruct the knowledge that installs the position of subject-readers in relation to this specific construal of the world and the contrivance of its "worlding".

History never forgets

New history, on the other and, is able to bring to bear on art history a kind of historiographic perspective that locates the activities of culture as well as those mediations which could be grasped aesthetically in the persistent routine of everyday life. This covers the oftentimes intimate processes of making art - of feeling and performing emotion - and looking at it in determinate settings, processes usually repressed by the grand narratives of diachronic periodisation and the parade of masters and masterpieces. As explicated by historians like Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Fernand Braudel, new history "was the logical outcome of the realisation that history was not 'value free', and that historical facts were in reality constructs. They rejected the view that each historical moment possessed a unique individuality whose meaning could be made manifest through the study of the written document without reference to general concepts and without more than cursory insertion into its most immediate context". (Colin Lucas, 1985, 4) Febvre termed this form of history as *une histoie vraie or une histoire a part entiere* which "sought a synthesis of all the material, physical and mental forces that had shaped...life...in past societies... to produce a total picture of past societies, a picture that would relate all the forces at work into an interacting hierarchy". (Lucas 1985, 4)

The metaphor of "picture" is appropriate as it paints the language of art on the canvas of a history that paints it. In short, the production of "seeing" reminds us that even if some historians would rather forget about the history that manufactures that seeing, history never forgets. And that there are people in the social field of art history who are looking. Looking not only in terms of passive observing or "the atmosphere of the voyure that subtends intersubjectivity", (Krauss 1989, 285-286) but in the active sense of critiquing, through the historical eye/I, the historical meanings of cultural codes, iconographies, signs, communicative systems, representational rhetoric, and regimes of interpretative schemes which presuppose forms of

colonial visualities and dispositions, of gestus and habitus.

Cultural studies and new art history, therefore, soak colonial art in the historicized situations of Southeast Asian colonial society, and the specificities of visualities which could only be dealt with and transformed thoroughly within culture and history. Needless to say, a new art historical ideology must be able to overcome the ethic of the antique collector or connoisseur who merely traps *culture in the aura of the art object* in glass cases. The new art historical dynamic is somehow obliged to "salvage" the cultural production of painting from dominant forms of appraisal and debilitating epistemological choices.

A diachronic history of Philippine colonial painting does not give justice to the complex processes of colonial art and history. Let me propose that the kind of history needed to address the said complexity must come in the form of theoretical issues and problems which mediate and realise whatever historical representation must be shown. The presentation of these issues and problems assumes the logic of defamiliarization in which conventional wisdom is cracked open and aerated, so to speak, so that the said naturalized truth is finally freed from the grooves of formula, revised by critique, and observed on by a much keener and renewed theoretico-political interest.

The following thematic clusters are proposed in this regard:

1. The introduction of painting to a native culture that is henceforth to be substantially underwritten by European and Hispanic discourses through colonial civil-religious military technologies; and *envisaged to construct knowledge* dictated by colonial encounters. The said culture is informed by the contradictions and discrepancies within the hybrid territory or formation designated as colonial, which has irrevocably ceased to be "indigenous" but could never become "European". The term colonial therefore must never be assessed as te*xtus in extremis* as it cannot thoroughly provide the essence and universality of either the indigenous or the European. In the long haul, colonialism had really meant to terminate itself, to effect its own demise, to deconstruct itself in the face of its "others" who must have had to reinscribe the struggles against colonialism within the disruptive re-inventions of their relationship with it, asserting identities and subjectivities as, in the case of Philippine natives, fractured along diverse cultural biographies.

2. The artifacticity of colonial painting as operating within the various articulations of colonialism, and disseminated through its various agencies reckons with the specificity of painting as a colonial signifying practice which produces meaning and information through its semiotic system. To tease these aspects out, the paper pursues the traces of colonial painting's multiple locatedness/locations: as colonial instruction, religious and *scientific; as subject to be studied* in schools; as commodity of secular patronage; and as basis of institutional mandate and imprimatur. Germane to these concerns also is the agency of the artist, who is situated here in the context of a colonial visual habit and ethnicity, whether native Philippine or Chinese or mestizo; and the artifacticity of painting in terms of its signifying system and the ideologies of its forms. To be tackled here are visual schemas, artistic education, iconographies, painting's relationships with pre-colonial figurations, notions of perspective and plasticity, engraving traditions, and so on.

3. The institutionalisation of painting in the Academia de Dibujo y Pintura as symptomatic of a kind of aesthetic education - which permeates the teaching of "Humanities" and the "Arts and

Painting in St. Christopher Paete Church, Laguna
date uncertain

Portrait of Eulogia, date uncertain
Central Bank

Letters" - locates the intervention of the academe and the State in the construction of the canons of culture. To be discussed are discourses of the "academy" and the so-called "guild of art and craft"; the politics of the Academy as constituted by traces of Enlightenment philosophy, as well as colonial baroque aesthetics and political economy.

Watersheds

To delineate the cartography of such a setting, the paper refers to the following historical "watersheds" that mark out certain narrative maneuvers which this particular construction of history had to negotiate:

1. 1521-1565, when colonialism began to build the bureaucracy of colonial occupation with the attendant components of religious, civil, and aesthetic structures;
2. circa 1785, when the edict of Charles III relaxed the control of the church over the practice of painting, and so enabling painters to open up to a new art public or clientele, and new rules governing the discourse of secularized art "worlding";
3. and 1820-1823, when the Academia de Dibujo was established through a "native master" and the Real Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais, therefore ushering in the visual knowledge and structures of European art academies and local iconographic mediations.

These historical events more or less point out the turning points in Philippine painting history. We underscore that the changes charted by these turnings had been bound to the shifts in political economies of the beleaguered colony, and so must be studied in relation to the socio-historical upheavals of the historical conjuncture (which were to prefigure signs of revolution not very long after). The theoretical themes and problems sustaining the discussion on colonial dissent, the opening of the islands to world trade, the influx of libertarian ideals, and the transcoding of the native into the national, and so on cannot be severed from any study of Philippine colonial painting, which had reinscribed all these in a specific overdetermined historical process.

The notion of conscription of labour as spiritual service is a specific articulation of colonial culture, even as archaic forms of oppression and hierarchies had already persisted in traditional societies

The theoretical issues and problems that guide this history pertain to the said determination of competing discourses in constructing Philippine colonial painting:

Mode of Production

It is posited here that the various forms of affiliation and resistance the natives had articulated as colonial subjects were preconditional to the coloniality of their experience and to a prefigurement of the struggle against it. It is, therefore, risky for some Philippine art historians to skirt the issue and naively assert that "the majority of churches, towns wholeheartedly contributed labour and material for what they perceived as an essentially spiritual service". (Jose 1991, 29) The perception of labour as spiritual service partakes of the efficacy of colonial conversion and so bears the trace-effects of colonial power relations and the broader articulations of the colonial political economy. As one native complained:

We also contribute, in the form of money, for the feast of the patron saint; and, in terms of work, for the needs of the parish church. When the rich want some saints to send down rain or bring sunny weather, they cause a mass to be celebrated, which as a rule costs

sixteen pesos; they assume responsibility and collect contributions from us in the form of money or poultry; those that have none steal from their neighbours; the church ceremony, which is celebrated with pomp as a rule, is followed by a sumptuous dinner generally shared only by the rich and those of high origins; it is the reward the government gives them for their services. (de la Gironiere 1983, 25)

This account is tamer, compared to others which explicitly reveal punishments like "fines or floggings for those who absented themselves from work". (Palazon 1964) We can discern this torture inflicted on the natives in such Majayjay church documents as "A*cuerdos de los principales sobre los carpinteros de la iglesia*", "*Sobre los 'polistas''para la iglesia*", "*Convenio regulando el trabajo en las obras de la iglesia*", and "*Peticion de los carpinteros de la iglesia*". To cope with the stress of such duress, native colonial subjects tried quite ingeniously to evade the task of constructing the stone house of God, which was 60 meters long, 17 meters wide, and 16 1/2 meters high:

One of the most common practices resorted to by the townspeople was to disappear from the towns so as to avoid carrying out these obligations that they considered too heavy for them to bear. We note from a decree (issued in 1621 by the Audiencia) that the townspeople of Majayjay continually refused to be citizens of the town. If they had a house in the town itself and a field in another town, they would erect a house in their field, and when asked by the authorities of Majayjay whether they had fulfilled their duties, they replied that they had done so in the neighbouring town. If the officials of the neighbouring town asked them the same question, they would reply that they were domiciled in Majayjay, and would fulfill their duties there. This practice became so widespread that the Audiencia was compelled to order the provincial governor to tear down the houses erected by the natives in their fields so as to compel them to live in the town. (Palazon 1964, 16)

The colonial mode of production distinguishes itself from that of structuring indigenous religious practices like the making of lichas, which could never have been forged by forced labour. The notion of conscription of labour as spiritual service is a specific articulation of colonial culture, even as archaic forms of oppression and hierarchies had already persisted in traditional societies. Moreover, the problem of forced labour is located in the wider agenda of urbanization which had not only collected natives *bajo de las campanas* (under the bells) and in plaza complexes, but also effected "social stratification, state formation, population concentration, military draft, occupational specialisation, elaboration of bureaucracies, codified law, regularized taxation, and redistributive economy". (Reed 1967, xiii)

The production of colonial art must never be twisted out of its political economic mold. The manner in which local ties were built around the church and around the culture that the church had cultivated cohered with the colonial government's broader plan of consolidating the natives, from its state of nature (*sin policia*), into a polity and government. The premise of such a consolidation springs from a particular concept of civilisation and aesthetics which could only be constructed within the possibilities of urbanism and colonial annexation. The intersection between civilisation/ colonialism and urbanism props up the idea that "only in the milieu of towns and cities could men and women live in full fellowship and achieve the highest measure of their individual and collective potentials. (Reed 1967, 141)

The issues lying at the intersection of colonialism and civilisation, however, are viewed

here from the vantage of the contradictions of the Baroque (16th-17th centuries in Europe) as a complex political economic sensibility which had to lock horns with thoroughgoing Enlightenment advocacies and the tenacity of estatist hierarchies. In terms of culture, the Baroque was formed through forms and expressions which sought to gather people in urban centress. In the colonial setting, this impulse burst with powerful energies:

The idea was to captivate the minds through the use of theater, sermons, emblematic literature, and so forth, and to cause admiration and suspense through these and other, more overt, displays of power: fireworks, fountains, fiestas. It is a culture directed especially towards the multitude of anonymous and, therefore, potentially disruptive individuals concentrated in the cities, with a message suggesting the desirability of integration within the confines of an estatist structure. (Maravall 1986, xix)

Art history, however, has to be sensitive and aware of gaps in Baroque culture. For while it celebrated profound visceral flamboyance - translated into painting in terms of the aesthetics of pintoresco (animated interplay of light-shadow, or tendencies to delineate "physical corporeality, density of pigment, nearness of space") - it had to suppress, especially in colonial territories, equally stirring expressions of indigenous sensuality, sexuality, and spirituality; a suppression of the body and the skin of the other.

Iconography

A study of the iconographic tradition in Philippine colonial painting history must discuss the contradictions across overlapping sources and influences. The visual codes and the cultural schemes within which these codes had made sense to colonial subjects involve intricate links to Chinese motifs, engraving pictorialities, European styles (Gothic, Baroque, Renaissance, Mannerist), and "native" visualities. European styles, however, must be seen as specifically colonial art practices and not mechanical "implantations" into native culture. Such convergence of styles is not to be seen as syncretic distillations either, but rather as colonial encounters which had produced hybrid styles and prefigured post-colonial aesthetics.

Post-colonial art focused on the processes of translation and the disparities in identities (which are produced in the course of these processes). In other words, the moments of resistance against colonialism must constitute a central concern in this theoretical mapping. The problematics of colonial mediation are inscribed in the discontinuities of tradition - the invention of change - produced by the tactics of consolidation both on the part of the dispensers of consolidation and those who had to receive it. The contradictions

painting: Paete Church, Laguna
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and constraints ensuing from this relationship and exchange stir up what Homi Bhabha calls the "disturbing memory of... colonial texts that bear witness to the trauma that accompanies the triumphal art of Empire". (Bhabha 1990,72)

In this colonial contract, the translation of colonial concepts into the visual arts serves as locus of confrontation, and articulates the ambivalence of meanings circulating in colonial society, and the impossibility of the hegemony of a "correct", fixed, transliterative, purely official translation; this critique of colonial originality and of an essentialised native voice/ identity/skin/space.

Eladio Zamora, an Augustinian friar, demonstrates how colonial discourse naturalized the ani*to*, the *taotao*, the *licha*, and the *larawan* in terms of their aesthetic merits or lack thereof:

The uglier and the more disproportional a santo was, the more it was supposed to have inspired devotion. There was such a prevalence of these grotesque images that the Bishop of Jaro, greatly scandalized, forbade the parish churches within his diocese to sanctify them after the Saturday-morning baptisms - the customary time for blessing new-carved santos. (Gatbonton 1979, 101)

The implication of the term "ugly" highlights a set of aesthetic criteria which places primacy on the discourse of colonial taste. Aesthetics here serves as an institution that controls the excesses and scandals of native articulations with regard to religious and artistic experience. In effect, the institution of aesthetics had made properly visible, and "beautiful" at that, the representations of Catholic religion, making it preconditional to the colonial conquest of an indigenous culture which was constructed in terms of its "ugliness" or lack of "beauty/art". The rejection of "beauty" accounts for "ugly" subversion.

And it is on this art historical stage that *vagamundos*, those with no domicile, and *remontados*, the apostates, and the socio-religious revolts of millenarian religious leaders since the 17th century, make themselves visible. The traces of the derogatory terms of devils, sinners, false heathen religions, idolatries, and superstitions are reinscribed within colonial art - if we stretch theory, in terms of wrong iconographies, faulty spatialities, mis-spelled words. And so, the information that in 1879 "some 9000 fanatics assassinated the parish priest of Tubig (Samar), (Schumacher 1979, 241) which in terms of conventional disciplinal logic is a religious matter, makes for art historical concern as well, since religious culture and "artistic" culture were interlocking forms both in the pre-colonial and colonial milieu, and that it is this conjuncture that had to be refunctioned in the highly hybrid productions of post-colonial discourse and history. A recurrent motif in the accounts of the popular uprisings in the 1600s - *tumultos* in viceregal vocabulary - in the Philippines is the destruction by Spaniards of "sacrilegous paintings".

It was from the position of such resistances that the artistic practice of regional painters, those who worked outside the Walls of Intramuros in Manila, is analysed. The careers of Juan Senson in Rizal, Vicente Villasenor in Quezon, Jose Dans in Laguna, and Esteban Villanueva in Ilocos testify to the multiplicity in articulations of Philippine colonial painting. The latter artist, for instance, has an extant work titled the Basi Revolt series. Signed by Villanueva and dated 1821, the series of 14 panels depicting the defeat of the Basi-makers in the hands of Spanish authorities constitutes a possible source of debate in the methods of art history. How must art history deal with the implications of power in the painting, with the rendering of racial, ethnic, religious, and aesthetic interests on canvas? Here, aesthetics insinuates itself as

it enforces colonial ideals regarding the "aesthetic", which again is recodified or transcoded through the said interests and the productive relations that proceed from these: colonial/indigenous, divine/mortal, white/brown, Catholic/pagan, civilised/non-civilised, and so on.

Finally, icons which feature people (who do not look European at all), and certain material representations (the bleeding heart, the priestly regalia, the angels, etc.) became relevant only in the semantic web spun by colonial religion. This becomes a serious concern of Philippine colonial art history not so much because it has to assume that colonialism had been so thorough that any form of native depiction was stifled, but because it has to find exigent the need to locate contradictions within the administration of colonial discourse.

The 25th Session of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) states that the images of the church refer to the "prototypes which they represent, so that by means of the images which we kiss and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves we adore Christ and venerate the saints whose likeness they bear". (Schroeder 1941, 216) The question is this: How would the native-looking (sometime Chinese, sometimes Indian) religious personnae bear the likeness of Christ, when the latter's traditional iconography puts him as unerringly European or, at least, foreign on the grounds of color and race? This is the point the paper would like to reiterate: that the discourse of colonial painting represents the cleavages within and among its modes of articulation and that the surveillance of the doctrina, the basic unit of religious territorial control, had been compelled to monitor, no matter how vainly, the unpredictable circulation of texts beyond its "sight" and beyond the political economy of that "sight", this optic of the post-colonial.

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Patronage

The politics of colonial visualities implicates the ways in which the production of painting was supported and the predisposition of colonial subjects towards these painting formed. The production of Villanueva's Basi Revolt series demonstrates the various problematics of religious and secular patronage and a kind of aesthetic education that is, at its very core, political. Moreover, it lays bare the constitution of aesthetic education, of how colonial subjects are positioned in the colonial cultural schema.

The Philippine colonial experience offers lessons in how Southeast Asian art history could construct a theoretical paradigm across which coloniality and the subversions against it are mapped out in the grids of world systems. Here, the rubric colonial is reflected upon as an instrument of diachronic history that pegs the cultural processes it represents to the constraints of a "period" or a "moment in time". It is rather made to resonate in the present and through the future: the present as in the active struggle against dominative systems and the future as in the prefigured humane and just society we all desire and aspire.

Patronage is also discussed in terms of how the State interprets

colonial culture as national patrimony. Much of the extant works of Philippine colonial painting are "preserved" in institutional collections. The business of "collecting" antique colonial artifacts congeals with constructing a historical perspective on the "colonial past". National Artist Nick Joaquin, to cite a case, always disparages the indigenous to pay homage to the nobility that was Intramuros.

Philippine Colonial Culture and Southeast Asian Art History

It is both curious and amazing to find out that Philippine history, as surveyed across the field of Southeast Asia, comes to mind as colonial benchmark. In D.P. Sardesai's Southeast Asia Past and Present, the Philippines appears in the historical time line only in 1521, when Magellan is "killed". This account, we submit, more than supports the proposal that a more critical review of Southeast Asian colonial art history is needed not so much to bracket out the " colonial" in Philippine culture - which some of the more nativist scholars are inclined to do - as to theorise on the "colonial" encounter. This encounter is important as it exposes the devices and the technologies of hegemonic relationships, and therefore the strategies and tactics which would make them rupture.

...a more critical review of Southeast Asian colonial art history is needed not so much to bracket out the "colonial"... as to theorise on the "colonial" encounter

Southeast Asian colonial art history is woven into a fabric of conquest and resistance. It is said that "(m)ost territories in Southeast Asia were acquired by the Western powers during the nineteenth century, more than 70 percent between 1860 and 1914, roughly corresponding to the era of 'economic imperialisms' during which the African continent was partitioned and spheres of influence were carved out in China among European powers". (Sardesai 1989, 133) The British swooped down on Burma in 1826, 1852, and 1885; on Singapore in 1819; on Malacca in 1824; on the nine Malay States and Brunei from 1874-1914; on Sarawak in 1846 by Rajah Brooke; on North Borneo in 1880s under the North Borneo Company. Even Thailand had to cede four Northern Malay states to it in 1909. The French laid claim to Cochin China in 1862; on Tongking in 1873; on Annam in 1885; on Laos in 1873; and on Battambang and Siem Reap in 1904. The Dutch was in Java in 1816 and in the East Indies in 1914. The Portuguese settled in Timor. (Sardesai 1989)

A historical critique of colonial Southeast Asian art history should include a more rigorous understanding of what Blandier called the *situation coloniale*, and in the formation of a theory on post-colonial culture and society. The highly accomplished historian Milagros Guerrero of the University of the Philippines proposes approaches to the study of colonial Southeast Asia by identifying the following concerns:

1. archaeological data on the region; for the Philippines this would include materials from Cagayan Valley, Agusan, Sta. Ana, Manila, and Calatagan.

2. kingship patterns as defense structures against and cooptative conduits of colonial and imperialist intrusions.

3. and the colonial experiences of the Southeast Asian peoples as well as the cultural policies of colonial regimes; the latter vary from country to country, depending on the form of governance dispensed by foreign rulers.

The Philippine colonial milieu is distinct in many ways. Guerrero notes the absence of strong kingship mechanisms as well as the swift and easy collusion of the native elite with colonial forces in laying the groundwork of conquest. Guerrero, however, reminds us to carefully sift through the contradictions among the institutions of the Church, the State, the people, and the elite in divining the signposts of this milieu; and also through the spaces of colonial consolidation, that is, the settlement patterns or the configurations of State put in place by certain "kingdoms" in Manila and "sultanates" in the south at the time of colonisation.

The Real Sociedad Economica de los Amigos del Pais is a case in point: the Basco Reforms, which made it possible, must be situated in the context of an overdetermined historical break effected by the Tagalog agrarian uprisings of 1745, the rise of the mestizo Chinese entrepreneurial activity, and the assertion of the Spanish civil government's discourse of progress. The construction of the "Academia", therefore, is to play itself out across the competing social fields of colonialism. This is the province of colonial art history.

This history is to be thought of as politically potent in revising unjust practices in the production of culture through the bureaucracies of taste: the academe and its curriculum, the highly commercialised art market, the elitist museum system, and even the sometimes opportunistic governmental art institutions.

All this, however, must fall under the disciplinal prerogatives of art history which define not only apparatus, structure, surveillance, and governmentality, but also practice, human action, will, agency, the gestures and habits - the performances - of subjectivity and the body politic within the domains of culture. This kind of reflexive history, according to anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, is keenly sensitive to "historical processes, historicity, and historiography". He elaborates that:

Histories, structures, and meaning not only are all multiple but are also all contested by historical actors. The dynamics of historical practice become unveiled when histories are seen as processes and histories are seen as the lived experience of historical actors. (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990, 23)

By way of closing, let me unnderpin this paper with notions of visuality that cut through colonial experience and the contemporary struggles which deal with its legacies:

Colonial cultural texts must be seen not as syncretic or embodiments of folksy mest*izaje elan* but as hybrid discourses through which colonial power relations are inscribed, transacted, and exchanged. They are not, as George Kubler might suggest, "modes of the survival of ancient forms" or "modes of extinction", (Kubler 1985, 68) but rather are specific forms of redefining colonial power in relation to the attempts to recover or recreate freedoms that had been lost, and so assume the broader political interests of the post-colonial vision of ending, once and for all, dominative systems. This is the point at which art history must burst the seams of the society it had repressed. An art historian in the Philippines has rightly warned her colleagues not to forget about the slippery "admixture" informing Philippine colonial art, asserting that "an active fusion of ... cultures in the arts failed. It was the colonial pattern of one people dominating another, an acculturation of a relatively unbalanced form". (Morillo 1993, 2) Discussing the retablos of Laguna, Frances Morillo is led to conclude that this hybrid art bears "features peculiar to it and foreign to its European counterparts", (Morillo 1993, 2) as if to say that colonial art is almost but not quite its native self nor its

at once coopted and recalcitrant other/s.

The idea of representation goes beyond the conventional concepts of "images" to the territories of culture and history, and how people in culture and history perform, produce, and practice "looking" and decipher the "signature of the visible". Art history has to inevitably interpret the political economy not only of sight but also of the visual experience. As Pierre Bourdieu puts it: the eye, not only the retina, is the product of history and the social production of sight and its social value. Art does not adjudicate itself through an autonomous system or an internal criteria but through ways of seeing. Can Philippine colonial art history, for instance, ever disengage the "beautiful" and the "powerful" from the "Catholic" and the "European"? Portraiture from comprador aesthetics? Heaven and Hell from religious iconography?

The discipline of colonial art history is compelled by ideological imperatives to commit itself to recapturing the memory of struggle. A Jesuit historian in the Philippines sinisterly wrote that: "If the town church be a sign of oppression, the people have no will to destroy it. If it be a shrine to their ancestors' martyrdom many a church is not venerated for what it is". (Javellana 1991, x) This is the kind of art history we must condemn in the most strident terms possible, and replace it with the more inspiring recollections which see through the palimpsest of memories and are able to link "the spread of 'civilising' modernity" to a "model of industrial progress...of multinational capitalism and its logic of the market place, centred on the metropolis and its control of economic exchanges". (Richards 1987-88,6) Salud Argable, a prominent figure in the anti-American Sakdalista Revolt in Laguna in 1935, recalls vividly what her family had told her:

It is an old town - a very old town. In fact, there is a golden bell ... During summer, when the water was clear, you could see down through the depths, down to where it stood. The reason they disposed of it was because mothers - early in their pregnancy - would give birth prematurely upon hearing it toll.

One of the reasons my ancestors rebelled was to protest against the church that held that bell. When the Spaniards came they forced the people to build the church. Many were killed by the Spaniards - flogged to death, there on the shore where the church was built. (Sturtevant 1976, 299)

Philippine colonial historiography must shake off the fetters of the Spanish Empire not only by diligently reexamining coloniality in post-colonial terms but also by trying to link up with the discourses of Southeast Asia. This is not so much to over-invest, and justify the Philippine neurosis of not being part of the Great Tradition of China and India as to locate the Philippines in some form of pre-Hispanic, pre-national map. Without at all eliding the implications of internal Southeast Asian power relationships and hegemonies, Philippine colonial historiography must learn to appropriate a Southeast Asian space if it is to overcome marginality in the community of Southeast Asian nations and the co-optation into the dubious national ideologies of the mother country or nation state. The place on which the Philippines must stand is a place that defines various articulations of "Philippinicity" and Southeast Asian-ness and the diaspora of its peoples and cultures within the region and across the globe.

Cluing us into initial attempts to render Southeast Asian borders porous and permeable are the incipient studies of Aurora Roxas-Lim on Srivijayan-Philippine relations. Roxas-Lim starts out by arguing: "It seems reasonable to assume despite meager evidence that the Philippine was already linked up to regional and

The Apotluosis of St. Thomas Aquinas, date uncertain
Damian Domingo,
Central Bank

international trade at least as a relay station by the 10th century A.D." (Roxas-Lim 1985, 192)

Through trade and other maritime activities, the Philippines, according to Roxas-Lim, firmed up its footing in the routes of Southeast Asian interactions:

It was trade and exchanges which provided the mechanism and structures for managing intra-group and inter-group relations be they alliances, or competing hostile groups. By the 10th century the various Philippine groups had already reached a level of social-economic development that welded them together however tenously within a network of regularized interdependence and inter-action through trade and exchange. (Roxas-Lim 1985, 199)

It is from this angle that Roxas-Lim lights up the relationship between the Philippines and Southeast Asia, which has to be made sense of through history and historiography and not as simply out there. Its "thereness" has to be plotted out in this respect, and Roxas-Lim goes beyond artificial geographical boundaries, and views Srivijaya not as a fixed locus but as a "federation of trading ports on the fringe of large areas of the forest...Srivijaya was not a state with territorial boundaries, but a series of interlocked human relationships among harbour principalities and pirate lairs based on patronage, loyalty and power". (Roxas-Lim 1985, 199)

What must be highlighted here is the intra-regional negotiations of inter-regional relationships. How was Southeast Asia mediated within the heterogenous moments of Philippine cultural and political economic history? How was Southeast Asia internalised by the multiple trajectories of Philippine identities? It is not adequate to present archaeological evidence of this or that image found in this or that site in pleading the Philippine Southeast Asian case. The pressing task is to write an ethnographic theory of Southeast Asian culture in practice; of Philippine and Southeast Asia "in use"; of Southeast Asian ceramics, textile, or jewelry in the daily lives of people. Robyn Maxwell gathers insight from textile:

Since traditional textile production in Southeast Asia was exclusively the task of women, textiles are able to show history from a different perspective by reflecting a female view of the contact between different cultures and are an alternative to the princely epics of war, succession and dominance. Textiles also remind us that many cultures and traditions existed outside the powerful court centres and kingdoms that dominate most accounts of Southeast Asian history. Many of the fabrics illustrated here - particularly the warp decorate vegetable fibre textiles - provide valuable information about life in some of the more isolated and remote locations in Southeast Asia not directly in contact with the centres of international power and trade. (Maxwell 1990, 24)

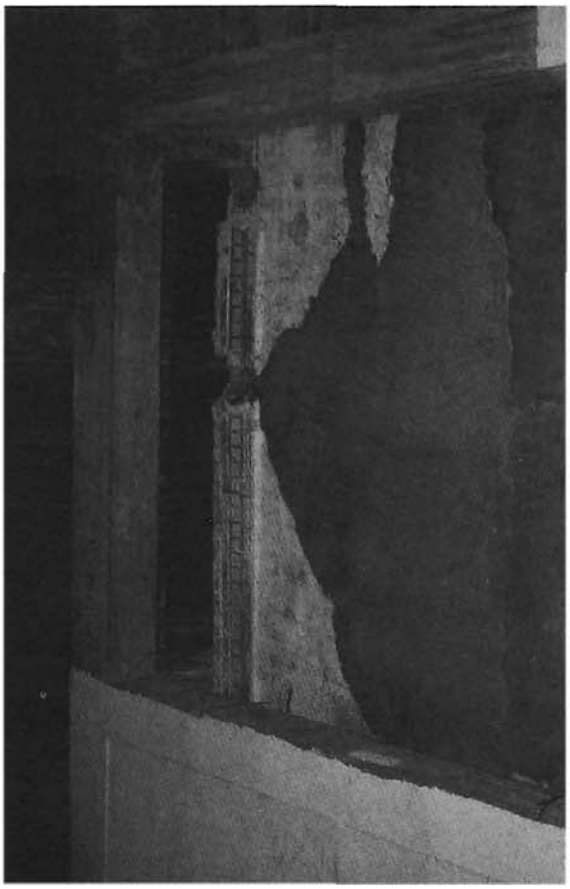
Most recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila presented its gold collection consisting of resplendent pre-colonial belts, tiaras, earrings, bracelets, rings, bead necklaces, daggers, hilts, coronets, finials, coins, and death mask from Butuan, Samar, and Surigao.

Roxas-Lim has sufficiently asserted that "trade" is crucial in this study: trade not only as a mode of exchange of goods but of power and hegemonic "schemes and surprises" within Southeast Asia itself. Roxas-Lim relates how groups "who control the trade have superior status and authority" (Roxas-Lim 1985, 198) as in the case of Subanun-Samal and Maguindanao-Tiruray relations. What is important to look at here is how these trade relations would define the status and value of artifacts in the lives of the contracting entities. Roxas-Lim cites an example:

What is interesting is that in almost all cases, imported trade goods being imperishables such as porcelains, gongs, beads, betel boxes were considered ritual objects and utilised as prestige items within the tribe. This seems to be the pattern from Sulu, Mindanao, Visayas to Luzon. These imported imperishables were also utilised as payment for fines, and other forms of indemnity, and as prestige symbols within the tribe. (Roxas-Lim 1985, 198-199)

"Trade" in this instance becomes a significant art historical site for investigation as it governs the traffic of artifacts and the power that calibrates their value in social formations. These matters pertaining to trade, furthermore, caution art historians not to rush into conjoining trade routes with cultural practice. The movement of artifacts into the Philippines from the domains of Srivijaya must be seen in the context of specifically marked geopolitical and socio-historical zones. Also, the Islamic dispersal into Southern Philippines must be taken into account in negotiating the "fanning out" of Southeast Asia into the Philippine archipelago. Roxas-Lim provides this information:

In the 14th-15th centuries Sulu and Maguindanao were the most dominant trading kingdoms from the Philippines which were active in the China trade...On the eve of Spanish and Dutch intrusion, the networks were already firmly in place. It was in defense of these trade networks that the Sulu-Maguindanao sultans fought a protracted war with the Spanish colonial government. (Roxas-Lim 1985, 195)



Wall Painting on Church, Ilocos Norte

Finally, the crucial interaction between colonial Philippines and Southeast Asia Philippines is effected not to demarcate rigidly between the two but rather to heighten the moments of a relationship, the points of conjuncture at which history is continued and disrupted, sutured at the transformations of the local and the global, nation and region, ethnicity and identity, marginality and solidarity.

In January of 1995, the Pope was in Manila and was very warmly received by millions of Filipinos. One month later, the King and Queen of Spain also came to visit. The colonial heritage, surely a "selective tradition" which pursues "predisposed continuities", hits the art historian straight and right between the eyes. Without much equivocation, the colonial history of the Philippines and the experience of its people reveal the important lessons in Southeast Asian identity in the face of a post-colonial culture: that history and

experience become important to us today only in light of our struggles against colonial re-presence and its future. ■

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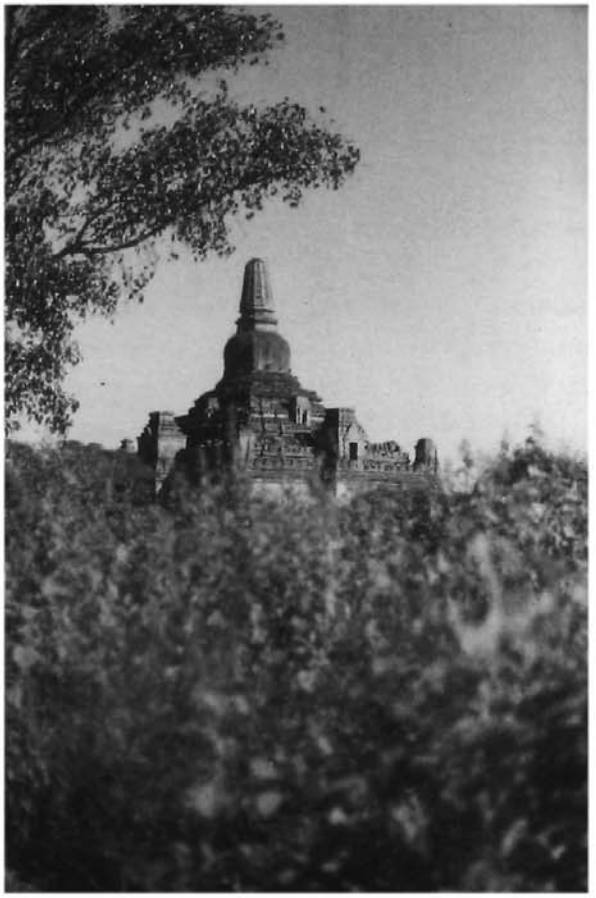
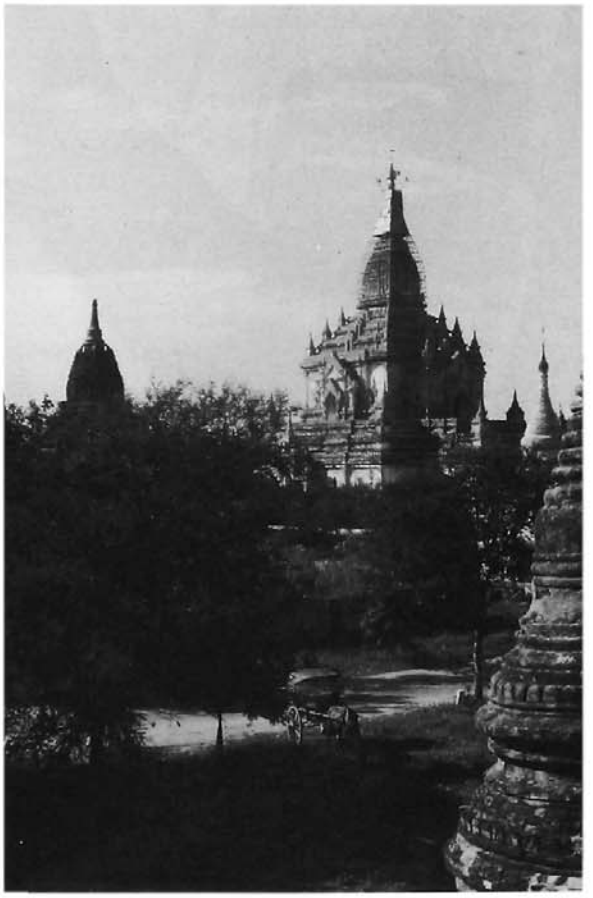
Photographs by Florence Pichon

Stupas in Bagan City, Myanma



Dhammayangyi, Myanmar



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