

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Collecting the People:
Textualizing Epics in Philippine History
from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Brandon Joseph Reilly

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Collecting the People:
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Brandon Joseph Reilly

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Professor Michael Salman, Chair

My dissertation, “Collecting the People: Textualizing Epics in Philippine History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First,” examines the study and uses of oral epics in the Philippines from the late 1500s to the present. State institutions and cultural activists uphold epics linked to the pre-colonial era as the most culturally authentic, ancient, and distinctive form of Filipino literature. These “epics” originated as oral traditions performed by culturally diverse groups. Before they could be read, they had to be written down and translated into, first, the colonial language of Spanish, and later, the national languages of English and Filipino. Beginning from the earliest Spanish colonial times, I examine the longer history of writing about, describing, summarizing, and beginning in the late nineteenth century, transcribing the diverse sorts of oral narratives that only in the twentieth century came to be called epics. I pay particular attention to how the instruments of pen, printing press, tape recorder, and video recorder, and media of preservation such as government report, published

or unpublished colonial chronicle, scholarly textualization, coffee table book, or television show, have shaped the epics. By charting how differing sets of actors from missionaries and colonial administrators to nationalists and cultural heritage preservationists sought to make sense of them over the course of successive epochs, I am able to unsettle notions of what this seemingly stable and ancient literary genre is understood to be. I show that throughout the periods I chronicle—the early Spanish colonial (late 16th to the early 18th c.), late Spanish (19th c.), American colonial (1898-1946), early post-independence (1946 to the early 1980s), and the recent era (1970s to today)—the epic has never been represented in quite the same way nor towards unchanging ends. This is a history of changing epistemologies, institutions, disciplines, and technologies engaged in the interpretation of culture.

The dissertation of Brandon Joseph Reilly is approved.

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2013

DEDICATION

This dissertation is the culmination of years of study of the Philippines that have been facilitated by the guidance of numerous individuals whose contributions to my knowledge are difficult to fully express gratitude for.

My intellectual growth has benefitted immeasurably from the guidance of my thesis advisor at UCLA, Michael Salman, whose intelligence still continues to startle but never surprises me. His patience with me throughout these long years has helped pushed me to become a better scholar at every turn. I cannot imagine having completed this project were it not for his sagacious guidance. William Marotti has opened my eyes to new ways of interpreting the world that have continuing purchase on the way I see things unfold. Jenny A. Sharpe has shown me how to think like a literary critic as I pursue history. Geoffrey Robinson has invaluable helped me to think of Southeast Asia in ways not grounded in my experience of the Philippines. It is from Nenita Pambid Domingo, most particularly, that I have learned the gift of Filipino.

Throughout my life I have had the love and support of my wonderful family: Robert and Marie Graff; Richard, Barbara, and Joe Reilly; Lorenzo (rest in peace) and Carminia Macapagal; Raghavji, Rambhabhen, Mahesh, Prafula, Ajay, and Manisha Sanathara. I am particularly indebted to my *ate*, Gayatri Sanathara, whose love and everyday concern has supplied me with many of the research materials I used for this project, among so many other things. Without Nayna Sanathara, the person who animates my every subatomic particle, nothing would be possible or worth doing.

A long time ago a little boy in the Philippines had nightmares of demons he always ended up running from. One night, he decided to fight back, and defeated them. Since that victorious battle, and every one since, he has been the greatest source of inspiration, patience,

and wisdom in my life and everyone else's whom he has encountered. Were it not for Lawrence Macapagal, I simply would not be here today. It is to Unc that this dissertation is dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION: VOICES INTO TEXT

Orally performed narrative has been a feature of Philippine cultures since before recorded history. Its sheer ubiquity explains why westerners wrote about it from the time of their earliest encounters. Antonio Pigafetta, the chronicler who accompanied Magellan during his attempted circumnavigation of the world in 1521, made substantial descriptions of the many rituals involved in “the ceremonies that those people [from Cebu] use in consecrating the swine,” which included a number of recitations directed towards the sun.¹ This seems to be why Maximillianus Transylvanus, “the scholar who interviewed the survivors of the expedition on their return to Seville,”² noted in his account, “They salute, rather than adore, the sun with certain hymns.”³ In the ensuing three plus centuries the Spanish colonizers witnessed, described, and studied innumerable performed narratives by the natives, some number of which were in fact re-stagings of traditions the Spanish brought with them from the New World or the Old. Their colonial records indicate a great deal about such narratives, for instance that they were often chanted at night, recited with a specialized vocabulary, and that they were performed for occasions as diverse as religious ceremonies, seafaring voyages, or as casual entertainment. In the late nineteenth century, when a new definition of the Filipino Self began to be imagined that linked the lowland Christian majority with the unconverted upland peoples against the colonizers, these chants, in their diverse sorts, came to be seen as the most genuine expression of who these “Filipinos” were. Because of this they needed to be transcribed in full (for the first time) and studied in published books. The

¹ Antonio Pigafetta, *The First Voyage Around the World: An Account of Magellan's Expedition*, ed. and trans. Theodore J. Chachey Jr. (New York: Marsilio Pub., 1995), 56-57.

² Laurence Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 146.

³ Maximillianus Transylvanus, “De Mulviccis Insulis,” in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1803: Explorations by Early Navigators, Descriptions of the Islands and their Peoples, their History and Records of the Catholic Missions, as related in contemporaneous Books and Manuscripts, showing the Political, Economic, Commercial and Religious Conditions of those Islands from their earliest relations with European Nations to the beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 no. 1 (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Company, 1903), 329.

“Father of Philippine Folklore,” as the nationalist Isabelo de los Reyes came to be known, described himself in *El Folk-lore Filipino* (1889) as the “Brother of the wild Aetas, Igorrotes, and Tinguianes,” the supposedly uncivilized peoples whose culture was theretofore seen as a signifier of Otherness rather than sameness.⁴ When the Americans came and conquered beginning in 1898, they inaugurated an approach to recording and studying folklore that was more regular, professionalized, disciplinarily-grounded, and institutionally supported than anything prior. After independence in 1946, a number of mostly university-educated, nationalistic Filipinos appropriated this scholarly apparatus and used it to monumentalize their culture. For E. Arsenio Manuel, F. Landa Jocano, Elena Maquiso and others, the most effective means of doing this was to collect one type of oral tradition, epics, which were upheld as “the pieces of enduring value in traditional Philippine literature, the representatives par excellence of that literature,” as Manuel put it.⁵ They labored to transform traditions like the *Hudhud*, *Darangen*, *Ulahingen*—each of which signifies some version of the term “chant” and did not necessarily refer to a specific, fixed story or set of stories in their original languages—into bona fide epics that could stand as the major works of the Filipino literary canon. Following their lead, similarly nationalistic Filipinos labored to create epic re-presentations in novelized, cinematic, and even soap operatic form, particularly after the 1970s.

For the past five centuries various groups of people have noted, described, summarized, and transcribed the performances that only came to be called “epics” in the twentieth century. Through pen and paper, printing press and book, audio recorder and cassette player, video recorder and the Internet, they transmuted Philippine voices into various media for preservation, study, and enjoyment. How and why they did this, what they

⁴ Isabelo de los Reyes, *El Folk-lore Filipino* (Manila: Tipo.-Lito. De Chofré y C., 1889), 19.

⁵ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 1969), 8.

transformed the lengthy oral traditions into, and towards what ends they employed their textualizations are questions this dissertation seeks to address.

Since the Finnish nationalist Elias Lönnrot recorded the *Kalevala* in the 1820s and made it into Finland's national epic, the act of transcribing the lengthy chants of oral cultures has become a meaningful cultural and scholarly enterprise. To the extent that people are aware that epics had their genesis in oral rather than literate cultures, they typically think of them today as either great works of literature (as for instance with the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, the quintessential epics) or the scholarly products that anthropologists have created "with a vengeance" since the 1950s because of the advent of tape recording technology.⁶ Yet while canonical texts like the *Odyssey*, the *Kalevala*, the *Epic of Sunjata*, and others have been repeatedly studied as literary and cultural objects that were created in a particular time and place, there exist few larger diachronic studies of the lengthy oral tradition genres from which they derive. The Philippines, with its lengthy colonial history of nearly four centuries, shorter but no less meaningful life as an independent nation, and highly oral culture even today, provides an ideal place to write such a history.

My project seeks to explore the following basic questions. How have various actors understood the lengthy orally recited narratives that only came to be called "epics" in the twentieth century in the three plus centuries before? How and why did they write about them? Why have people sought to transcribe them in their entirety, beginning in the nineteenth century? How have such texts, once created, been understood? How have individuals (missionaries, scholars, amateur recorders), disciplines (folklore, anthropology, history), and institutions (the Catholic Church, the colonial or postcolonial state, universities, UNESCO) provided an impetus for collecting and epistemological basis for their interpretation? My overarching aim is to problematize and historicize the epic genre in

⁶ Jan Jansen and Henk M.J. Maier, eds., *Epic Adventures: Heroic Narrative in the Oral Performance Traditions of Four Continents* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Pub., 2004), 7.

Philippine history by showing the contingency of how oral performances and the print, audio, or video media they were reduced to have been understood over the course of successive epochs. Centering my analysis on the describers, and later, recorders of epics—Francisco Ignacio Alzina, H. Otley Beyer, E. Arsenio Manuel, and others—I underscore the political, epistemological, cultural, and personal rationales that prompted their engagements with Philippine oral traditions. I draw out the strangeness of these literary products, which are laborious to collect, resist translation, make for wearying reading, confound interpretation, and occupy a liminal space between the foreign and the domestic yet are unquestionably projects of the nation. By charting the diversity of lengthy oral traditions that have been studied in the Philippines over the past five centuries, while at the same time underscoring the various ends towards which they have been deployed, most often by those that studied them but sometimes too for those that performed them, I am able to unsettle notions of what this seemingly stable and ancient literary genre is understood to be. My project thus speaks to the broader issues of colonialism, nationalism, culture, literature, and modernity in the historiography of the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.

General Historiography of Epics and Philippine Oral Traditions

On the most general level, what I seek to do is to write the first history of the oral epic genre in the Philippines. Since the nineteenth century, Herderian nationalists, colonial administrators, postcolonial anthropologists, among numerous others, have attempted to record these lengthy narratives we call epics all across the globe. There exists a substantial literature on epics collected from Africa, Europe, India, the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.⁷ Scholars have examined these oral performances, not all

⁷ On oral epics in Africa, see: Séverin Cécile Abéga, *Adzala: Espèces et Espaces dans la Forêt Badjue* (Yaoundé: Presses universitaires de Yaoundé, 1999); Ralph A. Austen, *In Search of Sunjata: The Mande Oral Epic as History, Literature, and Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999); Tayiru Banbera and David C. Conrad, *A State of Intrigue: The Epic of Bamana Segu According to Tayiru Banbera* (New York:

Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1990); Charles Binam Bikoi, *Mpomo, le Prince de la Grande Rivière: Épopée Nzimé du Cameroun Recueillie Auprès de Daniel Minkang* (Paris: IRD Editions, Karthala, 2007); David Conrad, *Epic Ancestors of the Sunjata Era: Oral Tradition from the Maninka of Guinea* (Madison: African Studies Program, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999); Mariam Konaté Deme, *Heroism and the Supernatural in the African Epic* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Amadou Oury Diallo, *Épopée du Fouta-Djallon: La Chute du Gâbou* (Paris: Harmattan, 2009); Drissa Diakité, *Kuyatè, La Force du Serment: Aux Origines du Griot Mandingue* (Paris: Harmattan, 2009); Lee Haring, *Ibonia: Epic of Madagascar* (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1994); John William Johnson, Thomas A. Hale, Stephen Belcher, *Oral Epics from Africa: Vibrant Voices from a Vast Continent* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997); André Mbeng, *Recueil de Chansons Épiques du Peuple Bassa du Cameroun: Les Murmures de L'Arc-en-Ciel* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); Isidore Okepwho, *The Epic in Africa: Towards a Poetics of the Oral Performance* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979); Fritz H. Pointer, *A Translation into English of the Epic of Kambili (An African Mythic Hero): And an Explanation of the Relation of Oral Tradition to Written Text* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012); R. Umeasiegbu and F. Dibor, *Anukili na Ugama: An Igbo Epic* (Enugu, Nigeria: Koruna Books, 1986); Oumarou Watta, *Rosary, Mat and Molo: A Study in the Spiritual Epic of Omar Seku Tal* (New York: P. Lang, 1993).

On oral epics in Europe, see: Matthew Bailey, *The Poetics of Speech in the Medieval Spanish Epic* (Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2010); Margaret Beissinger, *The Art of the Lăutar: The Epic Tradition of Romania* (New York: Garland, 1991); Philip V. Bohlman and Nada Petković, eds., *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012); John Miles Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993); János Honti, *Studies in Oral Epic Tradition*, trans. from the Hungarian by Eva Róna (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó [distributor, Kultura], 1975); Tod N. Luethans, *Gormont et Isembart: The Epic as Seen in Light of the Oral Theory* (New York: Garland, 1990); Elizabeth Minchin, ed., *Orality, Literacy and Performance in the Ancient World* (Boston: Brill, 2012); Christiane Seydou, *L'Épopée Peule de Boûbou Ardo Galo: Héros et Rebelle* (Paris: Karthala, 2010); Christiane Seydou, Silâmaka & Poullôri; *Récit Épique Peul Raconté par Tinguidji* (Paris: A. Colin, 1972).

On oral epics in India, see: Brenda E.F. Beck, *Elder Brothers Story, An Oral Epic of Tamil* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1992); Brenda E.F. Beck, *The Three Twins: The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982); Stuart H. Blackburn and Peter J. Claus, *Oral Epics in India* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989); Alf Hildebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadi among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Gene H. Roghair, *The Epic of Palnāḍu: A Study and Translation of Palnāḍi Vīrula Katha, A Telugu Oral Tradition from Andhra Pradesh* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982).

On oral epics in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, see: Nora K. Chadwick and Victor Zhirmunsky, *Oral Epics of Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010); M.C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-telling*, 3 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995); G.M.H. Schoolbraid, *The Oral Epic of Siberia and Central Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ., 1975); Susan Slyomovics, *The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987); Marianna E. Vogelzang and Herman L.J. Vanstiphout, eds., *Mesopotamian Epic Literature: Oral or Aural?* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

On oral epics in Southeast Asia, see: Theodora Helene Bofman, *The Poetics of the Ramakian* (Dekalb, IL: NIU CSEAS, 1984); Amy Catlin, ed. *Text, Context, and Performance in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam* (Los Angeles, UCP, 1992); William Collins, *The Guritan of Radin Suane: A Study of the Besemah Oral Epic from South Sumatra* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998); William Cummings, "Rethinking the Imbrication of Orality and Literacy: Historical Discourse in Early Modern Makassar" *Journal of Asian Studies* 62:2 (May 2003): 531-551; Joyce B. Flueckiger and Laurie J. Sears, *Boundaries of the Text: Epic Performances in South and Southeast Asia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan South and Southeast Asian Studies Monographs, 1991); Marijke Klokke, ed. *Narrative Sculpture and Literary Traditions in South and Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Jan Knappert, *Mythology and Folklore in South-East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999); Ann Kumar, *Surapati: Man and Legend, A Study of Three Babad Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); Stephanie Morgan and Laurie J. Sears, eds., *Aesthetic Tradition and Cultural Transition In Java and Bali* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Southeast Asia Monographs, 1984); Laurie Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996); Laurie Sears, "Javanese Mahabharata Stories: From Oral Traditions and Written Texts," in *Boundaries of the Text: Epic Performances in South and Southeast Asia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan South and Southeast Asian Studies Monographs, 1991), 61-82; and Laurie Sears, "Aesthetic Displacement in Javanese Theatre: Three Contemporary Performance Styles," *The Drama Review* (Fall 1989): 122-140.

of which have been transcribed, mostly from the disciplinary prisms of anthropology, literary studies, and folklore studies.⁸ As a consequence, while epic scholars have certainly kept the historical context of the particular epic they studied in mind, they have generally approached the subject as an already well-defined, established, known quantity. Few of them have treated the larger history of these chants before they were reduced to writing.

The starting point for my study is the body of historical studies of Philippine oral traditions. Reynaldo Ileto's classic study *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979), in which he argues that "it is beyond doubt that a text like the *Pasyon Pilapil* was, for all purposes, the social epic of the nineteenth century Tagalogs and probably other lowland groups as well," has demonstrated the broad importance an epic tradition in Philippine society as well as its link to nationalist discourses.⁹ Although they were not concerned with oral traditions specifically, Doreen Fernandez and Nicanor Tiongson, have shed light on some questions pertinent to the history of oral traditions, such as the manner of their performance, narrative content, broader social importance, among others, in their studies of Philippine theater.¹⁰ A number of synoptic studies, such as William Henry Scott's *Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine*

⁸ Larry Allums and Louise Cowan, eds., *The Epic Cosmos* (Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 2000); Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, eds., *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999); Jean Derive, ed., *L'épopée: unité et diversité d'un genre* (Paris: Karthala, 2002); John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991); Lauri Honko, *Textualization of Oral Epics* (New York: M. de Gruyter, 2000); Lauri Honko, *Textualising the Siri Epic* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998); Lauri Honko, Jawaharlal Handoo and John Miles Foley, eds., *The Epic: Oral and Written* (Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1998); David Konstan and Kurt A. Raaflaub, eds., *Epic and History* (Maiden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Jansen and Maier, *Epic Adventures*; Albert Bates Lord, *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991); Karl Reichl, ed., *The Oral Epic: Performance and Music* (Berline: VWB, 2000); David C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epics, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995).

⁹ Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1979), 14.

¹⁰ Their representative works are: Doreen Fernandez, *Palabas: Essays on Philippine Theater History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1996); idem, *Dulaan: An Essay on the American Colonial and Contemporary Traditions in Philippine Theater* (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas, 1994); idem, *The Iloilo Zarzuela, 1903-1930* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1978); and Nicanor Tiongson, *Komedya (Philippine Theater: A History and Anthology, Vol. 2)* (Quezon City: Univ of the Philippines Press, 1999); *Sinakulo (Philippine Theater: A History and Anthology, Vol. 3)* (Quezon City: Univ of the Philippines Press, 1999); idem, *Dulaan: An Essay on the Spanish Influence on Philippine Theater* (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas, 1992); and idem, *Kasaysayan ng Komedya sa Pilipinas, 1766-1982* (Manila: De La Salle Univ. Press, 1982).

Culture and Society, and D.R.M. Irving's *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila*, have treated oral traditions in part.¹¹ In his account of the Spanish "spiritual conquest" of Indio souls, Filomeno V. Aguilar examines how oral traditions served as expressions of religious beliefs.¹² Vicente L. Rafael, in *Contracting and Colonialism*, has examined how the primarily oral culture of sixteenth and seventeenth century Filipinos shaped their encounter with European writing.¹³ He has also authored a number of essays about the nature of language in the Philippines.¹⁴

A few literary studies treat oral traditions in part. Resil Mojares's *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel* usefully goes beyond its purported subject and devotes two early chapters to non-written forms of Filipino literature.¹⁵ Bienvenido Lumbera's *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898* deals at some length with oral poetry, despite that he was mainly interested in its written form.¹⁶ Closely related to these are a number of what I would classify as "analytical" folklore studies, as distinct from those devoted mainly to recording oral traditions, which examine the volumes of collected folklore for their sociological and at times historical content. Examples of these would be the work of Herminia Meñez Coben, Donn V. Hart, Francisco Demetrio, and Maximo Ramos.¹⁷ In Philippine studies, these are some of the main works devoted to studying the history of oral traditions.

¹¹ William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1994), chaps. 4, 5, 10, 12; D.R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), chap. 5.

¹² Filomeno Aguilar, *Clash of Spirits: The History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1998), chap. 2.

¹³ Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Idem, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1999), chaps. 4, 6, 8.

¹⁵ Resil B. Mojares, *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel until 1940* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1983), chaps. 2, 3.

¹⁶ Bienvenido L. Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898: Tradition and Influences in Its Development* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Herminia Meñez Coben, *Verbal Arts in Philippine Indigenous Communities: Poetics, Society, and History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2009); idem, *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1996); Donn V. Hart, *Riddles in Filipino Folklore: An Anthropological Analysis* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1964); Francisco Demetrio, *Myths and Symbols: Philippines*, rev. ed. (Manila: National Book Store, 1991); Maximo Ramos, *The Aswang Complex in Philippine Folklore* (Manila: Phoenix Publishing House, 1990); idem, *Philippine Demonological Legends and Their Cultural Bearings*

My approach to the study of the Philippine oral epic genre has been shaped by my understanding of the archipelago as a part of the larger Southeast Asian region. For this broader the region as a cultural zone, I have turned to the works of O.W. Wolters, George Coédès, and Anthony Reid's studies of regional culture.¹⁸ Accordingly, one of the tasks of this project will be to link Philippine studies of orality and oral traditions with those of Malaysia and Indonesia. Towards this end, I will draw on studies of Malay literature scholarship such as Amin Sweeney's studies of orality.¹⁹ I am particularly indebted to the work of Hendrik Maier, whose understanding of the nature of the literary canon in Malaysia and Indonesia, as elucidated in *We Are Playing Relatives* (2004), and understanding of its varying significance in successive historical periods, as explained in *In the Center of Authority* (1988), has many parallels in the Philippine history I seek to chart.²⁰

In some sense, what I attempt to do with this project is an *In the Center of Authority* written about the Philippines. In this book, Maier examines the meaning of a single text over the course of successive epochs, the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, a lengthy oral narrative that was first put to writing in 1849 at the request of British scholar James Low. Examining what a number of actors—Low, the colonial administrator and scholar R.O. Winstedt, fin-de-siècle Islamic modernist Malays, post-independence Malaysian nationalists, and the Malays who listened to the tradition in its originally oral form—made of the tradition based upon

(Manila: Phoenix Publishing House, 1990); idem, *Boyhood in Monsoon Country* (Manila: Phoenix Publishing House, 1990); idem, *The Creatures of Midnight* (Manila: Phoenix Publishing House, 1990); idem, *Creatures of Philippine Lower Mythology* (Manila: Phoenix Publishing House, 1990); and idem, *Tales of Long Ago in the Philippines* (Manila: Phoenix Publishing House, 1990).

¹⁸ O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1999); idem, *Early Southeast Asia: Selected Essays*, ed. Craig J. Reynolds (Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2008); George Coédès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Sue Brown Cowing (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968); Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988 and 1993).

¹⁹ Amin Sweeney, *Malay Word Music: A Celebration of Oral Creativity* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan, Malaysia, 1994); idem, *A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987); idem, *Authors and Audiences in Traditional Malay Literature* (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, Univ. of California, 1980).

²⁰ Hendrik Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004); and idem, *In the Center of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1988).

their epistemological context, institutional arrangements, political goals, and the form in which it appeared (as an oral performance, a scholarly manuscript, as part of a textbook, and so on), Maier shows that the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* has never had a fixed meaning or purpose over the course of its century and a half of life as a printed document. That Maier's study approaches the text's history only after it had been recorded however distinguishes it from mine, because I look at how the process of writing about, describing, or textualizing oral performances varied over time. Maier discusses at great length the issues involved with transforming the lengthy orally recited narrative into writing in his fourth chapter and at numerous other points throughout the book; even in printed form the hikayat retained a strongly oral flavor. But Maier had no need to approach the issue of textualization in each successive period he examined, as I do.

Works Cited

My understanding of Spanish views of the diverse sets of peoples across the globe they called "Indios" in the early modern period has been shaped by Anthony Pagden's study of the rise of comparative ethnology and David Weber's on Spanish understandings of the Indian Other.²¹ To gain a sense of how Spanish ethnography proceeded elsewhere in the early empire, I have relied on Sabine MacCormack's study of Andean religion for broad comparative information, and on Frank Salomon, George L. Urioste, and Francisco de Avila's edition of the so-called *Huarochiri Manuscript* for specific insights into how the colonizers and their local collaborators sought to record oral traditions in one locality in the empire.²² For an understanding of how scientific research was undertaken in the Spanish

²¹ Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986); David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005).

²² Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991); and Frank Salomon, George L. Urioste, Francisco de Avila, *The Huarochiri Manuscript: A Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1991).

colonies, I have consulted Andrés I. Prieto's study, which focuses mainly on Jesuit activities.²³

Alongside these studies of Spanish colonialism I have made use of a number of works about Indio culture written about the Philippines. Still the most significant and comprehensive portrait for prehispanic and early colonial Philippine culture is Scott's *Barangay*. Rafael's study of the linguistic dimension of religious conversion has helped me to understand the nature of Indio oral communication during earliest colonial times. For information about native shamans, I have relied on Carolyn Brewer's study of the decline of the baylanes.²⁴ Additionally, my thinking about Filipino popular culture throughout the Spanish and up to the American colonial eras has benefitted from many of the works cited above, including those of Iletto, Aguilar, Fernandez, and Tiongson.

Studies of the late Spanish colonial period have tended to focus on the activities more of the Filipino nationalists than of their Spanish colonizers. Indeed, one of the densest areas of Philippine historiography has been the study of the campaigns of Rizal and his colleagues in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.²⁵ For an account of the imperial reforms that after the loss of its American colonies allowed Spain's rule to continue in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, I have relied mainly on the work of Josep M. Fradera, which is highly

²³ Andrés I. Prieto, *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570-1810* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 2011).

²⁴ Carolyn Brewer, *Shamanism, Catholicism and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521-1685* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

²⁵ Major recent works include: Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2005); idem, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (New York: Verso, 1998); John N. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880-1895: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, The Making of a Revolution*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1997); idem, *The Making of a Nation: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Filipino Nationalism* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1991); Megan Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2012); Resil B. Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes, and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2006); Vicente L. Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2005).

useful for the first half of the nineteenth century but terminates around the 1860s.²⁶ Sebastian Balfour's *The End of Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* devotes its Prologue and first chapter to the final years of empire but thereafter turns to developments in the metropole.²⁷ John Schumacher's retrospective of Retana's corpus and Gloria Cano's studies of the historian touch on the larger history he formed part of while at the same time discussing his work.²⁸

In contrast with the late Spanish era, there is a massive literature on the period of U.S. colonial rule. Michael Salman's work on the bifurcated American colonial state structure has helped me to understand not only how politics but also literature has been divided.²⁹ I have found that Scott's study of the fugitive, upland area he calls *Zomia* has relevance for similar regions of the Philippines, despite that island Southeast Asia does not figure prominently in his account.³⁰ In thinking about how generations educated under American rule gradually began to learn that upland peoples like the Ifugao were Filipinos, however ambiguously, I have made use of Thongchai Winichakul's study of mapping practices.³¹ In conceiving of Laubach's project to create a newspaper in Lanao in the 1930s, I have benefited from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's essay on how news in Indonesian peripheries has been consumed.³² Sullivan's book on Worcester has served as a useful guide of the sort of paternalist and

²⁶ Josep M. Fradera, *Colonias para después de un Imperio* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2005); and Ma. Dolores Elizalde, Josep M. Fradera y Luis Alonso, eds., *Imperios y Naciones en el Pacífico*, 2 vols. (Madrid: CISC, 2001).

²⁷ Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997).

²⁸ John S. Schumacher, "Wenceslao E. Retana: An Historiographical Study," *Philippine Studies* vol. 10 no. 4 (1962): 550-576; and Gloria Cano, "Wenceslao Retana Visited: A New Historical Assessment," in Isaac Donoso, ed., *More Hispanic than We Admit: Insights into Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Vibal Pub., 2008), 263-301.

²⁹ Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2003), chap. 8.

³⁰ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009).

³¹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

³² Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "The News in the Provinces," in Renato Rosaldo, ed., *Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2003), pp. 192-222.

masculinist discourses that pervaded American discourses of their civilizing mission.³³

Rafael's essay on American attempts to know the Philippines through census taking usefully illuminates the peculiar logics of colonial surveillance in the Philippines.³⁴ I have also benefitted from W.H. Scott's debunking of Beyer's crackpot theories of the peopling the archipelago.³⁵

The rise of epic collection in the post-independence period grew out of a particular yearning for something that might serve as an anchor the Filipinos' sense of Self. Michael Salman's essay, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines: What the Social Life of Jose E. Marco's Forgeries and Ahmed Chalabi Can Tell Us about the Epistemology of Empire," elucidates this desire better than any other source.³⁶ Caroline S. Hau's work on the debates about Filipino literature illustrates many of the impulses that led to canonization of particular works and the problems their promoters encountered.³⁷ Patricia May B. Jurilla's work on the history of the is the best examination of the checkered history of the print culture in the country, limited though it is.³⁸ For information on Marcos era national cultural institutions, I have relied on Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut's study.³⁹ In my discussion of Marcos era propaganda, I have been enlightened by Rafael's essay, "Patronage,

³³ Rodney J. Sullivan, *Exemplar of Americanism: The Philippine Career of Dean C. Worcester* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, Univ. of Michigan, 1991).

³⁴ Vicente L. Rafael, "White Love: Census and Melodrama in the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines," in his *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, 19-51.

³⁵ For a brief overview of the rise and demise of the wave migration theory, see William Henry Scott, *Looking for the Prehispanic Filipino* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), 8-9; and idem, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1994), 10-11.

³⁶ Michael Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines: What the Social Life of Jose E. Marco's Forgeries and Ahmed Chalabi Can Tell Us about the Epistemology of Empire," in Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 260-272.

³⁷ Caroline S. Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ Press, 2000).

³⁸ Patricia May B. Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century: A History of the Book in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2008).

³⁹ Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut, *Institutions and Icons of Patronage: Arts and Culture in the Philippines during the Marcos Years, 1965-1986* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 2012).

Pornography, and Youth: Ideology and Spectatorship during the Early Marcos Years.”⁴⁰

Barbara Gaerlan’s essay on the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company offers a useful illustration of the genealogy of the re-staging of performative traditions in the present, which she shows to date back in her study to the American colonial era.⁴¹ The first volume of Lauri Honko’s treatise on his experience of textualizing the Siri Epic serves as a sort of summation of his life experience of studying and collecting epics; as such it remains a valuable resource that I have used for general as well as for more specific information, for instance on Lonnröt’s experience of creating the *Kalevala*.⁴²

Throughout this study I make use of a number of theoretical insights and key concepts penned by a diverse set of authors, such as Edward Said’s seminal study of Orientalism;⁴³ Pascale Casanova on the world literary system;⁴⁴ Walter Ong’s classic work on the distinctions between oral and literate societies;⁴⁵ Foucault’s essays on the “Fantasia of the Library,” authorship, and genealogy;⁴⁶ Bakhtin’s theorizations of literature and language;⁴⁷ Johannes Fabian on anthropological time;⁴⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger on the artificiality of tradition;⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson’s classical study on the social

⁴⁰ Vicente L. Rafael, “Patronage, Pornography, and Youth: Ideology and Spectatorship during the Early Marcos Years,” in his *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, 122-161.

⁴¹ Barbara S. Gaerlan, “In the Court of the Sultan: Orientalism, Nationalism, and Modernity in Filipino American Dance,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* vol. 2 no. 3 (1999): 251-287.

⁴² Lauri Honko, *Textualising the Siri Epic* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998).

⁴³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage: 1979).

⁴⁴ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. Debevoise (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2013[1982]).

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, “Fantasia of the Library,” “What is an Author?” and “Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History” in idem, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), chaps. 4-6.

⁴⁷ Particularly the essays in M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981).

⁴⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2002).

⁴⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983).

construction of nations;⁵⁰ Diana Taylor on performance;⁵¹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett on the museum-ification of culture, among other works.⁵²

Structure

My study will be composed of six chapters and follow a chronological organization, proceeding from earliest to most recent times.

Chapter One, “Epics in the Early Spanish Philippines Revisited,” examines the early Spanish encounters and writings about Philippine oral traditions, from roughly the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth. Current scholarly opinion holds that the early Spanish had little interest in Indio oral traditions. Using a number of colonial chronicles as my source material, my aim will be to show that the early Spanish did in fact devote themselves to seriously studying oral traditions. They described and often summarized many lengthy traditions to map out Indio religion, history, and culture, an activity they undertook most often to facilitate their conversion of the natives to Christianity. Charting this history usefully illustrates that transcribing epics was not the only manner of appreciating them. It allows us to see that from the earliest body of writings about Philippine cultures that exists, a particular group of people had specific political and religious goals for which the preservation and study of oral traditions (among other cultural aspects) served a useful end.

Chapter Two, “The Great Defender of the Indians: Jose Ignacio Alzina and Philippine Oral Traditions,” examines Francisco Ignaiico Alzina’s *Historia de los islas e indios visayas* (1668), the greatest ethnographic work of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, because it treats oral traditions, particularly the lengthiest and most complex genres, as he defined them,

⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Verso, 2006).

⁵¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2003).

⁵² Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museum, and Heritage* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1998).

at great length. Alzina seems to have intended to publish the book but never had the opportunity; consequently copies of it seem to have circulated only among members of his order. A highly adept thinker and linguist, Alzina spent nearly all of his adult life studying Visayan culture. My aim will be to show that, spurred by his Jesuit imperative to learn and study, he sought to monumentalize them as expressions of Visayan genius through his *Historia*. He created typologies of Visayan “poetry,” summarized a great number of stories, and displayed a unique sympathy for the culture of the people who became his own. Alzina’s text, in other words, demonstrates what an exhaustive, lifelong pursuit of grasping Philippine oral traditions as completely as possible looks like, prior to the rise of disciplines like folklore and anthropology. His engagement allows us to not only learn a great deal about what their features, meanings, and social functions were for the Visayans themselves, but also the great difficulty the non-Visayan student faced in attempting to understand them and preserve them in print for dissemination for an international audience.

Chapter Three, “The Recuperative Archive: Late Spanish Writings on Philippine Oral Traditions,” examines the late Spanish engagement with oral traditions during the nineteenth century, the period during which the first two Philippine epics were recorded, Isabelo de los Reyes’s transcription of the Ilokano *Biag ni Lam-ang*, and Jose Castaño’s of the Bikolano *Handiong*. Because a number of recent works have discussed the importance of the nationalist de los Reyes’s pioneering folklore campaign, this chapter will focus on the Spanish engagement with oral traditions.⁵³ Using Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga’s *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas ó, Mis viajes por este país* (1893), Castaño’s *Breve noticia acerca del origen, religión, creencias y supersticiones de los antiguos indios del Bicol* (1895)—the

⁵³ Resil B. Mojares, *Isabelo’s Archive* (Mandaluyong: Anvil Pub., 2013); Megan C. Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2012), chap. 3; and Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2005), Prologue. Each of these builds on William Henry Scott, “Isabelo de los Reyes: Father of Philippine Folklore,” in his *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Pub., 1998[1982]), 245-265.

document that contains the recording of *Handiong*—and Juan Villaverde’s *Supersticiones y cuentos de los Igorrotes* (1911) as my source material, I will show that the late Spanish engagement with oral traditions grew mostly out of one Spaniard’s attempt, Wenceslao Retana, to create what I call a “recuperative archive”: an assemblage of historical materials that future scholars would utilize not simply to flesh out the history of the colony that generated them, but so that they might rediscover the progressive role Spain played in its development. When Julian Malumbres sought to publish Villaverde’s text under American imperium in 1911, he was essentially following in Retana’s footsteps. Because Retana was centrally concerned with accumulating and preserving documents that displayed Spanish beneficence, his archive in fact contained relatively few texts that treated oral traditions in any sustained way. That a textualized epic appeared as part of it was not by design but was mere happenstance. This is why the late Spanish oral traditions textualizations and studies reveal surprisingly little that is concrete about the actual performances they purport to express. Seen in this light, an event like the recording of *Handiong* substantiates rather than challenges claims, for instance by the *Ilustrados*, that the Spanish were generally uninterested in Filipino culture.

Chapter Four, “Parting the Chorus: American Colonialism and the Origins of Collecting Epics,” examines the rise of epic recording during the American colonial era, from 1898-1946. I will focus on the writings of the period’s most significant anthropologists and folklorists: H. Otley Beyer, Roy F. Barton, Dean S. Fansler, and Frank Laubach. I will show that the peculiarly American scholarly approach to studying oral traditions bifurcated them, segregating those chanted by upland groups such as the Ifugaos, Bagobos, and others, which were portrayed “authentic” and therefore properly worthy of study, from those that the Christian population produced. This is why the sorts of oral traditions the colonizers most often encountered came to be called “metrical romances” and the relatively unknown

utterances of provincial groups came to be known as “epics.” This is a parting of the Philippine oral repertoire that persists even today.

Chapter Five, “The Garden of E. Arsenio Manuel,” examines the explosion of epic collection during the post-independence era, from roughly the late 1950s to the early 1980s. I will focus on the writings of the scholar who was central to this history: E. Arsenio Manuel. My aim will be to show that the impulse to collect epics grew out of a nationalist longing for cultural monuments where none existed. Recording epics offered a means of creating something that was distinctly Filipino; this is why they needed to be collected widely, transcribed fully, and studied intently, as never before. But once transcribed, the epics’ lives as literary texts were rocky; the recorded oral epic did not gain great fame. The idea of epic however did, and because of Manuel and his colleagues it became a known, venerated object in Filipino culture and literature, even if few Filipinos actually read the post-independence recorders’ works.

Chapter Six, “Of Permanence and Proteanism: Recent Developments in Philippine Epics,” examines recent developments in the history of epics, beginning in the 1970s but covering especially developments since the 1990s and 2000s. I will chart the two main developments of the period: the continuation of recording and archiving of epics and the phenomenon of re-presenting them. I will focus first on the work of Nicole Revel, creator of the online *Philippine Ballads and Epics Archive* (2011). I will show that this archive, besides being the most technologically advanced form of salvage anthropology possible, functions more to perpetuate the practice of epic collection rather than to do anything to preserve the cultures that performed epics. In the second part of the chapter, I will look at three of the most significant attempts at what I term epic “remixing”: Mig Alvarez Enriquez’s *Three Philippine Epic Plays*, Rio Alma’s *Huling Hudhud*, and the soap opera *Amaya*, which bills

itself as an “epicserye.” I will show that through these remixed forms, the epic at last found a wide audience beyond a limited community of scholarly readers.

CHAPTER ONE:
EPICS IN THE EARLY SPANISH PHILIPPINES REVISITED

The antiquities of the first age (except those we find in sacred writ) were buried in oblivion and silence: silence was succeeded by poetical fables; and fables again were followed by the records we now enjoy: so that the mysteries and secrets of antiquity were distinguished and separated from the records and evidences of succeeded times, by the veil of fiction, which interposed itself, and came between those things which perished and those which are extant.

Francis Bacon, *The Wisdom of the Ancients*⁵⁴

In his seminal “Survey of Philippine Folk Epics” (1963), E. A. Manuel, the most significant collector and theorizer of the genre in the postcolonial Philippines, writes, “*Biag ni Lam-ang* and *Handiong* were the only folk epics ever recorded during the Spanish period, a good index indeed of the lack of attention given the study of Filipino culture during that long time.”

Manuel found it shocking that throughout the historic three centuries of Spanish imperium in the Philippines, an extensive period during which the Spanish wrote voluminously about a wide variety of things related to the culture of the peoples they called “Indios,” the colonizers had only managed to record two epics. He found this surprising, because, as he points out, “Historically some of these epics must have been known to the early Spanish chroniclers who noted them in passing in their accounts,” a point whose validity he demonstrates by reproducing a few Spanish accounts that describe these oral narratives—those of Miguel de Loarca, Andres de San Nicolas, and Francisco Colín—which he asks to be read as examples of the Spanish *lack* of interest in them. “What is remarkable about these accounts,” he writes, “is the meagerness of the information and the lack of appreciation on the part of the Spanish historians and missionaries for the pagan creations of the folk.”⁵⁵ The Spanish were aware that epics existed, but they devoted so little serious attention to them, Manuel argues, that their entire engagement with Philippine folklore must be disregarded. The exceptions of *Biag*

⁵⁴ Francis Bacon, “The Wisdom of the Ancients,” in Basil Montagu, ed., *The Works of Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England*, new ed. (London: William Pickering, 1825), i.

⁵⁵ E.A. Manuel, “Survey of Philippine Folk Epics” *Asian Folklore Studies* vol. 22 (1963): 6, 4, 6.

ni Lam-ang and *Handiong* notwithstanding, Spanish colonialism contributed nothing of significance to the history of recording Philippine epics.

In writing these words, Manuel was not merely speaking for himself but was voicing the thinking of likely all of his contemporaries in Philippine anthropology, folklore, and history. The perception that the Spanish had little interest in Philippine oral traditions, and culture more generally, has long held purchase in the colony, later country's, historiography. In this chapter, I seek to challenge this view. Using Manuel's seminal essay as a point of departure, I will show that although the Spanish indeed did not record epics, they did nonetheless avidly study, appreciate, and value them, even if they did so in ways that have so far eluded scholars. This is significant because it particularizes Manuel's manner of appreciating the epics, articulated in the early post-independence era (1946-1980s), which posits that transcribing performances verbatim, translating, and publishing them in books is the only way to value them. Charting the early Spanish colonial history of studying the lengthy oral performances no one yet called "epics," from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth, usefully demonstrates that from the first period in history for which he have ample documentation, generations of writers sought in their own way to make sense and significance of them.

This chapter will be composed of five parts. First, I will critically reconsider Manuel's critique as a means of rethinking how we might assess the study and uses of epics in earlier historical eras. Second, I will turn to one of the chronicles Manuel references in his essay, Miguel de Loarca's *Relación de las Yslas Filipinas* (1582), to demonstrate how the early Spaniards made use of Indio oral traditions. My examination of Loarca will enable me in the following section to reread the other two accounts Manuel cites alongside others from the period to provide a more complete picture of writing about oral traditions the early colonial period. Fourth, I will examine the broad changes Spanish colonization brought about

to Philippine oral traditions. Lastly, I will look synoptically at what all of this means for the early history of the Spanish engagement with epics.

Manuel's Critique

Manuel's critique is valid according to the terms he sets. He is certainly correct in pointing out that the Spanish largely did not record, in the crucial sense of "transcribe," the long orally chanted narratives they so often witnessed. He himself transcribed and published three epics—*Maiden of the Buhong Sky: A Complete Song from the Bagobo Epic Tuwaang* (1958), *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (1969), and *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding: The Second Song of the Manuvu' Ethnoepic Tuwaang* (1975)—and believed that recording them in methodologically rigorous way he did was the only true measure of expressing interest in them. Interestingly, however, he offers no explanation as to how this practice came about in the Philippines or elsewhere in his essay. Nor does he offer any rationale for collecting epics is significant in the first place; he simply assumes it is a worthwhile endeavor. In the place of an explanation, he launches into a broad critique of the Spanish colonial regime: they were so mired in superstitiousness, racism, and ignorance that it left them blind to the immense importance and value of cultural products such as epics—something that might not raise the blood pressure of most but that made Manuel indignant. Hence his barb "a good index indeed of the lack of attention given the study of Filipino culture during that long time."

His conclusion that the Spanish were not interested in native culture is however impressionistic and unnecessarily dismissive of Spanish ethnology in the early global era.⁵⁶ Politically motivated, unproblematically ethnocentric, and culturally violent though it may have been, the Spanish study of the Indios nonetheless produced a vast archive that till this

⁵⁶ For useful corrective studies, see, e.g., Joan-Pau Rubiés, "The Spanish Contribution to the Ethnology of Asia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Renaissance Studies* vol. 17 no. 3 (Sept. 2003): 418-448; Andrés I. Prieto, *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570-1810* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 2011); David C. Goodman, *Power and Penury: Government, Technology and Science in Philip II's Spain* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988).

day remains one of the most important bodies of literature that treats Philippine culture. Moreover, studies of oral traditions in fact formed a substantial subset of this corpus, and the Spanish did transcribe some species of them, such as riddles, but such recordings were rarely made of more substantial genres.⁵⁷ Had they not studied oral traditions so diligently, Manuel would not have been able to refer to the accounts of Loarca as his successors in the first place.

His critique raises two questions about the history of recording oral epics. First, when, historically, did people begin to do so? And second, how does the Spanish Philippines fit within this global timeline?

Although we now recognize that many great epic works that have come down to us in writing such as Homer's *Odyssey* and *Illiad* or Spain's national epic *Cantar de Mio Cid* did in fact begin as oral performances that at some point were written down, pace Albert Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960), this was not the act of "recording an epic" that Manuel had in mind.⁵⁸ In the sense that he conceived of it, recording an epic meant transcribing a living oral tradition; this was folkloric activity of a particular sort. Historically, the first person to transcribe the lengthy recitations we now associate with the term "epic" seems to have been the Finnish nationalist Lonnröt, who in the 1830s began to collect what is now his nation's epic, *Kalevala*.⁵⁹ Shortly after him followed figures such as V. V. Radlov (F. W. Radloff), the Russian collector of Turkic epic narratives, among others beginning in the 1860s.⁶⁰ It was in the later nineteenth century that the first epics were recorded in Africa—where the scholarship on oral epics is the richest and longest standing.⁶¹ In Southeast Asia too—the

⁵⁷ Bienvenido L. Lumbea, *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1986), chap. 1.

⁵⁸ Albert Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed., Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000).

⁵⁹ For this information I have relied on Lauri Honko, *Textualising the Siri Epic* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998), 169-176.

⁶⁰ Stuart H. Blackburn and Peter J. Claus, *Oral Epics in India* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 1n1.

⁶¹ Stephen Belcher, *Epic Traditions of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999), appendix.

modern regional grouping of which the Philippines now forms part, although it did not initially—it was during the nineteenth century that oral traditions began to be transmuted into written texts.⁶² It was in the nineteenth century, then, that the modern activity of recording epics had its genesis. The recordings of *Biag ni Lam-ang* and *Handiong* later in the century were, therefore, in world historical terms, right on time.

Given this timeline, it should not be surprising that Spanish did not record epics in the Philippines if one takes into account the early origins and sheer duration of its colonization. Spanish colonialism began in the mid-sixteenth century, at a time when virtually no one, colonizer or colonized, sought to transcribe recited narratives of any sort—religious, literary, artistic, legal, political, or otherwise—although they certainly did summarize, excerpt, or otherwise abbreviate the content of such utterances as they wrote about them. European colonial powers generated a massive archive about the lands and peoples they encountered during the scramble for the Spice Islands and the New World, including information on oral traditions. But they never thought, or saw the need, to write out the full “transcripts” of the stories they heard. That the Spanish did not capture every detail of any cultural event—which would have, in any case, been an unmanageable, even impossible task—should be expected. In her magisterial reconstruction of Andean religion, Sabine MacCormack draws attention to the fragmentary nature of Spanish writings on Inti Raimi, an Andean cultural event that would not have failed to impress onlookers in its heyday.

[The] description of harvesting and plowing in Cuzco is unique for being the only extant detailed account by an eyewitness of a major Inca festival, the only account which conveys, however simply and haltingly, something of the immense splendor, dignity, and beauty of these celebrations... Even so, the description is incomplete, because the writer could say nothing about the theological and political significance of the festival, or rather, set of festivals that he witnessed. This fragmentary quality is not particular to this account. Rather, it pervades to a greater or lesser degree all extant

⁶² Maier notes the uniqueness of *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the earliest recording of which dates to 1758, “Given the fact that most Malay manuscripts are from the nineteenth century, it is a relatively old example of Malay writing. Hendrik Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 77

descriptions of Andean religion.⁶³

It is hopeless to assume that these writers could have, or would have, jotted down everything in their fields of vision and audition, much though historians and anthropologists would relish in such documentation. It bears noting further that to do so with epics would have been a difficult, time consuming, and distressing labor with the highly limited sixteenth and seventeenth century implements of the quill, ink, paper, and memory.

An important exception to this that might shed light on Spanish recordings of oral traditions is the so-called *Huarochiri Manuscript* (1608), a remarkable Quechua text that aspired to be “a totalizing book about inherited tradition, custom, and lifeways.”⁶⁴ Although the circumstances of its authorship and composition are somewhat unclear, it seems to owe its provenance to a publicity-seeking priest who wanted to create a catalogue of Indian blasphemies so that it might serve as a justification for his spectacles of iconoclasm. Who exactly recorded a particular folio, when they did it, and how the text as a whole became assembled cannot be definitively known. Nonetheless, the text provides a glimpse into what a recording of native oral traditions under early colonialism could and did look like. Of the many wondrous things one might find about native religion, origins, myths, and more in the manuscript, an epic—as defined according to the six-point criteria Manuel lays out⁶⁵—even in fragmentary form, is not one of them. To the extent that the manuscript expresses a prehispanic Andean consciousness of the importance of oral traditions, it does so in a way that evinces little concern for their preservation in the exact form they were recited. The religion and culture of the Andeans was no less glorious than that of their Philippine counterparts across the ocean. Yet no force seems to have compelled them to put their legends to writing for prosperity’s sake.

⁶³ Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), 77.

⁶⁴ Frank Salomon and George L. Urioste, eds. and trans., *The Huarochiri Manuscript: A Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1991), 2.

⁶⁵ Manuel, “Survey of Philippine Epics,” 3.

With this in mind, it becomes difficult to sustain the claim that the mere recording of two epics in the nineteenth century Philippines should be seen a sign of a general Spanish disinterest in either epics or local cultures more generally. Neither the early nor the late Spanish colonialists were unusually out of sync with world historical trends. Indeed, a contrary appraisal can be ventured. The fact that two epics were recorded by late nineteenth century in the perpetually maladministered archipelago, where political instability in the metropole made for inconsistent and ineffective governance in the colony, can be seen instead as sign of the Spanish Philippine active engagement with contemporary global intellectual trends, something powerfully underscored by the fact that one of these works, *Biag ni Lam-ang*, was recorded by an Indio who had never traveled abroad.⁶⁶ Measured amidst global literary developments, one could even say that these textualizations were on the leading edge.

Problematic and anachronistic though Manuel's lament is, it brings to visibility for the first time the question of the long Spanish engagement with epics. This is something that might not seem significant at first glance. After all, if, as Manuel points out, oral traditions do not seem to have figured prominently in Spanish writings, then were they not accordingly unimportant, minor phenomena? Answering no to this question, I will demonstrate that many Spaniards avidly studied and wrote about Philippine oral traditions. I will do this by utilizing various accounts from Miguel de Loarca (1582) to Gaspar de San Agustín (1720). As we will see, the Spanish encounter with Philippine songs, chants, and recitations was deeply imbricated with their attempts to grasp the Indio spiritual and cultural world, whether for the ultimate purposes of enhancing control, facilitating religious reformation, or even because of

⁶⁶ A good deal of recent work treats Isabelo de los Reyes's campaign to record folklore, including *Biag ni Lam-ang*. See Resil B. Mojares, *Isabelo's Archive* (Mandaluyong: Anvil Pub., 2013); Megan C. Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2012), chap. 3; and Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2005), Prologue. Each of these builds on William Henry Scott, "Isabelo de los Reyes: Father of Philippine Folklore," in his *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Pub., 1998[1982]), 245-265.

simple fascination. By examining the Spanish encounter with epics in a chronological fashion, from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, I will be able to track the broader changes in colonial thinking, their perception of the Indios, and the deepening of their knowledge about the Philippines that took place during this period. Some of these accounts devote a mere few sentences to oral traditions, while others treat them at length. The earliest one, Loarca's, is one of the latter category. It is also the account Manuel himself begins with. Interestingly, Loarca says much more about oral traditions, including epics, than Manuel's essay lets on.

Rereading Loarca

Loarca's *Relación de las Yslas Filipinas* is the most significant of the three early accounts Manuel cites as evidence of the Spanish lack of interest in epics, both for its early providence and the richness of its information about oral traditions. Probably for the latter reason it came to Manuel's attention. He reproduces the following passage in his essay.

...The inhabitants of the mountains cannot live without the fish, salt, and other articles of food, and the jars and dishes, of other districts; nor, on the other hand, can those of the coast live without the rice and cotton of the mountaineers. In like manner they have two different beliefs concerning the beginning of the world; and since these natives are not acquainted with the art of writing, they preserve their ancient lore through songs, which they sing in a very pleasing manner-commonly while plying their oars, as they are island-dwellers.

Also, during their revelries, the singers who have good voices recite the exploits of olden times; thus they always possess a knowledge of past events. The people of the coast, who are called the Yligueynes, believe that heaven and earth had no beginning, and there were two gods, one called Captan and the other Maguayan. The Iguines (another subdivision of that people) believed that the god Maguayan carried the souls of his disciples, in his boat, to another life.⁶⁷

"To be noted," Manuel writes, "are the preservation of ancient traditions through songs

⁶⁷ Manuel, "Survey of Philippine Epics," 4-5. The original is found in Emma Blair and J.A. Robertson, eds. and trans., *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 5 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1903), 120-121. Hereafter BR. This is one of the rare documents they have reproduced that is accompanied by an original text. Because their translations are suspect, I have checked any text from this document reproduced here against the original, correcting for any errors. See Gloria Cano, "Evidence for the Deliberate Distortion of the Spanish Philippine Colonial Historical Record in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 39:1 (Feb. 2008): 1-30.

which recount the exploits of gods or heroes in olden times. In particular attention should be drawn to the transport of souls of followers by Maguayan in his boat, a motif which has survived in the ethnoepics of the Bukidnon and Bagobo people.”⁶⁸ What Manuel finds important is not the story itself. He expresses no interest in its beauty, its referentiality, or what it can tell us about the spiritual universe or terrestrial culture of its reciters. Instead, he only finds it significant insofar as it serves to corroborate what he knows about epics, works that had been collected during his time or a generation or two before. Here he reveals his essential purpose—as well as that of his contemporaries—in recording: to collect for the purposes of collection and classification, towards what ultimate end he does not say here. He advances no strategy of how to read such stories or proposes any reason to do so in the first place. With no explanation as to why, he simply urges people to collect.

Manuel’s rejection of epic texts that are not verbatim transcripts precludes him from appreciating Loarca’s contributions as a student of Indio oral arts, which are in fact more substantial than he assumes. They are also what lead Manuel to end his citation as abruptly as he does. The above passage terminates just as Loarca begins to relate a lengthy orally recounted creation narrative of the coastal peoples (Appendix 1). Following this, Loarca relates a similar one, that of the mountain peoples (Appendix 2). Presumably, anyone interested in early Philippine oral traditions, religion, performative arts, literature, and culture would find great worth in stories such as these. Yet because they had not been preserved in a form that Manuel found appropriate, he disregarded them entirely. Had he read these more sensitively, he would have found that although Loarca did not transcribe epic fragments or entire cycles, he did think these narratives worth preserving in written form for study.

The immediately apparent feature of these stories is their form of representation. Here, Manuel’s point about their manner of preservation certainly applies: neither of these are

⁶⁸ Manuel, “Survey,” 5.

transcriptions in any real sense. It is probable that grammatical elements, individual words or phrases, have been reproduced by Loarca in translation—throughout the relation he conscientiously utilizes local words to identify Panayan customs and practices (he was writing from Panay) which he then goes on to explain in Spanish—but there is nothing here that approximates what Sweeney calls a “narrative chunk.”⁶⁹ This is in part because the oral traditions here are not *transcribed* but are *described*, and as such their content—if we imagine it to comprise the unimaginably extensive set of all verbal utterances Loarca heard and saw while gathering information about these stories—is massively reduced, and summarized, to what he regards as their basic components: the main characters, setting, and principal events that move the plot. For those familiar with the opulently woven Philippine epics that have been recorded so far, these stories will seem incomparably meager. The larger-than-life characters, which might have been variously brave, avaricious, beautiful, selfish, or dull, are merely identified by name. The everyday objects that acquired mystical qualities in the hands of deities—a magical kris, an ivory comb, a jewel-studded betel quid box, for instance—things the audience would recognize and be awed by, disappear from view. And, of course, the enigmatic figures of speech that animated epics, the inscrutable metaphors, the oblique references, and the calculated ellipses—grammatical features that alone invite multiple and contradicting hearings, viewings, and readings—all vanish through translation. Loarca’s stories certainly would not satisfy the contemporary epic litterateur’s appetite.

But Loarca’s goal was not to record an epic; it would be unjust to fault him for not doing so. His purpose was to create a sketch of the newly settled colony for Spanish administrators and missionaries, and ultimately, the king. As he did this, he created one of the earliest documents of Philippine religion—a subject about which we have few known

⁶⁹ Amin Sweeney, *A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1987), 165.

sources before the arrival of the Spanish. And he did so at a particularly crucial moment. Magellan's incursion notwithstanding, the permanent campaign to Christianize the Philippine Indios had begun less than two decades before Loarca's arrival; it had not, by the time of his writing, eradicated preexisting beliefs to the extent it would in the following decades centuries.⁷⁰ The spirit beings whose names he committed to paper—deities whose activities, Loarca notes in different places throughout the relation, animate practices like marriage, death, war, and more—would gradually disappear from the communities whence they gave rise, to the point where they have long since been forgotten today. Thus his identification of Captan, Maguayan, Cavahi and others serves as one of the only extant testimonies to their existence. From Loarca we can really only conjecture about the supernatural exploits of these gods, but we at least know they did exist.

Loarca's statement, "Also, during their revelries, the singers who have good voices recite the exploits of olden times; thus they always possess a knowledge of past events," is the clearest indication that his source for these stories was something like what we now call an epic. What is murkier is how he collected this information and transformed it into these stories. Although he does not explicitly state how he composed his relation, Loarca provides many clues throughout it about how he garnered his information. In many places, he refers matter-of-factly to what his informants say, which suggests that he simply wrote things as they were related to him. Here are a few instances:

It is said that the souls of those who are stabbed to death, eaten by crocodiles, or killed by arrows (which is considered a very honorable death), go to heaven by way of the arch which is formed when it rains, and become gods.

They say that those who die in old age that the wind comes and snatches away their souls. And of those who die thus, the Arayas (which is a certain alliance of villages), they say, go to a very high mountain in the island of Panay, called Mayas.

They say that there is in the sky another god, called Sidapa.

⁷⁰ See John N. Schumacher, S.J., "The Golden Age of the Philippine Church, 1700-1768," in his *Growth and Decline: Essays on Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2009), chap. 2.

It is said that, when the Yligueyenes die, the god Maguayen carries them to the Inferno.

They say that Macaptan dwells highest in the sky. They consider him a bad god, because he sends disease and death among them, saying that because he has not eaten anything of this world, or drunk from any pitarrillas [a type of jar], he does not love them, and so kills them.⁷¹

Descriptions such as these pervade Loarca's account, a feature it in fact shares with the Huarochiri Manuscript. They imbue the relation with a more journalistic quality, one that contrasts with the often more polished and meditative accounts of later authors.

Loarca's dispassion, his desire to write about things largely as he saw and heard them, is on display in his discussion of these stories. For reasons that have to do with the relatively early date of his account (before Spanish views of the Indios tended to become more disparaging and rigid), the dearth of information about the Philippines that then existed, and that are in part subjective, Loarca found delight in Indio oral traditions. The two things he says about them bear this out, that "they sing in a very pleasing manner" and that there are "singers who have good voices." He could find no fault with them. His assessment is further significant, paradoxical though it may sound, for what it does not include. He voices no complaint about how such performances were unbearably long, how they were prompted by the devil, or how they should be taken as a sign of the Indios' barbarism—all charges less broad-minded chroniclers would routinely level. It is not that Loarca was by instinct an admirer of the Indios. About Catanduanes, for instance, he writes, less flatteringly, "They all worship the ugly wooden idol, and talk to the demon."⁷² He was thus not reluctant to express a negative view when he held it. Yet in general Loarca referred neutrally, or in these cases, even positively, to the vocal arts Panayans performed.

Loarca wrote perceptively, often sympathetically, and intelligently about a number of oral performances he witnessed throughout his relation. In so doing, he created a catalogue of

⁷¹ BR 5: 128-29, 128-131, 130-31, 130-31, 132-35

⁷² *Ibid.*, 97-100.

things that have since either disappeared or that have so radically changed they have since become unrecognizable. The best example of a lost art Loarca preserved is his report is of a baylan chant.

The natives of these islands have neither time nor place set apart for the offering of prayers and sacrifices to their gods. It is only in case of sickness, and in times of seed-sowing or of war, that sacrifices are offered. These sacrifices are called baylanes, and the priestesses, or the men who perform this office, are also called baylanes. The priestesses dress very gaily, with garlands on their heads, and are resplendent with gold. They bring to the place of sacrifice some pitarrillas (a kind of earthen jar) full of rice-wine, besides a live hog and a quantity of prepared food. Then the priestess chants her songs and invokes the demon, who appears to her all glistening in gold. Then he enters her body and hurls her to the ground, foaming at the mouth as one possessed. In this state she declares whether the sick person is to recover or not. In regard to other matters, she foretells the future. All this takes place to the sound of bells and kettle-drums. Then she rises and taking a spear, she pierces the heart of the hog. They dress it and prepare a dish for the demons. Upon an altar erected there, they place the dressed hog, rice, bananas, wine, and all the other articles of food that they have brought. All this is done in behalf of sick persons, or to redeem those who are confined in the infernal regions.⁷³

As with the rowers' songs, but to a lesser extent than with the stories of the coastal and mountain peoples, Loarca gives tantalizingly few details about the content of these chants. Nevertheless, he provides a substantial description of a baylan curative ritual, a not insignificant event for the community. While mentioned only in passing here, Loarca's description of baylan chants is noteworthy. Missionaries perceived the baylans, to be the keepers of a heathen faith, and because of which, they sought to eradicate them, a feat they all but accomplished.⁷⁴ With precious few baylans practicing today, it would be difficult to know that they, at one time, performed this sort of recitation. Because of Loarca's diligence, however, we are offered a glimpse of them just as they were beginning to fade away.

Even though he did not transcribe epics, Loarca was a consummate describer and student of them. His account even allows us to get a sense of the centrality of the power of the voice in everyday life by documenting its opposite: silence. When speaking of what the

⁷³ Ibid., 130-33.

⁷⁴ Carolyn Brewer, *Shamanism, Catholicism, and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521-1685* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004). See also Alfred McCoy, "Baylan: Animist Religion and Peasant Ideology," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* vol. 10 no. 3 (Sept. 1982): 141-194.

Panayans called “Larao,” a time of abstention during mourning, he writes, “There must be no singing on board a barangay when returning to the village, but strict silence must be observed.”⁷⁵ Not every chronicler would be as conscientious, or even as interested in oral traditions as Loarca. Many of the writers I will discuss next in fact fall into this latter category. Read in conjunction with Loarca, their accounts demonstrate what had become common knowledge to the early Spanish colonialists: that the Philippines was a vast archipelago of songs.

The Archipelago of Songs

Pedro Chirino is best known to Philippine historiography for his *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, published in 1604. It became something of a sensation back in Spain because it was the first printed work that illustrated the Indio alphabet.⁷⁶ Cognizant of this, and seeking to provide a fuller portrait of Spanish and Jesuit accomplishments in the colony than he did in his relation, Chirino soon after drafted a more comprehensive work, *Història de la Provincia de Filipines de la Companyia de Jesús, 1581-1606*, which he never published in his lifetime and has only recently come to light.⁷⁷ With Antonio de Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1609), it ranks as one of the most significant historical works of the very early colonial period. Among the many things it contains is an actual transcription, albeit brief, of an entranced baylan’s chant.

Of this conquest, they had premonitions and warnings—in the same way as were seen and heard in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the old days and in the time of our Fathers in Mexico—especially the meters of a *Baylana*, or witch, who, like another one about whom Cornelius Tacitus wrote, sang in a flood of tears about them an unmistakable dirge like that one of Jeremiah, not many days before it happened. She clearly said it

⁷⁵ BR 5:138-139.

⁷⁶ Pedro Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (Rome: Estevan Paulino, 1604).

⁷⁷ Idem., *Història de la Provincia de Filipines de la Companyia de Jesús, 1581-1606*, ed. Jaume Gorriz i Abella (Barcelona: Portic, 2000); see also idem., *History of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Jose S. Arcilla, S.J., 2 vols. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2009).

in these mournful verses, which I learned from one who had heard them. She was called “Caryapa,” and she chanted this:

Bai abai co fa nagbanaua	My dirge to him who settled here
Bulung co sa nagcubayon;	Pain (sadness) to him settling here
Cay magcacaliwaliura ang banua	For the people will be changed.
Maga capueda angcubayon	Changed will be the place,
Mabual, agra, kinking lungsod.	Ruined, surely the place.
Mabungca ra kining cubayon	Desolate this land

Shocked at such a strange song, the whole community, especially the chiefs who felt offended, berated the Baylana with insults and anger, telling her, and having someone accost her as a bad example, “Kinsa siya siaron” (Who is this saying so?). “Gican ba siya sa langit? (Did she come from?). But, melting in tears, she continued despite everything, and when pressured, she replied that the *diwata* was forcing her to state it. Without doubt, it was the devil, like the one who sent a note to Montezuma of Mexico. Although father of lies, one is forced to say it is true in similar cases.⁷⁸

This very short recording does not overturn Manuel’s assertion that the Spanish recorded no epics, but it does call into serious question their supposed disinterest in Indio oral traditions. We should view it in light of the interest in Chirino’s other work. Since the reading public was fascinated by the strange writings of Philippine Indios he reproduced in his *Relación*, he likely thought they would be even more enchanted by one of their songs. So he reproduced one. Notice its dual language rendition. He rendered the Panayan original into Roman letters so that his readers might have some idea of how it sounded. He then provided a parallel translation so that they might understand its content. Chirino wanted to give his readers a taste of Indio culture. In this sense, to have transcribed more would have made it less readable, less manageable. More than countless other contemporary sources, and for reasons that have to do with its singularity as a text, it demonstrates that the Spanish were indeed interested in such utterances.

Seen from a certain angle, Chirino’s is a highly strange document. It is an account written by a Jesuit who came to the Philippines to convert the natives, yet its function in the

⁷⁸ Pedro Chirino, *History of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus*, 2 vols. ed. Jaume Gorriz I Abella and trans. José S. Arcilla (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2010), 2:124-125. Father John Schumacher had kindly lent me his transcribed copy of the original manuscript, which I then had copied and bound: Pedro Chirino, *Història de la província de Filipines de la Companyia de Jesús, 1581-1606* (Barcelona: Pòrtic, 2000). This passage appears on p. 260.

passage reproduced here is to render visible the incantations—word for word, in fact—of a “witch,” who had been possessed by demonic spirits and, ultimately, the devil. It is an account inspired by the omnipotent Christian god but which betrays his limitations. If this is so, why did an earnest missionary create such an account? Clearly, this is information Chirino wanted to disseminate. But towards what end? No doubt he was in part creating a record of (what he and his contemporaries saw as) the devil’s activities. Doing this validated their mission and provided a catalogue of their progress. But unlike so many histories or other writings produced for this very reason—the *Huaro-chiri* document is a particularly good example—Chirino’s does not impress the reader as being overly concerned with sensationalizing the heterodoxies of barbarian peoples. He does not fill his sentences with scorn for Indio blasphemies. Rather, he aims, not without some bias of course, at producing a judicious and reflective chronicle of the things he witnessed. One effect of this is that the baylan’s chant becomes emplotted as one of a number of universal historical events of coequal worth and significance. This is why she sang her dirge, he writes, “in the same way as were seen and heard in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the old days and in the time of our Fathers in Mexico.” This witch, whom Chirino unquestionably identified as being an agent of the devil, is thus invested with the dignity of being a historical worthy subject, and her words worth hearing, because he undertakes to render them visible. Most remarkable still is that he achieves this by reproducing her chant in its original wording, and in the format, “meters,” that makes clear how it was performed.

Chirino wrote about this in part for the benefit of prosperity, but he also because there was clearly interest in such things, as his earlier publication of the Indio syllabary had taught him. In much the same way that ethnographers of the “marvelous possessions” brought into view by Columbus’s voyages produced accounts that put “imagination at work” in the service of a reading public that hungered for tales of the fantastic, Chirino here produces his

own minor marvel.⁷⁹ Yet to incite his readers' interest he did not need to fabricate a story of giants, beasts or other supernatural phenomena. He simply wrote about the Philippine cultural world he encountered.

Manuel cites two early colonial writers besides Loarca to show that the Spanish were not interested in epics, Andres de San Nicolas, who wrote in 1624, and Francisco Colín, who wrote in 1663. I will treat each of these in turn. San Nicolas writes about Indio oral narratives as a subset of his discussion on “The customs and ceremonies of those people,” which, he writes, “must be touched upon briefly, not so much for the diversion that they may afford as that we may certify to the labor of Ours in changing them according to law and reason, and putting them into a suitable condition.”⁸⁰ He lists, rather than explains, a number of customs before writing the following, which Manuel later reproduced.

Besides that adoration which they gave to the devil, they revered several false gods--one, in especial, called *Bathala mey kapal* [God the Creator], whose false genealogies and fabulous deeds they celebrated in certain tunes and verses like hymns. Their whole religion was based on those songs, and they were passed on from generation to generation, and were sung in their feasts and most solemn assemblies.⁸¹

San Nicolas says little novel about the oral narratives themselves that Chirino, Loarca and others before him had not already said. His account merits consideration, rather, for the particular way it mapped out Indio beliefs as a terrain that had to be re-territorialized.

Prehispanic Philippine religion is typically glossed as “animism,” because it was characterized by the belief that objects, places and people were invested with supernatural force. Architecturally quite different from its Abrahamic foils, this polymorphic spiritual assemblage posited no permanent center. Something of this can be inferred from this passage, but a fuller, though far from complete, description of Indio beliefs that would bear this out is found in the section from which the passage is drawn. What is notable here is how

⁷⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1992).

⁸⁰ Andres de San Nicolas, “Historia General de los Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de San Agustin,” in BR 21:137. I have been unable to locate the original document.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

Indio religion is characterized. San Nicolas views Indio spirituality quite explicitly through the lens of his Christian faith. The same optic that had led so many Spanish writers to erroneously characterize Islam in the archipelago as “Mohammedanism” here frames Indio beliefs as proto-Christian. Bathala may capal, the “one [god] in especial” is privileged above all other spirit beings. This depiction of Indio religion is premised on the notion that god had spoken to the Indios but, because of their “blindness,” that is, their inability to reason, they had misinterpreted it, and thus practiced a distorted form of Christian faith.⁸² The oral traditions San Nicolas describes are figured as a sort of malformed spoken version of god’s truth, a vocal Bible that had to be overwritten if the natives were to be converted.

Like San Nicolas, Colín says very little about Indio oral traditions, and what he writes is not terribly dissimilar from that of earlier chroniclers. His account merits brief consideration, however, because it demonstrates the manner in which the Indios preserved these traditions. Just as permanent Spanish colonization in the Philippines reached the century mark, he wrote,

It is not found that these nations had anything written about their religion or about their government, or of their old-time history. All that we have been able to learn has been handed down from father to son in tradition, and is preserved in their customs; and in some songs that they retain in their memory and repeat when they go on the sea, sung to the time of their rowing, and in their merrymakings, feasts, and funerals, and even in their work, when many of them work together. In those songs are recounted the fabulous genealogies and vain deeds of their gods.⁸³

No better encyclopedia entry length summary of the ubiquity of epics in the early Spanish Philippines can be found. Without saying anything new, or even anything that goes beyond mere description into analysis, Colín nonetheless affirms what was common by that point as to be unremarkable: Indio songs, which they sung at all places for all occasions, were ubiquitous.

⁸² Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (New York: Cambridge, 1982), chap. 2.

⁸³ Francisco Colín, *Labor Evangélica*, ed. Pablo Pastells, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Henrich y Compania, 1904). 64.

Two further early chroniclers of oral epics are worth mentioning: Francisco Combés, whose *Historia de Mindanao y Joló* (1667) was the first Spanish history of the Philippine South, and Gaspar de San Agustín, author of *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas* (1698), a work on Tagalog grammar (1703), and a well known, harshly critical, letter to a friend about the customs of the “Indios de Philipinas” (1720), among other works. Oral traditions do not figure prominently in Combés’s account. He does make reference to them, however, in his discussion of marriages.

The celebration at their marriages is such that in all that has been discovered nothing else can compare with it; and the Spaniards who daily wonder at it, as witnesses, always do so with new wonder. For if the marriage is of a chief, the celebration begins a week beforehand, and is concluded a week after with dancing to the sound of their bells and drums. There is open table for all who care to go up into the house. The viands consist of wine, for that is the thing in which they are especially solicitous to show display, while they take no account of the food, although it is not lacking. But the deceptive heat of the wine takes away their taste so strongly that they do not remember a thing. Its heat serves to give spirit and animation to their songs (which are in honor of him who makes the feast), and sprightliness to their dances.⁸⁴

This is the only passage in his account that describes chanted narratives, and it is a scant one. Combés is interested in the marriage ceremony as an event, not with oral narratives in particular. His discussion of its associated rituals serves to describe the occasion as a whole. As with the Indio dances, the playing of instruments, and their habits of eating and drinking, he does not view the songs that accompany marriages as separate customs in and of themselves. Rather than criticize him for this, as Manuel would, one might instead read this to take notice of what cultural phenomena were visible to the Spanish gaze. Here Combés carefully relates the event, without negative evaluation, as it seems to have taken place; he neutrally documents a uniquely Philippine cultural ritual.⁸⁵ Epics may not have figured

⁸⁴ Francisco Combés, *Historia de Mindanao y Joló*, ed. Pablo Pastells (Madrid: by the author? 1897), 67-68.

⁸⁵ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982); idem, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974); idem, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1970); and idem, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); see also Gary B. Palmer and William R. Jankowiak, “Performance and Imagination: Toward an Anthropology of the Spectacular and the Mundane,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11:2 (May 1996): 225-258; and Bennetta Jules-Rosette,

prominently in his account, but the broader subject of Philippine culture did. The first historian of Spanish Mindanao was partly a conscientious ethnographer.

To understand history one must also examine the individuals that shape it.⁸⁶ If one is to judge by the tenor of his writings on Indio culture, San Agustín must rank as among the most racist of the early colonial period. Almost certainly, if he was speaking about the Indios, he was berating them. With this bias in mind, in each of the above-mentioned three works, he nonetheless goes into some detail or at least makes reference to oral traditions. Here I will examine the first and the third.

Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas is more a work about Spanish activities in the Philippines than anything else. It reads like an unending catalogue of events and personalities major and minor with some reflection and precious little space devoted to the vast majority of the archipelago's inhabitants. Something of this imbalance can be seen in the title of the lone chapter in which he discusses Indio culture as a distinct subject, "Chapter 43: What Was Learned from the Arrival of the Portuguese Captains and about their Return to the Moluccas; how the Patache San Juan was Sent to New Spain with Fray Pedro de Gamboa Aboard who Died on the Voyage, Including the Narrative Sent by the Governor on the Customs and Rites of these Islands." It is in this chapter, in which customs serve almost as footnote to the larger narrative of glorious Spanish conquest, that San Agustín relates a story that has since been repeated in chronicle after chronicle since.

They spoke so disconcertedly about the creation of the world that it is a thing of laughter. They said that in the beginning of the world there was nothing more than sky and water. Between the two flew a *milano* that, upset at not being able to find a place to perch or rest, churned the water against the sky. Offended by this, the sky populated the water with islands so that the milano could nest. As he rested on the shore of one of these [islands], the current washed a piece of bamboo to his feet. The milano grabbed the bamboo, pecked at and opened it. The bamboo had two sections from whence came man and woman. These, they say, were married by dispensation of the *Linog*, which is the earthquake. In time, they had so many children that they grew angry. Wanting to

"Decentering Ethnography: Victor Turner's Vision of Anthropology," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24:2 (May 1994): 160-181.

⁸⁶ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1967), chap. 2.

throw the children out of the house, they began to beat them with sticks. With that, the children escaped. Some of the children hid in rooms of the house. From these descended the *Datos*, which are the chiefs (akin to our Grandees or Nobles). Others ran down the stairs and from these descended the *Timabas*, which are the plebeians. From the children that remained and hid in the kitchen descended the slaves.⁸⁷

This is in fact the same origin story that Loarca recorded over a century before, albeit in slightly different form (above). A question arises: what accounts for the differences in the two versions? One simple answer was that San Agustín chose, for whatever reason, to write about it in this reduced way. Assuming this is not the case, however, that he reproduced it largely as he heard it, I will venture two tentative, not mutually exclusive answers. The first is that there were, simply, many versions of this story, as is commonly the case with folklore. Loarca recorded one and San Agustín another. A second possibility is that because of Spanish cultural and religious colonization, the Indios began to forget or otherwise modify the details of the earlier narrative, either because they were compelled to learn new (Christian) stories of their origins or because the process of colonization created such social upheaval that it impeded their ability to preserve their archive in the historic way they had.

This second explanation for the differences in the two versions of the story finds corroboration in San Agustín's letter to a friend. In one segment of his spiteful missive, he notes how the Indios have forgotten their oral lore.

42. They are so ignorant that they do not have the slightest knowledge concerning the origin of the ancestors from whom they descend, and whence they came to settle these islands. They do not give any information concerning their Gentility, which is not the worst; and they only preserve in certain parts some ridiculous abuses, which they observe at births and sicknesses, and the cursed belief that persuades them that the souls of their ancestors or the grandfathers of the families are present in the trees and at the bottom of bamboos, and that they have the power of giving and taking away health and of giving success or failure to the crops. Therefore, they make their ancestors offerings of food, according to their custom; and what has been preached to them and printed in books avails but little, for the word of any old man regarded as a sage has more weight with them than the word of the whole world.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Gaspar de San Agustín, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas, 1565-1615*, ed. Pedro G. Galende, trans. Luis Antonio Mañeru (Manila: San Agustín Museum, 1998), 490. Translation modified.

⁸⁸ Gaspar de San Agustín, "Carta de Fr. Gaspar de Agustín aun Amigo suyo en España" ca. 1720. Vault Ayer MS 1429, Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago. Pages 11 and immediately following.

San Agustín does not explicitly identify oral traditions here by name but rather indirectly refers to them as “ridiculous abuses” (*abusos ridiculos*). Given the importance of song, however, and the numerable occasions during which the Indios made use of it, and reading this in conjunction with the accounts above, it is clear that that is precisely what he intends by the term. The picture he paints is of a people who have a reduced awareness of things they once knew in generations prior. To be sure, San Agustín was never at a loss for negative interpretations of Indio culture. The letter to a friend discusses point-by-point—one hundred three of them—every aspect of Indio vice he is able imagine, and he lists no virtues to accompany them. Deeply prejudiced as his account is, however, it does not seem likely that the Indios’ difficulty in recalling their stories of the days of yore was a product purely of this writer’s imagination. If we take it to be at least partially true, it can serve as an indication of the waning of prehispanic oral traditions that had been precipitated by Spanish colonization. This is perhaps San Agustín’s most significant contribution to the early Spanish history of writing about epics: that he provides a record of Indios’ stories while they still were being sung, but after they had begun to disappear.

What Happened to the Epics?

Their recurrence in the historical records indicates that lengthy oral traditions had been a significant feature of prehispanic and early Spanish Philippine history. Yet after three centuries of colonial rule, these stories about beings like Captan, Sidapa, Maguayan had largely disappeared in all of the lowland areas, the places where Spanish colonialism had taken hold. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the only places they could be found were in the highland areas of Luzon and Mindanao, and a very few similarly hard to reach places in the Visayas, areas where Spanish colonialism was negligible or even nonexistent. What happened to the epics? I contend that three not mutually exclusive developments took place: extirpation, evanescence, and supplantation/appropriation. I will treat each of these in turn.

Extirpation. This was most evident in the case of baylan chants but it also explains why many of the “fabulous genealogies and vain deeds of their gods,” as Colín called them, are no longer known today. The greatest victims of Spanish incursion were the indigenous shamans, usually female, called baylanes or catalonanes. Because they were the central spiritual figures of prehispanic societies, they became immediate targets of the campaigns to convert. The conquerors marginalized and subjected them to great psychological violence, thereby ensuring that subsequent generations of young women and men would not apprentice under them. Their numbers dwindled as time wore on, and, along with the greater gender parity and the greater tolerance of sexual expression their social existence made eminently natural, their oral traditions vanished too. Spanish Christianity, in other words, destroyed the baylan epics.⁸⁹ To the extent that other types of epics were perceived by the Spanish as being (sac)religious in nature, as opposed to merely entertaining, say, their practitioners too were ostracized, and their creations expurgated.

Evanescence. The socially disruptive process of Spanish colonization—compelled residence (*reducción*), forced taxation and labor, political reorganization, conversion to Christianity, with its literal and spiritual iconoclasm—changed society in ways that became evident later on but are difficult to adequately account for as they were taking place. Put another way, we know that many things changed with the advent of Spanish colonization, Philippine religions, values, thinking, diet, and more, but we lack sufficient expositions of the processes of change. This is because many factors—the paucity of adequate primary documentation and historians that work seriously with it being chief among them—have conspired to make reconstructing this history very difficult. It is thus hard to fathom when one thing that we know has disappeared, the epic, exactly disappeared. Indeed it is difficult to pinpoint all of the places where lengthy oral traditions could be said to have definitively

⁸⁹ See Brewer, above.

existed in the sixteenth century. In the place of a more satisfactory explanation of how they gradually became forgotten, I will just say for the purposes of brevity that the wrenching process of colonization reconfigured the cultural milieu from which the epics sprang, causing them to fade away into humid air.

Supplantation/Appropriation. Colonization may have destroyed, marginalized, or otherwise caused the indigenous oral traditions to disappear; yet it in no way changed the Filipino penchant for song. The proclivity to sing, recite, or chant seems as if it has been and will remain an immutable feature of the cultures in the archipelago. A great deal of the success of Christian conversion in the Philippines, which these chroniclers then had attributed to the miraculous, has more to do with the musical repertoire provided by Catholic rites and rituals. This provided the new adherents with a body of songs they could easily appropriate. Recall that the selective taking on of aspects of the outer world and the refashioning of them into one's own is a quintessential feature of Southeast Asian history from at least the first millennium.⁹⁰ That the Indios did this with Catholicism should come as no surprise. Iletto's magnum opus, *Pasyon and Revolution*, carefully traces how this took place in the Tagalog provinces in the nineteenth century.⁹¹ Better still is that Chirino captured this process in his *Historia* as it was unfolding two centuries earlier.

All the boys and girls, and young ladies of that barrio gather in the afternoon when the sun sets, to recite the prayers and chant the Catechism. In San Juan del Monte, this practice was well observed, everyone coming on time. At the end of the Catechism, they sang, like a triumphant army over the Pharaoh, some pious songs, putting in verse the mysteries of the faith and the Catholic prayers. They themselves compose these songs impromptu with great beauty and skill. In the same way that our men and women in the Castilian villages compose and sing in their carts to the accompaniment of their tambourines and guitars, these give them no less grace, employing music and poetry in divine praise, although not much earlier they served the demons so blindly and unreasonably. One day, one of our priests heard them from the church, and it was a young girl who led and the others responded, while, as they used to in the manner of the ancient dramas, she put into music the entire sermon of

⁹⁰ O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture & Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999).

⁹¹ Reynaldo Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1979).

that day, causing him great admiration for the ease with which she put together and understood varied and difficult deep things, without omitting analogies, or a substantial point from the sermon, and omitted from her verses and songs.⁹²

How insouciantly and abruptly he transitions from praising their Christian zeal to noting their former blasphemy! The possibility that the Indios would “slip back into paganism,” as the missionaries would have put it, was a grave concern for them. At the same time, it shows how inadequately, in their judgments, the natives had imbibed the Christian doctrine—this same phenomenon also serves as an indication of Indio genius: their ability to selectively appropriate that which resonated or which they found useful. Here Chirino documents but does not fully explain the cultural changes that are taking place. The Indios’ facility as singers, their ability to extemporaneously create songs, to sing them with “great beauty and skill,” to form into verse the complexities of “the mysteries of the faith,” and their ability to understand varied and difficult deep things, without omitting analogies or a substantial point from the sermon” had its beginnings in prehispanic culture long before the Spanish set foot in the archipelago. What might have seemed like a miracle to the missionaries was in fact more serendipitous. The power of their god—as the Indios understood him—is part of what accounts for Christianity’s spread, but so too is the cultural penchant for song.

In Praise of the Ancients

Manuel, we can now say, was about fifty percent correct. Nothing I have discussed here can overturn his assertion that “*Biag ni Lam-ang* and *Handiong* were the only folk epics ever recorded during the Spanish period,” if it is taken literally. Even in instances where writers incorporated actual words in the local language (i.e. Loarca) or even a few lines of verse (i.e. Chirino), none of them actually wrote out, in full, the text of any lengthy recitations, chants, songs, etc., that they heard. Aside from *Biag ni Lam-ang* and *Handiong*, the Spanish indeed did not record epics.

⁹² Chirino, *History*, 2:72-73; Chirino, *Història*, 238.

But to make the point in this way is to overlook their contributions to the history of studying Philippine oral traditions. For myriad reasons, with varying degrees of perceptiveness, and with appraisals that were partly subjective, partly historically conditioned, they sought to make sense of these long oral narratives. More often they did so intelligently. Thus Manuel's assertion that their inability to record epics must be seen as "a good index indeed of the lack of attention given the study of Filipino culture during that long time" must be discarded. The early Spanish were clearly and deeply interested in Philippine cultures.

Manuel viewed the early Spanish engagement with epics negatively for what it did not accomplish. But he failed to account for the specific historical context and actors' motivations that shaped this history. Rather than take such a pessimistic tack, one might view this first historic encounter of an outside group with Philippine epics more sensitively, as I have tried to do. Doing this will allow us to see that for all of the cultural damage the Spanish inflicted on the Philippines during this early period, real or exaggerated, their manner of writing about Indio oral traditions, problematic though it was, also had its virtues, a few of which I will note here.

In a sense, the writers I have surveyed practiced what we today call "anthropology," but they did so long before the methods they deployed became crystallized as a discrete, modern discipline. While they did operate within their own particular (not homogenous) methodological and epistemological frameworks, these early moderns were in many ways freer from many of the constraints that would bind some of their contemporary counterparts. This is evident, for instance, in their approach to genres. They largely sought to learn from their informants the terms that they themselves applied to particular speech acts. Modern epic recorders, by contrast, have sought to classify sorts of oral traditions into categories such as "epic," "myth," and so on, often with the consequence that such labels have made for a

problematic fit. The early writers' disciplinary innocence also accorded them a level of freer expression when writing about oral traditions. Of course, most of the chroniclers I have treated only dealt with epics in passing, and a few of them barely at all. But for those who took a more serious interest, such as Loarca, Chirino, and as I will discuss in the next chapter, Alzina, this freedom allowed them to write in a way that did not create such a radical separation between the writer and informant, as for instance would be the case most prominently with American colonial era anthropology.⁹³ While they wrote in the service of the Crown, the Pope, their god, and other entities, and were subject to the demands those obligations imposed, the exigencies of contemporary anthropological research—the limited time allotted for fieldwork, the pressures to publish and teach, the need to create something meaningful to say—did not drive their research agenda. Because of this, they were, in some instances, able to become the most skillful, and some might argue most fortunate, generations of anthropologists to have studied the Philippines. There is no doubt that they were outsiders—as almost every scholar of Philippine epics who has ever lived has been—but the duration of their stay often negated much of that cultural distance.

For most of the twentieth century, scholars who dealt with epics mostly confined their activities to recording them; a surprising few channeled their energies towards analysis. Again, Manuel's survey epitomizes this tendency. To the extent that he proffers any analysis of the epics that have been recorded, it is only to corroborate what is known and to facilitate further classification and collection.⁹⁴ The early Spanish writers took the opposite tack. They did not transcribe them, but they did mine the original oral performances and the written renditions they were made into for information about the Indios' religion, culture, and thinking. Many of these analyses are insubstantial, consisting of only a few sentences of

⁹³ See the works of Otto Scheerer, William Reed, David Barrows, Najeeb Saleeby, Albert Jenks, EmersonChristies, Fay Cooper-Cole, Mabel Cook Cole, H. Otley Beyer, Roy Franklin Barton, enumerated in a later chapter.

⁹⁴ See Manuel, "Survey," esp. 47-66.

interpretation or explanation (i.e. Combés), but a few of them are pithier. Alzina's study of these cultural products, as I will discuss in the next chapter, ranks as among the most thoughtful and meditative in of all Philippine history. One might object to the Spaniards' readings of these stories as being religiously motivated, ideologically suspect, and insufficient—all of which may be true. But at the same time they at least learned the languages, or consulted interpreters, acquainted themselves with the local cultures, and undertook the difficult labor of seeking to genuinely comprehend these performances in a way that few others have attempted since.

How the early Spanish analyzed these stories, what they made of them, is of further interest for those interested in Philippine oral traditions studies. For the first time historically, we see these performances depicted as rituals.⁹⁵ Whether genres existed for the singers and hearers and whether these were indeed self-conscious rituals is to some extent indicated by the fact that informants supplied particular words for them and seem to have engaged themselves in particular sets of activities. This gives the impression that many of the rituals the Spanish described were discrete events. On the other hand, the fragmentary nature of many of the sources precludes us from knowing definitively which of these songs were ritualistically sung.

In *Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture and Society*, William Henry Scott's posthumous masterwork on prehispanic Philippine cultures, the preeminent historian makes the following point in his discussion of the Visayas,

Spanish accounts are unanimous in saying that Filipinos did not use their alphabet for literary compositions or record keeping; the Boxer Codex states unambiguously that they used their script only for letters and messages. Visayan literature was therefore oral literature, and as such, was not recorded by friar chroniclers or ethnographers who would have considered the idea of oral literature a contradiction in terms.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).

⁹⁶ William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1994), 96-97.

For the early Spanish, these epics were not classifiable as “literature,” by its most basic definition. Recall that Loarca wrote: “since these natives are not acquainted with the art of writing, they preserve their ancient lore through songs.” Because they were without the capacity to write (an assertion we know to be untrue for a number of the communities the Spanish encountered), they made use of oral communication. They could not write so they only spoke and listened. While it is common today to refer to such oral performances, dances, and other sorts of not-written works with the term, for the early Spanish colonizers, epics and all other sorts of oral genres were not literature.

The perception that the Spanish were uninterested in Filipino culture seems to have begun with the Ilustrados, the first generation of late nineteenth nationalists, of whom the polymath novelist José Rizal is the best known.⁹⁷ To oversimplify the history for the purposes of brevity, one could say it was then picked up by the Americans, who contorted and perpetuated the worst versions of it to justify their supposedly benevolent rule. Manuel’s mentor, H. Otley Beyer, was one American who subscribed to this narrative, and it was from Beyer, most prominently, that Manuel imbibed this prejudice. The problem with this depiction of Spanish colonialism is that it is overly broad; it does not—and the Ilustrados, the Americans, Manuel and his generation, or anyone after did not—distinguish between the earlier, middle, and late periods of Spanish colonialism, which are at this point only nebulously defined anyhow.⁹⁸ Whether or not late Spanish colonialism was as obscurantist, malevolent, and ruinous as its critics have claimed, what I have hoped to show is that in its earliest stages, it was at many points intellectually curious, sensible, and open to being awed by Indio folkloric arts. Over the course of this period these views of the Indio evolved, and

⁹⁷ The locus classicus on the Ilustrados remains John N. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880-1895: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, the Making of a Revolution*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1997).

⁹⁸ It is only very recently, for instance, that anyone has adduced an adequate periodization of the history of Christianity in the Philippines, which is surely among the most significant topics. See John Schumacher, *Growth and Decline: Essays on Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2009), chap. 2.

transformed from generally positive to generally negative. Loarca wrote with bemusement and approval, not unqualified, about the Indios, in the late sixteenth century. By the time of San Agustín at the turn of the eighteenth century, the Spanish perception of the Indio had worsened to the point where he had almost nothing positive to say about them. There were exceptions to these trends, but by and large things became grimmer as time wore on. Over a century before the advent of scientific racism, writers such as San Agustín had turned demeaning the Indios into an artistic vocation.⁹⁹ In this, they were quite unlike their earlier predecessors, but not unlike the high colonialists the Ilustrados would due battle with in the late 1800s.

The early Spanish did not record epics, but they did write about them as few others could, or would, in subsequent epochs in Philippine history. To ask them to have done other than what they did would be an invitation to fantasy. Indeed Manuel's lament, though it purportedly treats the Spanish era, tells us more about his own. Even now, with the blessings of modern technology, it is still a laborious undertaking to record an epic. What more of a burden would it have been for the numerically few early colonizers of the archipelago, whose primary concern was settling the vast and distant colony in Asia, chroniclers who were charged with documenting as wide a range of phenomena as they could with limited resources and time constraints. This, after all, was no simple task. When they did have occasion to write, they necessarily had to be selective. As San Agustín put it in his letter, "I shall relate briefly what I have observed, for it would be impossible to write everything, even if one were to use all the paper found in China."¹⁰⁰

If Manuel, whose influential survey I have referred to throughout this chapter, was distressed by the lack of attention paid to epics, it was above all because the Spanish did not show sufficient appreciation for what he saw as being of sublime importance—the primordial

⁹⁹ See San Agustín's infamous list of Indio vices that he juxtaposes with Spanish virtues. San Agustín, "Carta," pages 31 and following.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., page preceding 2.

roots of Filipino national culture. This was something he himself dedicated nearly his entire life to searching for and documenting, as will be discussed in the Chapter Five. Yet he too easily dismissed these writers who, although they were far from being the angels that they professed belief in, nonetheless zealously applied themselves to the study of Indio culture, including oral traditions. Their histories narrate the stories of great men who traveled far distances, magically healed the sick, vanquished their adversaries, brought their followers to settle new lands, and became powerful beings in the communities they created. Did the early Spanish chroniclers truly record no epics?

Appendix 1: First excerpt from Loarca's *Relación de las Yslas Filipinas* (1582) about an epic from Panay

Chapter Seventh: which treats the beliefs held by the natives of the Pintados islands concerning the creation

There are two kinds of people in this land, who, although of the same race, differ somewhat in their customs and are almost always on mutually unfriendly terms. One class includes those who live along the coast, the other class those who live in the mountains; and if peace seems to reign among them, it is because they depend upon each other for the necessities of life. The inhabitants of the mountains cannot live without the fish, salt, and other articles of food, and the jars and dishes, of other districts; nor, on the other hand, can those of the coast live without the rice and cotton of the mountaineers. In like manner they have two different beliefs concerning the beginning of the world; and since these natives are not acquainted with the art of writing, they preserve their ancient lore through songs, which they sing in a very pleasing manner-commonly while plying their oars, as they are island-dwellers.

Also, during their revelries, the singers who have good voices recite the exploits of olden times; thus they always possess a knowledge of past events. The people of the coast, who are called the Yligueynes, believe that heaven and earth had no beginning, and that there were two gods, one called Captan and the other Maguayen. They believe that the land breeze and the sea breeze were married; and that the land breeze brought forth a reed, which was planted by the god Captan. When the reed grew, it broke into two sections, which became a man and a woman. To the man they gave the name of Sicalac, and that is the reason why men from that time on have been called lalac; the woman they called Sicavay, and thenceforth women have been called babayes. One day the man asked the woman to marry him, for there

were no other people in the world; but she refused, saying that they were brother and sister, born of the same reed, with only one knot between them; and that she would not marry him, since he was her brother. Finally they agreed to ask advice from the tunnies of the sea, and from the doves of the air; they also went to the earthquake, who said that it was necessary for them to marry, so that the world might be peopled. They married, and called their first son Sibon; then a daughter was born to them, and they gave her the name of Samar. This brother and sister also had a daughter, called Lububan. She married Pandagan, a son of the first pair, and had a son called Anoranor. Pandagan was the first to invent a net for fishing at sea; and, the first time when he used it, he caught a shark and brought it on shore, thinking that it would not die. But the shark died when brought ashore; and Pandagan, when he saw this, began to mourn and weep over it—complaining against the gods for having allowed the shark to die, when no one had died before that time. It is said that the god Captan, on hearing this, sent the flies to ascertain who the dead one was; but, as the flies did not dare to go, Captan sent the weevil, who brought back the news of the shark's death. The god Captan was displeased at these obsequies to a fish. He and Maguayen made a thunderbolt, with which they killed Pandagan; he remained thirty days in the infernal regions, at the end of which time the gods took pity upon him, brought him back to life, and returned him to the world. While Pandagan was dead, his wife Lububan became the concubine of a man called Maracoyrun; and these people say that at that time concubinage began in the world. When Pandagan returned, he did not find his wife at home, because she had been invited by her friend to feast upon a pig that he had stolen; and the natives say that this was the first theft committed in the world. Pandagan sent his son for Lububan, but she refused to go home, saying that the dead do not return to the world. At this answer Pandagan became angry, and returned to the infernal regions. The people believe that, if his wife had obeyed his summons, and he had not gone back at that time, all the dead would return to life. [Blank space in

MS.—Blair and Robertson] Inheritances, and their inventor. Their ceremonies. The
omentum.

From: Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands* vol. 5: 121-125.

Appendix 2: Second excerpt from Loarca's *Relación de las Yslas Filipinas* (1582) about an epic from Northern Luzon

Another belief, that of the mountaineers, who are called Tinguianes

The Tinguianes believe that in the beginning were only the sea and the sky; and that one day a kite, having no place where to alight, determined to set the sea against the sky.

Accordingly, the sea declared war against the sky, and threw her waters upward. The sky, seeing this, made a treaty of peace with the sea. Afterward, to avenge himself upon her for having dared to assert herself, they say that he showered upon the sea all the islands of this archipelago, in order to subdue her; and that the sea ran to and fro without being able to rise again. They say that from this event arose the custom of mavaris that is, taking vengeance for an insult received, a very common practice in this land; and they consider it a point of honor to take revenge. Then they relate also the story of the reed; but they say that the kite pecked the reed, and the aforesaid man and woman came out. They add that the first time when Cavahi gave birth to children, she brought forth a great number at once. One day the father went home, very angry, and threatened the children. The latter were frightened and fled; some into the most hidden rooms of the house; some hid in other places nearer the open air; some hid themselves within the dindines, or walls of the houses, which are constructed of reeds; some in the fireplace; and some fled to the sea through the same door by which the father had entered. It is said that those who fled to the most hidden rooms are the chiefs of these islands; those who remained nearer the outside are the timaguas; those who hid themselves within the walls are the slaves; those who hid themselves in the fireplace are the

blacks; and those who fled out to the sea through the open door, are the Spaniards, and that they had no news of us until they beheld us return through the sea.

From: Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands* vol. 5: 125-127.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE GREAT DEFENDER OF THE INDIANS:
FRANCISCO IGNACIO ALZINA AND PHILIPPINE ORAL TRADITIONS

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit
("Captive Greece took captive her rude conqueror")
Horace, *Epistles*

After more than a century of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, one extraordinary missionary set out to write a comprehensive natural history and cultural of the Visayan Islands. In his *Historia de las islas e indios bisayas* (History of the Bisayan Islands and Indians, 1668), the Jesuit Francisco Ignacio Alzina described his means of gathering information about the Philippine Indios and their culture. "About matters and things regarding these natives, and even more so with respect to their antiquity, given that we do not have teachers or doctors" (among the Visayans themselves), he writes, "it is imperative to follow their testimonies, among which, I always favor the part that seems to me which was expressed with greater care and greater precision. And it is for this reason that I include many things in their own words"—that is, he included in his narrative individual words, sayings and even verbatim lines of performed traditions, in their original Visaya. He reproduces "some sayings or proverbs [*refranes o paremias*] from the Visayan language," he explains, for two reasons. "First for the moral [content] they contain, given that this quality of the language is not lacking"—"moral" in this context signifying that which pertained to "mores." And "the other for what they express the qualities of animals or other things they are derived from, so that one may better familiarize oneself with their nature and properties. All of this is done with the end of bringing everything [out] and not omitting a single thing"—so that his account would be as complete as possible.¹⁰¹

Alzina's means of gathering information was neither remarkable nor innovative by the late seventeenth century. This was precisely what European ethnographers in the

¹⁰¹ Victoria Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII* (Madrid: CISC, 1996), 10, 11.

Philippines since the time of Pigafetta had done, as we saw in the previous chapter, although unlike the Italian chronicler Alzina did not work through an interpreter. But in this instance the recourse towards the oral accounts of native informants would prove distinctive and singularly significant. In Alzina's case, this means of gathering information, of "bringing everything [out] and not omitting a single thing," opened the gateway to the most ambitious study of Philippine oral traditions that would be written under Spanish colonialism.

Born in the Valencian town of Gandia in 1610 and entering into the Jesuit Province of Aragon fourteen years later, Alzina went on to spend a tenure of nearly four decades as a missionary in the Philippines, most of which he labored in the Eastern Visayas. His lengthy vocation as a "minister of souls" to Indios throughout the Visayas and in Manila, his many administrative roles in the Church, and the various devotional works he wrote earned him great respect among his contemporaries and successors. Emphasizing these contributions, the prolific Jesuit historian and geographer Pedro Murillo Velarde said of him:

He was a great defender of the Indians, especially because his teaching was applied with such care that he was not content with it by itself, but sought to teach them even after his death, and for this he produced various books in the Visayan language, like the *Casos raros, un Manual de devociones*, and other similar Treatises that, because they were such eminent works of their language, that they were not only of great benefit to the Indios, but were also of great assistance to the ministers. He also wrote a very copious History.¹⁰²

The greatest expression of his life's work as a Philippine scholar is this "copious history" Murillo Velarde refers to: the magisterial *Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas*, which Alzina was unable to complete and publish during his lifetime. A document of immense value for the naturalist, anthropologist, and historian, it contains rigorous, extensive, and conscientious meditations on the types, characteristics, functions, history, and value of Philippine oral traditions.

¹⁰² Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la provincia de Philipinas de la Compañía de Jesús*, Part II (Manila: Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay, 1749), 354.

Modeled on José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590), Alzina's *Historia* ranks as the great ethnographic work of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines. In that sense, it is in the company of that and similar texts such as Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Apologética historia summaria de las gentes destas Indias* (c. 1551), and Bernardino de Sahagún's *La Historia Universal de las Cosas de Nueva España* (1590). More than any contemporaneous work created in the colony, the *Historia* best exemplified the broad, "humanist culture [that] contributed to a scientific ideal within early descriptions of non-European societies."¹⁰³

Alzina seems to have intended to publish the book but never had the opportunity to do so prior to his death. Nevertheless copies of it circulated among members of his order in the decades and even centuries following its completion. At some point after Murillo Velarde's time, it seems to have fallen off of the Jesuits' radar, one presumes because of the difficulties the order faced following their suppression in 1773. It had thus all but disappeared until it was rediscovered early in the twentieth century. Looking into the holdings of the Spanish *Real Academia de la Historia* in 1911, Blair and Robertson made note of its existence but could not ascertain its location or say anything substantive about it.¹⁰⁴ It was thus not until the intrepid Filipino historian Manuel Artigas y Cuerva found a copy of the work in the Ateneo Library in the 1910s that anyone made scholarly use of the invaluable text.¹⁰⁵ Decades later, the Philippine Studies Program at the University of Chicago undertook to provide a translation of the entire work into English but ended up only

¹⁰³ Joan-Pau Rubiés, "The Spanish Contribution to the Ethnology of Asia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Renaissance Studies* vol. 17 no. 3 (Sept. 2003): 419.

¹⁰⁴ James Alexander Robertson and Emma Blair, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 53 (Cleveland: The A.H. Clark Company, 1908), 30.

¹⁰⁵ Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, *Historia de Filipinas para uso de los alumnos del Instituto Burgos y de otros colegios particulares* (Manila: Imp. "La Pilarica," 1916), 12; and idem, *La Civilizacion Filipina: Conferencia Dada el 9 de Octubre de 1912 en el "Columbia Club ante la "Philippine Academy"* (Manila: Imp. Sevilla, 1912), 11-12, 30.

completing the four books that comprise Part One.¹⁰⁶ María Luisa Martin-Meras and María Dolores Higuera, who published a reproduction of Books One and Two of Part One, with commentary, in 1974, followed them.¹⁰⁷ Building on their efforts was Victoria Yepes, who in three installments published the only complete edition of the *Historia* so far (1996 and 1998).¹⁰⁸ Most recently, Cantius J. Kobak and Lucio Gutiérrez, who had been publishing chapters of Alzina's *Historia* piecemeal in the journal *Philippiniana Sacra* since 1979, have completed three of a projected four-volume series with both the original Spanish and accompanying, page-by-page English translations and annotations.¹⁰⁹

From Artigas y Cuervas's time until today, scholars of nature and culture have mined the published and unpublished editions of the *Historia* for often substantial glimpses into the world of the seventeenth century Visayas.¹¹⁰ One indication of the richness of Alzina's account is that William Henry Scott's *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and*

¹⁰⁶ Evett D. Hester, "Alzina's *Historia de Visayas*: A Bibliographical Note," *Philippine Studies* vol. 10 no. 3 (1962): 331-365; Paul Lietz, ed. and trans., *The Muñoz Text of Alcina's History of the Bisayan Islands (1668)*, 4 vols. (Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, University of Chicago, 1962-).

¹⁰⁷ Ma. Luisa Martin-Meras and Ma. Dolores Higuera, eds., *La Historia de las Islas e Indios Visayas del Padre Alcina. 1668* (Madrid: Instituto Histórico de Marina, 1975).

¹⁰⁸ In addition to the work listed above, see Victoria Yepes, *Historia Natural de las Islas Bisayas* (Madrid: CISC, 1996); and idem, *Historia Sobrenatural de las Islas Bisayas, del Padre Alzina* (Madrid: CISC, 1998).

¹⁰⁹ Cantius J. Kobak and Lucio Gutiérrez, *History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands*, 3 vols. (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2002-2005). A quick comparison of Kobak and Gutiérrez's transcription of their Alzina manuscript with that of Yepes's (and presumably Martin-Meras and Higuera's) reveals very slight differences in the text, although they seem to be superficial at first glance.

¹¹⁰ A representative listing of works of animal and plant biology includes: Jose Ma Lorenzo Tan, *A Field Guide to Whales and Dolphins in the Philippines* (Manila: Bookmark, 1995); William Sm. Gruezo and Hugh C. Harries, "Self-Sown, Wild-Type Coconuts in the Philippines," *Biotropica* vol. 16 no. 2 (June 1984): 140-141; Elmer D. Merrill, *An Enumeration of Philippine Flowering Plants* vol. 4 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1926), 44, 158; idem, "Notes on Philippine Euphorbiaceae," *Philippine Journal of Science* vol. 7 no. 6 (Dec. 1912): 381-382; idem, "New Species of Eugenia," *Philippine Journal of Science* vol. 10 no. 3 (May 1915): 217; *Censo de las Islas Filipinas Levantado por Orden de la Legislatura Filipina en 1918*, vol. 3 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1921), 756; L.B. Uichanco, "Francisco Ignacio Alcina. On Another Kind of Bananas which, Although It Does Not Yield Food for the Natives, Provides Clothing," *Philippine Agriculturist* vol. 20 no. 8 (1932): 495-499; and idem, "Francisco Ignacio Alcina. On the Palms Which Are Called Cocos and their Great Usefulness," *Philippine Agriculturist* vol. 20 no. 7 (1932): 433-466.

For works of history and culture, in addition to Artigas-Cuervas's works listed above and Scott's in the following footnote, see D.R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010); Carolyn Brewer, *Shamanism, Catholicism, and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521-1685* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004); Rubiés, "The Spanish Contribution to the Ethnology of Asia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 429; Jose S. Arcilla, "Jesuit Historians of the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* vol. 44 no. 3 (1996): 374; Bruce Cruikshank, *A History of Samar Island, the Philippines, 1768-1898*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); and Nicholas Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines: From Conquest to Revolution* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1971).

Society (1994), the prehispanic Philippine historical text par excellence, made extensive use not just of Alzina's documentation of specific phenomena such as dress, agricultural methods, metallurgy and more, but also of many of the statements his seventeenth century informants provided.¹¹¹ Scott described it as, "The most important single work for [his] study," adding, it "remained the most extensive work of its kind until the twentieth century, and a unique testimony to a missionary's intimate knowledge of his parishioners and their culture."¹¹² For some time, then, scholars have understood the immense importance of the *Historia*. Despite that, however, few of them have ventured any satisfactory explanations as to why it was Alzina produced his magnum opus in the first place or gave such prominence to Visayan oral traditions.

In this chapter I will seek to more fully account for Alzina's reasons for creating the *Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas*. I will pay particular attention to his fascination with oral traditions, which went far beyond a simple reliance on them as a source material for Visayan culture and history. My principal aim will be to show that Alzina sought to monumentalize Visayan culture by showcasing its epics in particular, among all other human phenomena, because he viewed them as the preeminent expressions of their genius. By employing the term "genius" here, I seek to refer to the original Spanish term *genio*, which in its seventeenth century usage would correspond to the present day English cognate term's definition of "the prevailing character or spirit of something," without its necessary connotations of brilliance, wonder, and so on.¹¹³ He undertook the labor of writing this magisterial text for one main reason—because producing scholarship was for the Jesuits a means of performing one's spiritual labor—and a number of secondary ones, such as wanting to create a record for prosperity, to serve as a guide for future missionaries, and because he

¹¹¹ William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1996). See esp. chaps. 1-8.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 286.

¹¹³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, online ed., s.v. "genius," <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/genius?q=genius> [accessed 10 September 2013].

was simply fascinated by the Visayans' culture. Because he so highly prized these oral traditions he sought to impart knowledge about them to others through his work. He discussed their features, what distinguished genres from one another, he showed examples of their artistry, and, most importantly, reproduced a number of them in summary.

Demonstrating the variety, richness, and sophistication of Visayan oral traditions functioned more than to just convey Alzina's appreciation, of course; it also worked to indicate the extent to which they were rational, political beings.¹¹⁴ He saw in their oral traditions a complex and highly developed humanity, one which he, as a longstanding interpreter of their language and culture, had unique access to. He wanted to impart this insight to the civilized world, towards which end the medium of the book formed the perfect technology.¹¹⁵

This chapter will consist of five sections. I will begin by outlining the seventeenth century world in which Alzina operated, a time of Catholic reform vis-à-vis Protestant challenges. I will highlight the particular importance of the Jesuits' culture of learning, which helps to situate his work and explain what it attempted to accomplish. Next I will introduce the *Historia* itself, its precursors, purpose, and main features. Following this, I will examine, in succession, the two main contributions the book self-consciously sought to make for the study of culture through its analysis of oral traditions: its survey of genres and its study of particular stories. Along the way I will discuss what his particular engagement tells us about these cultural products themselves as well as Alzina's process of studying them. Lastly, I will conclude by noting the enduring significance of Alzina's attempt to understand these complex manifestations of Visayan culture and note how unique his engagement was.

A brief note before beginning: in the course of this chapter I will use the word "epic" as a shorthand to refer to the lengthier oral traditions Alzina describes in the *Historia*. I want

¹¹⁴ Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), intro. and chap. 1.

¹¹⁵ Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, 3rd ed. (New York: Verso, 2010); see also Patricia May B. Jurilla, "What Book? An Introduction to the History of the Book and Prospects for Philippine Studies," *Philippine Studies* vol. 51 no. 4 (2003): 530-557.

to point out that the Jesuit himself never used the word. Typically, he either used local terms for particular traditions or referred vaguely to the things his informants told or sang to him as that which “they say.”

A Work of Catholic Renaissance

As one recent study has it, the era of Protestant Reformation sparked by the Augustinian Martin Luther’s posting of his infamous *Ninety-Five Theses* at All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg in 1517, is perhaps best describable from the Church’s standpoint as one of “Catholic Renewal.”¹¹⁶ During this time the Church undertook a series not only of reforms but also novel initiatives aimed at winning back converts to Protestantism, restructuring its institutions, and modernizing its evangelical practices to better suit the conditions of a an increasingly globalized world.¹¹⁷ This included the creation of new orders that would carry on the work of proselytization of unconverted populations in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere. Along with the older orders such as the Franciscans, Augustinians, Capuchins, and others, they contributed to the spreading of the faith across the globe in the regions to which they were assigned in their own ways, but probably the most important of order was the one Alzina belonged to, the Jesuits, who were founded in 1534. They were the vanguard of Christianity’s expansion in the new colonies of South America, Goa, China, Japan, the Philippines, and elsewhere, until the time of their suppression in 1767.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770*, rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005).

¹¹⁷ For this information I have relied on *ibid.*, and Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

¹¹⁸ A number of general surveys exists, see, e.g., Jonathan Wright, *God's Soldiers: Adventure, Politics, Intrigue, and Power: History of the Jesuits* (New York: Doubleday, 2005); William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society*

The hallmark of the Society of Jesus was its singular emphasis on learning. There were practical advantages to fostering a rigorous and broad humanistic curriculum in missionaries who would preach to relatively unknown populations on the other side of the world. But for the Jesuits engendering a culture of education was not merely a means of occupational preparation; it was a form of religious observance. This was a tradition that originated with their founder, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). After noting in one section of the Order's *Constitutions*, "In order to make great progress...scholastics should strive first of all to keep their souls pure and their intention in studying right, by seeking in their studies nothing except the glory of God and the good of souls," he expounded,

Furthermore, they should keep their resolution firm to be thoroughly genuine and earnest students, by persuading themselves that while they are in the colleges they cannot do anything more pleasing to God our Lord than to study with the intention mentioned above; likewise, that *even if they never have occasion to employ the matter studied, their very labor in studying, taken up as it ought to be because of charity and obedience, is itself work highly meritorious in the sight of the Divine and Supreme Majesty.*¹¹⁹

The promotion of learning, even beyond the production of specifically useful knowledge, was a godly end in and of itself. As one historian who focused on their contributions to science put it, reiterating this point,

As long as one was careful to study philosophy and the natural sciences in a pious manner, stated Ignatius, and to do it for the greater glory of God and not for personal fame or recognition, then the study of science would be a service to God, comparable in God's view to prayer and contemplation. Even if one never used the knowledge thus gained in any pastoral ministry, if done with charity and obedience—the two main virtues for the Jesuits—the study of nature was pleasing to God.¹²⁰

One indication of the seriousness with which the order took to this imperative to study is that in the two plus centuries from the time of their founding until their suppression,

of Jesus, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986); Manfred Barthel, *The Jesuits: History & Legend of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Mark Howson (New York: W. Morrow, 1984). A useful survey of the early history of the Order is John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans., intro., and with a commentary by George E. Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 190. Emphasis mine. Quoted in part in Andrés I. Prieto, *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570-1810* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 2011), 3.

¹²⁰ Prieto, *Missionary Scientists*, 144.

they produced over 30,000 books of theology, geography, history, and literature—a massive scholarly output.¹²¹ As one would expect, the majority of these works dealt with plainly theological matters. And of course even those that dealt with subjects that might seem to be of secular import such as histories, geographies, grammar books, dictionaries, etc., were still written from a religious standpoint and still served spiritual functions, most often to facilitate the labor of conversion. Nonetheless, because of their theologically grounded emphasis on learning, the order produced a number of more broadly humanistic and scientific works, beginning with Jose de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las indias*, whose full significance has yet to be realized.¹²² Such is why Jesuit authors for instance have produced a sizeable proportion of the Spanish era historical accounts that Philippine scholars most rely on today.¹²³ It is no coincidence therefore that the great book of Spanish Philippine colonialism was written by one of their order.

The rationale Alzina spells out in the *Historia* reveals this impulse to produce scholarship as an act of fulfilling of his religious obligation. He writes in the Proem that he was, “moved in the beginning more by curiosity than by other justifiable motives.” Armed with “a greater than average knowledge of their language and manner of speaking [*lengua y habla*], which is the key that best opens all of secrets,” he began, over the course of thirty-four years, “to write down and preserve” things he saw, “for the benefit of memory.” During a break from ministerial work around 1667 and at the urging of colleagues he began to put in order his “labyrinth of loose and disorganized notes.” “Like the other Daedalus, I began to take apart or unravel the tangled ball of yarn, and in a space of nine to ten months I put in order what was for so many years a heap of papers or a draft. And that is what this *Historia*

¹²¹ Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, 180-181.

¹²² Prieto, *Missionary Scientists*.

¹²³ Jose S. Arcillia, “Jesuit Historians of the Philippines,” *Philippine Studies* vol. 44 no. 3 (1996): 374-391, esp. 377-389.

de las islas e indios de Bisayas contains and I offer.”¹²⁴ From these words, it would seem that he did not act on any lingering thoughts he had about assembling the *Historia* until about a year or slightly earlier before its completion in 1668. When the possibility first struck him to do so is unclear. What we might take from these developments is that he was an avid note-taker of all manner of things he saw and heard, and that he had a profound appreciation for history and the study of cultures, towards the furtherance of which he began creating an archive of his missionary career in the distant colony.

Alzina’s manner of beginning the book bespeaks grand aims, even if they are aims that he was at pains to disavow. Reproducing Pliny the Elder’s observation that, “Semper Africa affert nobis aliquid novi” (“Africa was never lacking in novelties for history, and always provided something new for it”), he goes on to humbly claim that he and his book have neither the “style, genius, or talent” of the Elder nor the “erudition” of the Younger—that he himself was no great author.¹²⁵ This profession of humility, feigned or otherwise, suggests two things: first, that Alzina’s conception of history is to some extent one in which men achieve visibility by writing great books; and second, that he wrote the *Historia* as part of that canon of universal literary history. In this light his recurrent statements about the inadequacy of other Philippine Spanish writers’ chronicles must not be seen merely as criticisms of lesser works, as we see for instance in the Proem, where he writes,

I have not followed (nor did I have someone I could follow in what I treat) another author. Thus if others treat something that I have done here with greater clarity, distinction, and no less truth than what I write, it is only in passing, as most of [their] information was acquired from relations [*relaciones*], written or oral reports on the fly [*al vuelo*], which always were and will be expressions more of deceit than truth.¹²⁶

Rather, they form one of his more explicit moves in making a claim for the book as a singular one among many literatures—not just of Philippine histories but also, more broadly,

¹²⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 10.

of Spanish colonialism and European writing as a multi-century, multilingual enterprise.

Alzina thus created the work in part to memorialize himself as a great author.

In contrast with this indirectly stated function of the book is Alzina's more general statement of his aims. He writes without complication that,

The purpose of all of this has been and is to acquaint the rest of the world with that which God left hidden in this corner of it, and that such may serve as an incentive for all of us that we praise him in everything and always. Hence there will be found no shortage of things in this *Historia* that demonstrate this.¹²⁷

For Alzina, the *Historia* did undoubtedly function on many levels as a religious text. It was a chronicle of his and other Jesuits' evangelical efforts in the Eastern Visayas. It was written with the hope it would stimulate further missionary work. And it was a testament to God's powers, as the quotation explains. But that does not mean that everything that appears can be reduced to religious functions alone. It is also worth noting that in stating his purpose was to "acquaint the rest of the world with that which God left hidden in this corner of it," he allowed himself to broaden the scope of his text to nearly everything he found interest in, including, crucially, a vast array of oral traditions. As we will see, some of the epics he writes about do deal with metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical themes and in that sense could be said to be of theological import. On the other hand, many simply do not. Thus a desire to simply chronicle God's work does not adequately account for his recurrent interest in oral traditions and other cultural phenomena in the work. It might also be that his enchantment with these lengthy, grand narratives, expressions of which will recur throughout this chapter, explains why he devoted so much space to them.

From Acosta to Alzina

Alzina followed the general structure of Jose de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las indias* (1590) but adapted it slightly to suit his particular purposes. In the first two books

¹²⁷ Ibid.

of his *Historia*, Acosta writes that he treats “everything concerning the heavens and climate and living conditions of that hemisphere”; and in the second two he “deal[s] with whatever is remarkable about the elements and natural mixtures, such as metals, plants, and animals, that are found in the Indies.” Taken together, these constitute the natural history portion of the work. The remaining three books, which “describe what I have been able to discover and what seems worthy of telling about men and their deeds (I mean the Indios themselves and their rites and customs, government and wars, and great events),” make up its moral history.¹²⁸ In actuality, though, the discussions of “natural” and “moral” matters are not so neatly segregated. In the final chapter of Book One, for instance, Acosta treats, “What the Indians are wont to say about their origin,” which is more properly a cultural matter. Nor are the books themselves as thematically or even regionally focused as Acosta’s description would indicate, given that for instance Book Four, Chapter Six deals with universities and studies of China, and that much of the latter half of Book Seven with the conquest of Mexico, which most contemporary historians would have treated as a Spanish rather than Indian historical event. This overall structure of a natural, followed by a cultural history, both somewhat loosely categorized, would be frequently emulated in the decades and centuries that followed in the New World and beyond.

Following Acosta, Alzina provides, first, a wide-ranging natural history of the Visayan Islands in Part One, Books One and Two, which includes a very few introductory chapters about the Visayans’ name, outward appearance, material culture and practice of tattooing, because that was the most immediately visible thing about them. He then treats at some length all of the fauna, flora, geographic, climactic, and other natural phenomena of the islands he was able to witness. He even includes illustrations of some examples of each. This

¹²⁸ José de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, ed. Jane E. Mangan, with introduction and commentary by Walter D. Mignolo, trans. Frances López-Morillas (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2002), 11.

sets up the moral component of his history in Part One, Books Three and Four. He opens the moral component of his book by explaining,

if we treated the name and nature of these Indios in the first book, a necessary prerequisite for an understanding of their knowledge and intelligence, in this one we will treat the information that as a consequence of reason qualifies and makes the human being [*humano ser*], according to which law s/he is obligated to respond intelligently, or, at least, knowingly. Thus before treating matters regarding their religion and knowledge of God, their rites and sacrifices, which is an irremissible debt owed by the created to their creator, we will see their language and letters, science and arts, liberal and mechanical, what knowledge they were able to achieve.¹²⁹

Alzina's explorations of their culture, of "their language and letters, science and arts, liberal and mechanical, what knowledge they were able to achieve," functioned to bestow visibility on God's workings in a distant and heretofore mostly unknown corner of Asia. In this moral history he treats the Visayan language, writing system, mechanical arts, agricultural methods, textiles, metallurgy, shipbuilding, navigation methods, metaphysics, shamanic and ritual traditions, witchcraft, "vices" such as drunkenness, illnesses, social organization, building practices, political organization, slavery, legal systems, trade and commerce, feasting and entertainment practices, weaponry, martial practices, marital practices, abductions, and the question of the existence of giants and pygmies. Taken together, these four books that comprise Part One of the *Historia* amount to the most systematic and comprehensive attempt to study any Philippine community under Spanish colonialism. And Alzina wrote more still.

Just as Acosta treated recent events towards the end of his *Historia*, Alzina too sought to use the vehicle of his text to relate the history of the colony since the Spanish advent. In this endeavor, the ambitions of the Philippine Jesuit far exceeded those of his predecessor. Part Two of the *Historia* is devoted entirely to the history of the Visayas after the conversion of the natives to Christianity. It seems to have been even lengthier than Part One.

Unfortunately, only about half of its five books has survived. Half of Book One, chapters and

¹²⁹ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 2.

sections of chapters of Book Two (the most complete), even more chapters and sections of Book Three, and all of Books Four and Five have been lost or destroyed.¹³⁰ Based on what has survived however, we can see that this was an immensely rich history of the archipelago's central islands that treated in some detail major and minor events of the preceding century.¹³¹ Nothing of this sort of regionally-focused history on the archipelago's central islands would be attempted again during the Spanish colonial era until quite late—and then by the pen of one of its accidental sons: Isabelo de los Reyes's *Las islas Visayas en la época de la conquista* (1889), which was written without knowledge of the Jesuit's work.

Inspired in part by and building on Acosta's pioneering opus, Alzina was able to create a wide-ranging work that treated Philippine natural and cultural history with unprecedented detail, deep reflection, and, significantly, a unique sympathy for his subject. From the numerous performances he described and summarized we can discern a number of features regarding the epic tradition in the seventeenth century Philippines. First, we know the names a least a few of the types of performances we would today call epics (sidai and candu or caranduun) as well as something about what distinguished them from other sorts of oral traditions. He also supplied for us many of the particulars about the performances he witnessed: the names of protagonists, the places where the stories were set, and where they were recited. In some instances (most notably *The Epic of Datong Somanga and Bugbung Humaianum*), but not others (the Diibtang traditions), he gives us lengthy treatments of the plots, such that we know what are, perhaps, their major developments. Because he did not limit himself to studying only the performers and performances themselves, we know something about the audiences who watched and listened to them. I will discuss all of this

¹³⁰ The only published version of what remains of Part Two is Yepes, *Historia Sobrenatural de las Islas Bisayas*.

¹³¹ Kobak and Gutiérrez have reconstructed a table of contents of some of the lost portions. See *History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands*, 1: 48-59.

below, beginning with his discussions of the types of Visayan oral traditions that he witnessed.

Grasping Genres

One of Alzina's principal contributions for the study of Visayan oral traditions was his attempt to chart all of its major genres. In two main sections of the *Historia* and in a few scattered places elsewhere he supplies the locally given names of a number of seventeenth century vocally performed oral traditions that have seemingly all been forgotten today. He does this first in his discussion of the Visayan language in the first chapter of Part One, Book Three. His concern with the Visayan language as the starting point for the understanding of their culture was not unique. Pagden notes that for sixteenth and seventeenth century writers, "The true civil community was made possible through the persuasive power of language." Hence any accounting of Visayan culture (or any other) would begin with it, and not simply because it would facilitate a deeper understanding of it in any practical sense, but rather because, "the language any given people use will simply reflect the level, material, spiritual and civil, of the culture they have acquired."¹³² The question of the Visayans' humanity was therefore inextricably bound up with their linguistic capabilities.

Alzina's treatment of the Visayan language is wide-reaching. He addresses questions of its origin and main features, including, its poetic mode, recurrent use of metaphors, and expressive range; its seemingly infinite vocabulary; its pronunciation; its general lack of a polite form of address when compared with Tagalog; its relationship to other languages in the Philippines, to those in "India this side of the Ganges," and to the tongues of Classical Antiquity.¹³³ This is substantially more than an introduction to a local language as a communicative technology that could be studied by Spanish missionaries in furtherance of

¹³² Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 20, 205.

¹³³ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 3-8.

their evangelical campaign (as for instance dictionaries and other grammar books were); it might in fact be the first substantive historical and broadly comparative linguistic analysis of a Philippine language written under Spanish imperium. The three characteristics of Visaya he highlights in his discussion of the language all function to frame it in approbatory terms. Comparing it with the Spanish Alzina wrote in, he claimed Visaya had a greater abundance of terms, a more precise and wider range of semantic expression, and that it was more intrinsically mellifluous, regardless of who spoke it.¹³⁴ It was superior to the imperial tongue in many ways. This effusive treatment sets up his discussion of poetry that follows.

After devoting the first half of Book Three, Chapter Two to the Visayan alphabet, Alzina introduces the subject of Visayan poetry by noting how radically different its poetic conventions are from European ones. He writes,

although they do not have the variety of consonant and assonant meters we have (although they do have consonantal meters, somewhat different from ours), without a doubt they exceed us in these because the language they use differs from that of ordinary and common conversation; and it is of such high register [*tan alto grado*] that few are those Europeans who, although they might be adept linguists and know a great deal of Visaya, do not understand it even though they listen to it; because in addition to their words and concepts in their meters being different *ut plurimum*, their use of ordinary words that often accompany the poems is so metaphoric when they say it in verse, everything is pure metaphor, and for the person who does not understand and knows them, they are impossible to grasp.¹³⁵

He then explains how he was able to learn to understand this challenging poetic register.

It had already been more than five years that I knew the language with some depth and I was always listening to them speak in verse, which I did not understand, [and] it caused me great dismay, until I took it upon myself to study and learn the mode, which cost me much work and irritation in the beginning; and after a few months I began to understand something of it, and with greater application and a desire to know everything about it [*de saberlo todo*] more after. I would say that it cost me even greater work learning this metaphoric mode of the Visayan language that they only use for their poetry, than it did learning the everyday language, even though it is [more] extensive; and in truth extremely few are those Europeans, ministers or not, who understand it even if they listen to it; extremely rare is s/he who knows how to imitate it, especially with the acuity and facility that some of them possess with this poetic mode.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ibid., 5-8

¹³⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

He concludes these introductory remarks by noting a few more basic features about this poetic form of expression. He writes,

there are some who improvise speech better in verse than in prose, and so and so of the most skillful will do so for many hours, and sometimes for an entire night, given that they use this form of entertainment mostly at night, speaking without searching for a word, with notable fluency, facility, and acuity, such that if someone does not understand what is being said [the words], one will not make sense of the larger idea.¹³⁷

These cursory remarks tell us a number of things about both the Visayan poetry itself as well as his strategy of studying and explaining it for his European audience. Immediately evident is that Visayan poetry follows very different conventions from its Spanish counterparts: it is exclusively oral and not written, it followed a different rhyming scheme, the meanings of its words are fluid and contextually determined, it was mainly chanted at night, it was often extemporaneously performed, often extremely skillfully, and more. He also explains (more than once) how difficult it was to learn elementary Visaya, and especially the region of it he describes as its “metaphoric” or “poetic” mode. It was difficult particularly if one’s goal was literally understand every word and phrase—which was a preoccupation of Europeans like Alzina. These general features of Visayan poetry he supplies help to contextualize his subsequent typology of forms.

Alzina then attempts a survey of Visayan poetic genres from the simplest to most complex. The *ambahan*, the “most popular and common among children and adults, men and women,” is composed of two heptasyllabic verses that express a single idea; both lines must be interchangeable.¹³⁸ Mainly used for entertainment, its subject seems to have been whatever its reciters desired. The *bical* was characterized by a freer verse structure but a stricter rhythm. Similar to the Tagalog *balagtasán*,¹³⁹ it was a verbal joust between two men

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 12.

¹³⁹ Galileo S. Zafra, *Balagtasán: Kasaysayan at Antolohiya* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1999); and Pablo Reyna Libiran, *Balagtasán: Noon at Ngayon* (Manila: National Bookstore, 1985).

or women on the subject of the other's faults and shortcomings. Alzina writes that the performers would poeticize alternately, in uninterrupted succession, for up to two hours. Similar in rhythm to the bical, the *balac* is a comparatively more metaphorical genre that took the form of a dialogue that was sung between two lovers, and had as its subject, "amatory things, all evil, about which they know more than about good things"—almost certainly a reference to erotic subject matter.¹⁴⁰ Uniquely among the poetic types, it seems, reciters played instruments in addition to using vocal expression while performing the *balac*—the man a *curiapi*, the woman a *corlong*, both stringed instruments.¹⁴¹ Alzina believed that through this musical form of poetic expression, the couple achieved greater intimacy and secrecy of expression, because few could understand the messages created by the notes they played. He found that the most challenging poetic form was the *sidai*, which, if it were performed today, we would likely identify as an epic. It was chanted to:

praise or recount the deeds of their ancestors, or the beauty of woman, or the bravery of a man. It is the most difficult to understand, and even the Visayans themselves do not understand everything because there is not a word in it that is not metaphorical and that does not have a different meaning in this meter. The Visayans delight in hearing this and do so at all hours, especially at night, and do so without yawning or falling asleep. And they are wont to pay and not infrequently give gifts to those who are trained in this type of poetry, for singing it in their homes—for this form is always said in song. And I confess that these *sidai* cost me a great deal of effort to understand and not a few times I gave gifts to the best trained among them so that they would sing for me. It is only that they have certain repetitions that are somewhat tiresome, because they come to repeat things many times, by adding only a word or two, in these many and very long accounts. Maybe it cannot be any other way because the subject matter they recount and sing demands it. It is the most difficult mode as we have said.¹⁴²

It would be useful to take particular notice of the characteristics and subject matter of the *sidai*—they "praise or recount the deeds of their ancestors, or the beauty of woman, or the bravery of a man"—because doing so will help us to understand the many sorts of narratives

¹⁴⁰ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 13.

¹⁴¹ For discussions of Philippine instruments, particularly prehispanic, see José Maceda, *Gongs and Bamboo: A Panorama of Philippine Musical Instruments* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1998); and E. Arsenio Manuel, *Towards an Inventory of Philippine Musical Instruments* (Quezon City: Asian Studies Center, 1978).

¹⁴² Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 13-14.

he reproduces later in the book but does not identify by type. Alzina's note that the *sidai* "is the most difficult to understand, and even the Visayans themselves do not understand everything because there is not a word in it that is not metaphorical and that does not have a different meaning in this meter," reveals something of the nature of their performative conventions. It suggests that his informants did not necessarily attach great importance to the concatenation of words and lines of lengthy oral recitations. Rather it was the *sound* of narration they delighted in. Such explains why, as I noted in the previous chapter, Loarca singled out the Panayan chanters' "good voices" ("during their revelries, the singers who have good voices recite the exploits of olden times") above all other aspects of their performance.¹⁴³ Reynaldo Ileto has drawn attention to this characteristic of audience responses to recitations of the *pasyon*. He relates how,

it was the sound of the teacher's voice reciting the prayers that brought joy and *liwanag* [light]. *The experience of listening was one of the feeling, not of deciphering or understanding.* What, to others, might have seemed like noise was, to the pilgrims, similar to music in a key that their religious experience enabled them to respond to.¹⁴⁴

This equally true for Alzina's *Indios* as it was for other Malays across the South China Sea. As Amin Sweeney has noted about audience responses in the places that became Malaysia and Indonesia, "Tales were presented in a rhythmical chant to an audience which did not expect to hear every word."¹⁴⁵ The musicality of the voice was paramount for *Indios* listeners, not necessarily the literal "text" of what was being narrated.

After discussing poems from simplest to most complex, Alzina then treats what we might class as ritual- or event-based ones. "*Haya*," he writes, "is another type of poetry which they used and still use to mourn their deceased." This was exactly the sort of oral

¹⁴³ Emma Blair and J.A. Robertson, eds. and trans., *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 5 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1903), 120-121.

¹⁴⁴ Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1979), 66. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁵ Amin Sweeney, "Literacy and the Epic," in Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger and Laurie J. Sears, eds., *Boundaries of the Text: Epic Performances in South and Southeast Asia* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, Univ. of Michigan, 1991), 18. For a fuller discussion of this phenomenon, see *idem*, *Authors and Audiences in Traditional Malay Literature* (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1980).

tradition Chirino had identified earlier in the century.¹⁴⁶ Alzina is not clear, but it seems that that *haya* seemed to refer to dirges in general, while *anugon* and *kanugon*, which, he writes, translated to “pitiable” (*lastimosa*) and “regrettable” (*mal logrado*), referred to specific types of mourning songs.¹⁴⁷ In the final part of this section, he draws attention to the *awit*—which means “to sing” in a number of Philippine languages even today. In the Visayan case, however, Alzina contended, the term referred only to a type of rowing song. Composed of two-verse couplets in which the second functions as a short refrain to be repeated by a chorus, it brought to his mind the Spanish *zalomas*, which “even if these songs among these natives were more numerous, they had a greater number of little melodies they slow or hasten with the rhythm of their rowing”—notice again the comparison with Spanish conventions that serves to highlight the superiority of their Visayan equivalents. He had heard “the most skilled sing [awits] for entire days without faltering.”¹⁴⁸ He terminates the discussion here by noting he was “leaving aside other special names of poems, the ones discussed being the most noble.”¹⁴⁹ We can only wonder what these other sorts of poetry were that Alzina had in mind. Just as likely, there were poetic forms that escaped his otherwise panoptic view and that he had no knowledge of whatsoever. Interestingly, and although this survey of Visayan poetry has received the most attention from scholars, these are not the only oral traditions he provides a typology of in the *Historia*.¹⁵⁰ In scattered places throughout his account he listed and described the characteristics of several more, some of which were recounted in prose, others in verse.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Pedro Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas y de lo que en Ellas Han Trabajado los Padres de la Compañía de Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Manila: Imp. de D Esteban Balbás, 1890), 107. This is found in English in: Pedro Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas Filipinas*, ed. and trans., Ramon Echevarria (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1969), 87.

¹⁴⁷ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ See Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 87; Scott, *Barangay*, 97-100; and Cantius J. Kobak, “Ancient Bisayan Literature, Music and Dances: In Alzina’s *Historia de las Islas e Indios de Bisayas... 1668*,” *Leyte-Samar Studies* vol. 11 no. 1 (1977): 33.

In Chapter Fifteen of Part One, Book Four, “Concerning the Difficulty that Some Princesses of Greater Fame Had in Marrying during Their Antiquity; The Efforts of Some Men and the Abductions of Others,” Alzina provides a lengthy summary of an epic narrative for the purpose of illustrating pre-Christian Visayan marital customs. I will discuss the significance of this record in a moment. What I want to highlight here is the name(s) he applies to this type of epical oral tradition, which is not *sidai*, as one would expect from his survey of forms earlier in the work. He writes that his summary was a “type of poetry they call *candu* or *caranduun*.”¹⁵¹ He gives no indication what similarities or differences existed between the *candu* or *caranduun* and *sidai*. “*Candó*,” a “Tone in which are sung the feats of their ancestors,” is a term listed in Juan Félix de la Encarnación’s *Diccionario Bisaya-Hispano* (1851), while *sidai* is not.¹⁵² This fact might indicate the prevalence of the former over the latter among Visayans, but there is no way to be sure. Thus even though Alzina was the most comprehensive and detailed student of Philippine oral traditions, there were still a number of things he left unclear. In any event, we are at least able to ponder whether or not the *candu* or *caranduun* was a genre distinct from the *sidai* because he wrote about it in the first place.

In Chapter Nine of Part One, Book Four, “Concerning Their Feasts, Banquets, Dances and other Entertainments of the Elderly, Young, and Children,” he supplies the names and says a few words about several types of oral traditions Visayans performed in their homes.

Nor inside the home do they lack for their stories or riddles, which are told at night: these they call *titigoon*, of which they have many that are perplexing and difficult to make out. Others they call *sareta* or *susumatuny*, some of which are very long and convoluted, the sort that elderly women and men recount. These serve as an archive for them here as they do elsewhere. And even still they have numerous histories of their ancestors that they recount, or it would be better to say, sing, which are in verse. They also have many fables, which they call *posong*... They have no shortage of short

¹⁵¹ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 258.

¹⁵² Juan Félix de la Encarnación, *Diccionario Bisaya-Hispano* (Manila: Imp. de los Amigos del País, 1851), 93.

stories [*cuentecillos*] that are similar in every way to what is said about someone over there, as well as some that are peculiar to things here. And although they are usually prolix in reciting them, and even more so in singing them, they listen with pleasure, and thus listening to them recite stultified me many times, especially listening to their historical narrations, because they were recounted in the correct poetic form, which is the most pleasing, because of the subject matter, artistry and manner of presentation [*propriedad*] with which they say them. When they recount them in prose, for us it is the least pleasing, because they repeat a great deal and contain an abundance of tiresome refrains that exasperate us. But this is their natural language, lacking in the expedience that we know well, such that to them it is not the least disconcerting [*se espantan*] when they hear us repeat their stories without the recurrent words [*bordoncillos*] and without swallowing the saliva they do.¹⁵³

He does not go into as great of detail about these types of oral traditions here as he had earlier in his section on Visayan poetry. Nonetheless he again supplies the names and the distinguishing characteristics of a number of traditions we would otherwise have no knowledge of. The fact that he could not make more detailed descriptions about these vocal genres is not completely surprising. As with the Spanish experience of describing unseen things in the New World, finding an adequate vocabulary for things never before heard was no simple task.¹⁵⁴

Ambahan, bical, balac, sidai, haya, anogon and canogon, and awit; candu and caranduun; titigoon, saretá and susumatuny, and posong—no other single work of Spanish colonialism contained such a lengthy inventory of Philippine oral traditions. The historian of music D.R.M. Irving has pointed out that a few studies of indigenous poetry, particularly of the Tagalog regions, contain surveys of poetic genres similar to that of Alzina. Accordingly, he contends that Alzina’s “identification of seven distinct genres within Visayan poetry: *ambahan, bical, bacal...sidai, haya, anogon* (or *canogon*), and awit,” for instance finds its equivalent in Melchor Oyanguren de Santa Ynés’s *Tagalysmo Elucidado* (1742), with its “similarly long list of genres of Tagalog poetry—the awit, *diona, oyayai, talindao, dalit*, and

¹⁵³ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 215.

¹⁵⁴ Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, chap. 1.

soliranin.”¹⁵⁵ But this is only true in a superficial sense. Oyanguren de Santa Ynès provided us with the names of these genres but his treatment lacked specificity. He discusses the formal characteristics of Tagalog poetry in general terms and thus leaves unclear what distinguished one type from another.¹⁵⁶ Possibly this was because he perceived all Tagalog poetic forms to have been recited in the same manner. Unlike Oyanguren de Santa Ynès, not to mention Gaspar de San Agustín, Francisco Bencuchillo, and Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga - the other authors of studies of Tagalog poetry Irving cites -, Alzina used the occasion of his study to ponder larger questions about a Philippine language, such as its historical origin and place among the universe of human tongues. The Tagalog scholars’ studies were, by comparison, essentially technical treatises, produced so that missionaries could learn and understand—not necessarily appreciate in any deeper sense—the Philippine languages through which they evangelized. Although he failed to even note the existence of many genres—Kobak and Gutiérrez indicate a number of oral traditions listed in Visayan dictionaries Alzina made no mention of¹⁵⁷—and was at points unclear about his subject, as the uncertain relationship between the *sidai* and *candu* or *caranduun* shows, Alzina’s inventory of genres was the most serious and thoughtful attempt to make ordered sense of Philippine oral traditions during Spanish colonialism.

His attempt to domesticate the wilderness of Visayan oral genres, by committing to paper the names and characteristics of the most “noble” types, formed one of the two main features of his study of the subject. More numerous, and in fact more revealing, were his interpretive studies and reproductions of actual traditions themselves, to which I will now turn.

¹⁵⁵ Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 87. A good number of these were later tracked down and recorded by E. Arsenio Manuel. See his “Tayabas Tagalog Awit Fragments from Quezon Province,” *Folklore Studies* vol. 17 (1958): 55-97.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Melchor Oyanguren de Santa Ynès, *Tagalysmo Elucidado: y reducido (en lo posible) a la Latinidad de Nebrija* (S.i., Mexico: Imp. de D. Francisco Xavier Sanchez, 1742), 219-220.

¹⁵⁷ Kobak and Gutiérrez, *History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands* vol. 3, 498-499n4.

A Panoply of Epics

Whereas most of the missionaries who wrote about oral traditions in the early modern era did so to understand religion and history mostly on an elementary level, Alzina extracted from them a wider range of information, for instance on recent events, literary tastes, linguistic history, social phenomena like slave-raiding, war practices, marriage and more. True to his words in the Proem, he made maximal use of the things the Visayans said for writing his book. While nothing in the *Historia* may be found to overturn Manuel's theorem that "Biag ni Lam-ang and Handiong were the only folk epics ever recorded during the Spanish period"¹⁵⁸—"recorded" in the crucial sense of "transcribed"—Alzina nonetheless reproduced a not insignificant number of summarized, epic-length narratives. This is worthwhile in and of itself. But what is more compelling is that he seems to have done so not simply in the pursuit of illustrating a particular point about some aspect of Visayan culture or history, but because he valorized the oral traditions as cultural products in and of themselves. In the many places where he reproduces summarized oral narratives, he could have simply noted that he found corroboration for his claims about, say, marital customs, in "one of their stories." Just as practical, and indeed more efficient, he could have reproduced only the portions of those narratives that validated his points rather than reiterating them from beginning to end. Yet he did neither. Because of his ethnological bent, Alzina came to see the great emic importance of Visayan epics. Through the *Historia* he sought to inculcate his appreciation of them onto his readers.

To reproduce every oral narrative Alzina summarized, long and short, would take up a great deal of space. Instead, what I will do in what follows is to indicate most of the places in his *Historia* where these narratives appear. Along the way I will highlight some aspects of his style of reproduction, manner of analysis, and critical bent, all of which help us to gain

¹⁵⁸ Manuel, "Survey of Philippine Epics," 6.

insight into a broader Spanish scholarly tendencies vis-à-vis the epics. With the exception of the *candu* noted above, he did not identify any of these narratives by their locally used generic names but referred to them variously as “songs,” “stories,” “histories,” and so on. At times he is even less specific than that, and simply characterized them as things “they say.” Despite that, however, most of these narratives do seem to have been the sort of lengthy, hero-centered, dramatically recited stories we identify by the term epic today.

In Book Four, Chapter Two, “Concerning Another Town in Ibabao, Its Antiquity, The Reasons for Its Destruction, and About the Many Others They Had,” Alzina treats the history of what he called “Ancient Lavan.” Alzina came to know of this town through the story—legend?—of a man named Caragrag, its “lord and regulus,” and his wife Bingi, who was “renown for her beauty among the natives.” Her beauty was so well known that the Datu of Albai (present-day Albay), Dumaraug (whose name, Alzina informs us, means “conqueror”), wanted to take her as his wife. Amidst stormy seas he sailed to their island with a hundred ships. His arrival with this fleet was sufficient to demonstrate that he was serious when told Caragrag, once they met, that he wanted Bingi for himself. Through envoys she conveyed that she was content with her husband and that even if she were carried off she would die before becoming Dumaraug’s wife. The Datu of Albay thus withdrew in defeat. Seeing how vulnerable they were to invasion, the inhabitants packed up and moved to Lavan (present-day Lawaang), where their descendants told Alzina this story.¹⁵⁹

In Book Four, Chapter Eleven, “Concerning their Manner of Fighting in Wars; If There Were Some Men Who Were Brave and Distinguished for their Strength, Bravery, Agility, Etc.,” a chapter filled to the brim with recordings and musings about oral traditions, Alzina relates the stories of great Visayan warriors. These “men of extreme strength or determination or bravery...they call in their language *darangangan*.” “I will tell of one, the

¹⁵⁹ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 164-165.

memory of whom is still one of the freshest,” he writes, “because it took place only a few years before the Spanish arrived here. The name of this gigantic Indio was Pusung, a native of the Pueblo of Magtaon...Many were those who he had killed when they showed their faces. More numerous still were those he had captured repeated times because he was a great raider [*salteador*], or *magahat* as they call them, until they set a trap near the Pueblo of Calviga that killed him.” Below we will revisit this Pusung, who comes up again in his discussion of giants.

It is during the course of this discussion about captives that he in fact reproduces, word for word in the original Visaya, an actual line of a performed epic, undoubtedly one he had heard over and over. He writes,

in one of their ancient songs [*cantares antiguos*] they sing the praises of one of their vanquishers: ‘*Capitoan inbihag, casiaman inagbaiun, gatos inpinanangin,*’ which in our Spanish language means: ‘the captives taken on land are seventy; fifty are those who because of scrawniness or frailty like women were led by the hand; and one hundred were captured by sea.’ In all there were 220 taken, without adding jewels and etc., [*sic*], which they call *taban*.¹⁶⁰

This single line of transcribed Visayan text is rather plainly descriptive and as such not particularly revealing of the literary genius he spoke at length about earlier in the work. If our Visayan litterateur were to reproduce only a single line of text, one would expect it would be something more figurative, fantastic, or beautiful—this he in fact does next, though in translation. His selection of this particular line of the performance to reproduce, with its specific numbers of raided slaves taken, suggests that he valued its verisimilar quality above all. Here he presents the epic as a source of reliable historical information, one that can be profitably studied for an understanding of Visayan culture. Although perhaps given to embellishment and hyperbole, it nonetheless contained tidbits of factual information.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 228.

In this same section he reproduces what seems to be another line of text, this time in translation, which showcases the genius, artistry, and beauty of Visayan figures of oral speech.

And so that something of the metaphorical quality of this language may be seen, we will conclude this matter of captives with that which the song [*cantar*] uses to conclude its story. Speaking with one of their princesses renowned for her beauty, which he says speaking about her eyes, ‘You pillage [*pirateas*] with your eyes and capture many, and only with your look do you seize and capture more than pirates do with their fleets, etc.’ that they also had and have in their poetry, poetic hyperboles and allusions not less metaphoric than in ours, and in ways more, for, as we have said, their style of poetry is wholly another.¹⁶¹

Yet again in the still relativistic world of the seventeenth century, where cultural difference alone can explain a “style of poetry” that “is wholly another,” he maintains not only the difference but also superiority of Visayan forms.

Similarly in Book Four, Chapter Eleven, Alzina relates the story of a legendary Indio who ran at the speed of lightning.

I will speak of a remarkable thing that is in one of their ancient songs [*cantar suyo antiguo*] that I have heard many times and has been repeated no few, and because of its unusualness of its subject it should well be discussed in text. It is said, thus, that there was an Indio named, if I not remembering it incorrectly, Parapat, who was so agile that in running along the beach (the ones here have very clean and fine sand) that he did not leave and sign or print by which one would know he had run there. Furthermore, according to said chant, that on the tops of the rocks could be recognized a few of the little grains of sand that he had left on the plants or the spaces in between the fingers [?], by which they recognized him, and which those that knew of his agility and that passed by that area, [would say it] was the place the it was said he had gone through.¹⁶²

This was all quite unbelievable, and Alzina goes on to admit as much.

It could be that there is a great deal of hyperbole in the poetry [*poesía*], but singing it and telling it in this way and with certainty [is such] that all of them have very ancient information, and none of them doubts their truth. If Alalanta’s [*sic*; should read “Atalanta,” the Ancient Greek female hunting deity] speed was as great as the ancients say, it would have not been too far beyond what a person would have been capable of, as we have said, given that she was more agile because she was among the lightest of females. About some of the more famous ones from here we will say

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 228-229.

¹⁶² Ibid., 229-230.

something in the in the following chapters, because there is no lack of their Helens, Lucretias, Portias, etc.¹⁶³

Here we can see that Alzina sought to explain the fantastic in terms of what is realistically possible. Legendary events were not pure fiction; rather, they were the imaginative recreations of actual history. This provides us with a fuller explanation of how he extracted truth from these epics, which were inevitably spliced with touches of fantasy. Alzina points out that Visayan epics were, in this way, no different from those of Ancient Greece—and as such no less worthy of regard.

In Book Four, Chapter Sixteen, “Concerning the Difficulty Some Princesses of Greater Fame in their Antiquity Had in Becoming Married; The Efforts of Some Men and the Abduction of Others,” the fifth and final on the subject of Visayan marriages, Alzina recounts in summary a number of epics. Here is the place where he identifies a narrative as a *candu* or *caranduun*. Probably because of this, the chapter has attracted the attention of scholars, particularly the historian of the prehispanic Philippines William Henry Scott, who has identified and translated and two of them from the chapter, which we might call The Epic of Datong Somanga and Bugbung Humaianum (or Datung Sumanga and Bugbung Humasanun, as Scott transliterates it according to modern Filipino), which ranks as the longest summarized epic under Spanish colonialism prior to the late nineteenth century, and the The Epic of Cabungao and Bubun Ginbua (or as Scott puts it, Kabungaw and Bubung Ginbuna).¹⁶⁴ Alzina sets up his reproduction of The Epic of Datong Somanga and Bugbung Humaianum by noting, simply,

We shall present an example that shows what followed when a suitor pledged to fulfill all that he was asked to do, and I will faithfully translate it, adjusting for the incommensurability [*idiotismo*] of both languages, Visayan and Spanish. It is taken from one of their ancient songs that I have translated for the benefit of memory. I omitted some of the repetitions, which were refrains and were for entertainment in this type of poetry they call *candu* or *caranduun*, which were seen as elegant in the

¹⁶³ Ibid., 230.

¹⁶⁴ Scott, *Barangay*, 99-103. Cf. Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 258-262.

way they used them but for us would be exasperating and prolix and would rouse the Spanish anger.¹⁶⁵

Alzina's sparse words here about his purpose of reproducing the epic in summary indicate that for him it was simply an exercise in illustrating what he had written about Visayan marriages earlier, towards which end he took the necessary steps to make it intelligible—and pleasurable to read—for his global Spanish and European readers. His concluding words that follow the epic summary are similarly uncomplicated: “This is a translation of the said poetry and relation of how they esteem and appreciate these princesses of greater rank, who did and do correspond to our Infantas in name and absolute power, whose grandeur, majesty, and beauty and everything else could not be reached in ten thousand leagues.”¹⁶⁶ Here he is usefully explicit about the political implications of Visayan literature: their art clearly reflects their rational intelligence, which in turn finds expression in their political organization, and which—here is the key expression of the Jesuit's relativistic thinking—finds its clear analogue in glorious Spain.

In addition to these epics, Alzina makes mention of a few more princess-centered ones in Book Four, Chapter Sixteen, one of whose protagonists he identifies by name. Clearly he wanted to reproduce these in longer form but felt doing so would unnecessarily lengthen his already weighty tome. About the first, he writes,

In parts of Samar their poets [*semideas*] celebrated another named Diibtang, whose narration is so long and full of so many and so varied circumstances—I do not call them adventures—that the elders who recited it to me, still painted [tattooed], said it to me with great elegance and grace, enduring for [up to] 6 hours, with some finding it necessary to stop for the next day and others to moisten the throat passage, because the way they speak and sing or recount in song tires them most, even though their tune is good—of which they have many—and it displeases less.¹⁶⁷

Concluding the chapter, he mentions other such narratives whose protagonists he does not identify by name but by place or origin.

¹⁶⁵ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 258.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

Also celebrated and whose memory endures still is that of other princesses of greater name and beauty and who were abducted by the *datos* or *reguluses*—who were many—from the coasts of Samar: one in Burias, an island that falls by the pier; another in Masbate, its nearest island, and even though the princesses were the cause of wars and theft among them, because they took them to marry them, they placated the fathers-in-law afterward when grandchildren came, bringing in return other princesses with whom their children could marry off to their children or relatives, making them into friends and allies. And we said that, even from Jolo, they came to abduct and search well for other women of rank in Samar. Another Visayan woman—from which of these islands I could not ascertain—was sought after because of the fame of her beauty by another kinglet from Mindanao.¹⁶⁸

Finally, Alzina collected and analyzed oral traditions about a semi-monstrous race of man in the archipelago: giants—denial of whose existence, he writes, amounted to a “negat[ion] of that which divine faith attests in sacred letters and with which the human refers to in many and trustworthy histories”—in Book Four, Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen. Of “Constant fame and great popularity on the coast of Ibabao that faces East,” he writes, “there was a giant with a woman and children named Morongborongan, which in this language means ‘head that reaches the clouds.’” Alzina relates Morongborongan’s many exploits such as how he conducted raids in Samar, how his spear was made from the same sort of tall tree (*lavan*) the Spaniards used to make ships’ planks, how his shield was so unwieldy that dozens of men would be needed to carry it—so large it could be used for fording a river. To those who would point out how unbelievable such things sounded, Alzina explains, “if they were measured against other such things that trustworthy authors recount about other giants, then these are not too great but are instead proportional to the subject.” Then again, part of the fantastic quality was attributable to the Visayans’ manner of preservation. He continues,

I do not doubt that *fama crescit* and that that which they relate grows in effect or diminishes with the dislike with which they refer to him. There might be much added and also taken out, if it is true that there was such a man, then the tradition [that is] so general, so common, and so ancient always proves much. Given this, all of it was

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

consequent and necessary for his conservation and perpetuation [*conservación y ejercicio*].¹⁶⁹

This passage is noteworthy for the way it expresses Alzina's belief that these orally recited narratives were the Visayans' attempt at preserving and re-presenting actual historical knowledge, and that in the process of doing so they confused them, thereby rendering them fantastically. Yet at the same time he ventures to question whether they were to be believed at all.

These comments about the fluid and semi-fantastic nature of oral traditions serve as a guide to narratives about Morongborongan just as they do for another giant, Pusung, whom Alzina mentioned earlier in the *Historia*. He writes here he had learned about the giant from “a prince of reason and a greater than ordinary knowledge of things” in Calviga (modern day Calbiga). Pusung seems to have achieved his greatest fame by being put to death—at the hands of pygmies. This is interesting in and of itself because it provides us a glimpse of a long forgotten Visayan folk hero—and Alzina dutifully relates the story of how these “human puppets” (*títeres humanos*) slayed their “Goliath”—but what is particularly noteworthy is that he heard two slightly distinct versions of the narrative and explained for his readers the process by which he determined their relationship. After relating what he heard from the Calvigan prince, he writes,

This they recounted to me in said pueblo *fides sit penes autorem*, and I believe that they confuse the name Pusung, which is similar to someone much more ancient, with one who died at the hands of the pygmies shortly before the Spaniards arrived... And it is not much [to say] that these [natives] confuse one story with another [because of] the similarity of their names and occurrences and not having writing nor books. Even the most well versed among them are in the habit of confusing the plots, combining two into one, switching the deeds of one with another, which takes place many times in the histories. And here from the two Pusung[s] I believe they make one from, from what I can grasp, is two, taken from the relations I heard from the most ancient and closest to the times from this last one, thus I got one from those that knew him, and the other from an occurrence or story that had remained among them.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 263, 264.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 270. “Fides sit penes autorem” [sic; should read “auctorem”] translates to: “credit to this author (i.e. let the person supplying the facts be responsible for their accuracy).” Jon R. Stone, *The Routledge Dictionary of*

Building on what he had written earlier about the fantastic nature of Visayan oral traditions, Alzina explains here that much of his informants' confusion about is a result of their lack of a written archive. As he sees it, books are the basis of all forms of all true information. Oral traditions may serve as a supplement to the written word but cannot replace it nor challenge its supremacy. Only when they are reformed as literary knowledge can things like epics acquire significance—such as through his creation of the *Historia*. What is at the heart of this passage is the notion that all stories, whether written or oral, have as their basis a single and immutable original iteration. This notion leads Alzina to misrecognize the differences that characterize the two narratives as the result of confusion on the part of natives: they erroneously reproduce the original and in the process alter it, seemingly unconsciously. It is the sort of mistake that only a literate who studied oral cultures would make.¹⁷¹ But what was true of Pliny the Elder's works a millennium earlier, José de Acosta's decades before, or the book of all books, the Bible—which ironically too began as a series of variable oral traditions—clearly did not apply to Philippine oral traditions. What he captured in this commentary, by misunderstanding the performative conventions at play, was the highly fluid and variable nature of Visayan oral traditions, where there were no originals and reproductions, faithful or failed, but instead an innumerable variety of versions, performed differently each time on the basis of a general mental script.

Through these many examples we can discern how Alzina sought to preserve Philippine epics. After a lengthy, decades long course of study of the language and culture, he set out to listen, take notes of, and attempt to commit to memory a number of the performed narratives. He attempted to pay particular attention to the details of the actual stories—the names of the protagonists, the places depicted, the course of particular events—

Latin Quotations: The Illiterati's Guide to Latin Maxims, Mottoes, Proverbs, and Sayings (London: Routledge, 2004), 160.

¹⁷¹ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

despite that grasping the full “text” of the performance, clinging to every word, seems not to have been something the Visayans themselves sought to accomplish. With all of this information in mind and in notes, he reassembled the narratives as coherent stories with identifiable characters, verifiable locations, and a clear plot progression. Lastly he categorized them according to what aspect of Visayan customs their stories best seemed to relate to, and reproduced the stories in those sections of the *Historia*. In many cases, he related the stories in whole; that is, in as complete of fashion as he could reconstruct them; in others, he merely mentioned their existence. Through this series of actions, he gave greater permanence to performative snapshots of the mid-seventeenth century that otherwise would have continued their infinite process of reworking, to the point where they are no longer known today. This is how Alzina preserved Visayan epics, and demonstrated what the process of doing so entailed under the early and middle periods of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines.

An Inscrutable Art

What his survey of genres and particularly his compilation of epics amounts to then is the historic first attempt to grasp not only the more or less complete repertoire of oral traditions that existed within a Southeast Asian community, but more importantly, one of the earliest attempts to make intelligible sense of them.¹⁷² As a proto-anthropologist and proto-

¹⁷² Given that in the 1660s there was not yet any such thing as British Burma, British Malaya, or French Indochina—and there would not be for about two centuries—the only real point of comparison for the extensive Spanish Philippine colony would be the colonized areas of the Malaysian and Indonesian archipelagos, and particularly Dutch East Indies. Braginsky notes that, “The Europeans knew about Malay literature roughly in the early seventeenth century, when the first manuscripts of Malay writings appeared in the collections of British and, somewhat later Dutch, bibliophiles and gatherers of exotic Oriental objects” (Vladimir Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings and Literary Reviews* [Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004], 4). But the fact that these manuscripts were collected does not mean they were necessarily studied in any meaningful way. Although the history of Malay literature is still in the process of being written, it seems that from what we have so far, it was only really in the nineteenth century that Europeans devoted themselves to the serious study of Malay texts, or late eighteenth century at the very earliest (Henk Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* [Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004], 11). Thus until newer research demonstrates otherwise—which one would expect to happen at some point not too far in the future—Alzina’s folkloric work will remain singularly impressive.

folklorist, Alzina provides us the best example under Spanish colonialism of what the study and attempted reproduction of Philippine epics looks like. The results of his labor are twofold. First, he clearly had many insightful things to impart about the form, function, and significance of the lengthiest oral narrative genres and their associated forms more generally. Second, his work typifies how difficult such narratives are to access, understand, record, and reproduce for textual consumption.

Nearly two centuries before William Thoms codified the study and collection of oral traditions with the term “folk-lore” in a letter to the journal *Athenaeum* in 1846, Alzina was practicing in the *Historia* a prototypical form of what we would today call comparative folkloristics.¹⁷³ So that his readers would have a basic understanding of the subject, he took the basic step of supplying the local terminologies of genres. To put things in more familiar terms he sometimes drew analogies between Philippine and Spanish types, such as when he identified their rowing songs as awits, which he then compared to zalomas. In another place, he likened the Visayans’ “multitude of proverbs” to what “in Spanish were called little Gospels [*evangelios pequeños*].” It was not only stories but also characters that could be analogized. In discussing the “fables” they called posong, Alzina claimed, “this *posong* duly corresponds to our folk story Ordimalas [*pueblo de Ordimalas nuestro*], about whom they have no few little stories that are similar in every way to what is said about him over there [in Spain] and a few special ones they tell about him here.”¹⁷⁴ This was a reference to Pedro de Urdemalas, a trickster character perhaps best known in Alzina’s time as the titular character in Cervantes’s play, *Comedia famosa de Pedro de Urdemalas* (1615).¹⁷⁵ And as we saw

¹⁷³ Duncan Emrich, ““Folk-Lore” William John Thoms,” *California Folklore Quarterly* vol. 5. no. 4 (Oct., 1946): 355. There were, of course, earlier precedents. See, e.g., the compilation of major folklore writers in Alan Dundes, ed., *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., Inc., 1999).

¹⁷⁴ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 7.

¹⁷⁵ This was published as part of a collection of his dramatic works: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Ocho Comedias, y Ocho Entremeses Nuevos, Nunca representados* (Madrid: La Viuda de Alonso Martin, 1615), page opposite 196-220.

above, he likened Parapat, the Visayan who ran at the speed of lightning, to the Ancient Greek goddess Atalanta and the Visayan princesses of legendary beauty to “Helens, Lucretias, Portias.”¹⁷⁶ For Alzina, folkloric genres and characters were universal. The specific qualities that distinguished Visayans’ folk heroes and the performative conventions that sustained them were different, to be sure. But they were not so irreducibly foreign that they could not be explained by comparison with European equivalents. For him, it was no surprise that the oral traditions he heard and read about in Europe could be found in the Philippine colony.

He evinced a clear fascination with the narratives themselves, yet he was also a careful enough chronicler to provide us with a good deal of information about their performative conventions generally and the larger ritual events they formed part of. Alzina was the first Spaniard to take note of many of the features of epic performance that contemporary scholars would discover for the first time in the twentieth century, such as the supernatural qualities of protagonists, the metaphorical language of chanting, the repetitiveness of narration, their lengthiness, the chanters’ tendency to remix elements from two or more stories, the fact that they were nearly always chanted at night, and more. Propelled by the Jesuit notion that study was an act of devotion in and of itself, he tacked on to a number of cultural phenomena that seemingly no one before him and really no one for hundreds of years after him would take notice of.

The uniqueness of his insights highlights not only how difficult it was for the Spanish (just one of many European peoples) to study a radically foreign, Philippine culture in the seventeenth century, but particularly to access their most complex oral traditions in any meaningful way. Here it is worth considering the circumstances that enabled him to produce the *Historia*, which would be difficult to replicate in any time and place. He had a peculiar

¹⁷⁶ Yepes, *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 215, 230.

cultural orientation that predisposed him to lifelong learning and study; he by necessity of his vocation resided in a single place for nearly three decades, which allowed him to indulge his scholarly interests; he was a highly adept linguist and anthropologist; he had personal traits that led him to seek to unlock things he could not readily understand, and to equip himself with knowledge to do so when he lacked it. In light of these factors, we can see why no one else in Spanish Philippine history, or really even Philippine history in general, was able to probe oral traditions in the way that he did until very recently.

There is one more factor that contributed to his ability to understand Visayan oral traditions that is worth further consideration: the question of his position in colonial society. Clearly, he was born a Spaniard, labored as part of an international though in many ways Spanish religious corporation for his entire life, and he never abandoned the medium of the Spanish language as his primary vehicle of written communication. But at the same time, he spent nearly all of his life in the colony, and lived for most of that time as an integral part of a number of Visayan communities. Where he for instance wrote that he, “omitted some of the repetitions, which were refrains and were for entertainment in this type of poetry they call *candu* or *caranduun*, which were seen as elegant in the way they used them but for us would be exasperating and prolix and would rouse the Spanish anger,” he was to a large extent communicating Visayan culture from inside of it for a Spanish audience whose own tastes and sensibilities he had for decades been far removed from.¹⁷⁷ Certainly he still kept up certain habits, such as reading books, corresponding with colleagues, and the like, and in that way he maintained links with the culture he was born in. But that was not the culture he was deeply immersed in day to day. His rhythms of daily living, the food he ate, the language he spoke in, the people he interacted with—the large preponderance of them were Visayan and not Spanish. For that reason, it is not too much to say that he had to some extent become

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 258.

Visayan over the course of his life. The question of his identity, to what extent he was more Spanish or more Visayan, is impossible to answer definitively. There can be little doubt, however, that he had assimilated himself to local culture. This is why for instance the oral traditions that he described, “would be exasperating and prolix and would rouse the Spanish anger,” bothered him so little, if at all. It also explains his recurrent praise of all things Visayan when compared with their Spanish equivalents. He appreciated Visayan culture because it was in part his own.

Alzina’s *Historia* was the product of an unlikely constellation of circumstances that uniquely allowed its author to deeply engage an aspect of Philippine culture that for most of recorded history had remained largely inaccessible for foreign scholars. Not until a very different assemblage of epistemological, institutional, and historical factors came together in the twentieth century, nearly three centuries after Alzina, did similarly perceptive scholarship on Philippine oral traditions come to be produced.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE RECUPERATIVE ARCHIVE:
LATE SPANISH WRITINGS ON PHILIPPINE ORAL TRADITIONS

At first glance, the late Spanish engagement with Philippine oral traditions seems appreciable. This was a time when one of the first two epics, *Handiong*, was recorded (the other being Isabelo de los Reyes's *Biag ni Lam-ang*, 1890), and when a book of what we might liberally call folktales, Juan Villaverde's *Supersticiones y cuentos de los Igorrotes*, first appeared. If one considers that the enterprise of transcribing the lengthy chants we now call epics only began with the Finn Elias Lonnröt's recording of the *Kalevala* (1828-1844) and that the methods he employed crystallized into a formalized discipline two years later, then these developments appear as seasonable and conscientious contributions to scholarship.¹⁷⁸ Yet if one probes deeper into the circumstances of their creation, into questions of why, how, and by whom they were created, the picture becomes murkier.

Contemporary scholars of oral traditions, and of Philippine theatre especially, have made frequent use of one late Spanish travelogue and historical work, Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga's *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas ó, Mis viajes por este país* (Status of the Philippine Islands, Or, My Travels in this Country, 1893), which he completed writing in 1803. For reasons that seem to have to do with his mild criticism of certain colonial policies in the work, among others, he did not publish it at that time. An Englishman, John Maver, published a translation titled *An Historical View of the Philippine Islands Exhibiting their Discovery, Population, Language, Government, Manners, Customs, Productions and Commerce* in London in 1814. But the text did not appear in its original Spanish language form until the historian Wenceslao E. Retana resurrected it for publication in 1893. Scholars customarily attribute the recording of the Bikolano epic *Handiong* to the missionary José

¹⁷⁸ For this information I have relied on Lauri Honko, *Textualising the Siri Epic* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998), 169-176. On the rise of folklore, see Duncan Emrich, "'Folk-Lore'" William John Thoms," *California Folklore Quarterly* vol. 5. no. 4 (Oct., 1946): 355-374.

Castaño, because the text first appeared in a report he authored, the *Breve noticia acerca del origen, religión, creencias y supersticiones de los antiguos indios del Bicol* (Brief Notice About the Origin, Religion, Beliefs, and Superstitions of the Ancient Indios of Bicol, 1895). This too, Retana published, in the first volume of his *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino* (Archive of the Philippine Bibliophile, 1895). Scholars mention Retana's role in publishing the *Breve noticia*, but they see him as merely someone who disseminated what Castaño produced. Yet it was Retana who urged Castaño to write the report in the first place. Complicating things further, the question of when the *Handiong* portion of the text was written, and whether even Castaño was the person who created it, is unclear. Recent scholarship has suggested the possibility that a certain Bernardino Melendreras recorded it sometime before his death in 1867, according to which scenario Castaño merely included the already recorded transcript in his document.¹⁷⁹ A similar event took place in 1911, when the Dominican Julian Malumbres published his colleague Juan Villaverde's study of Ifugao oral traditions *Supersticiones y cuentos de los Igorrotes*. Villaverde transcribed these stories in the late 1880 and 1890s but never published any of them in part or in whole prior to his death in 1897. The question of the authorship of these late Spanish texts on oral traditions is more complicated than it has seemed—to say nothing about the even more vexing question of who uttered the vocal narratives themselves.

In this chapter I will examine the late Spanish colonial engagement with Philippine oral traditions. For decades, scholars have noted that this was the period when the first two epics were recorded, the Bikolano *Handiong* and the Ilokano *Biag ni Lam-ang*.¹⁸⁰ Studies of the nationalist Isabelo de los Reyes's campaign to collect folklore, part of which included

¹⁷⁹ Merito B Espinas, *Ibálong: The Bicol Folk Epic-Fragment* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas, 1996), 59. Cf. Valentín Marín y Morales, *Ensayo de una síntesis de los trabajos realizados por las corporaciones religiosas españolas de Filipinas*, vol. 2 (Manila: Imp. de Santo Tomás, 1901), 569.

¹⁸⁰ Manuel, "Survey of Philippine Epics," 6.

recording *Biag ni Lam-ang*, have appeared in recent years.¹⁸¹ But no one, surprisingly, has looked at the other side of the coin: why it was Castaño recorded *Handiong*—or why Retana saw fit to publish it. In a similar vein, although Beyer and Barton made use of Villaverde’s *Supersticiones* and a biographer of the Dominican recently made note of the work, describing it as “the first comprehensive book on Ifugao Mythology,” no one has sought to explain why Villaverde produced it or why Malumbres worked so single-mindedly to first locate and eventually publish it.¹⁸² Utilizing these texts, I will argue that the late Spanish engagement with oral traditions grew out of Retana’s effort to establish what I call a “recuperative archive” in the 1890s: an assemblage of historical materials that future scholars would utilize not simply to flesh out the history of the colony that generated them, but so that they might rediscover the progressive role Spain played in its development. In the context of a Spanish empire that had been greatly diminished by the Latin American revolutions of the 1820s and that seemed to be inching closer to a complete collapse by the time Retana reached adulthood, creating such an archive allowed for the perpetuation of imperium in at least some form—if the empire could not be salvaged at least its memory could. Added to this was the highly offensive fact that the preeminent scholars of the Philippines in his time were not his Spanish countrymen but Filipino nationalists.¹⁸³ His creation of this archive was therefore a defensive maneuver performed in the context of a tumultuous present, hence the term “recuperative.” When Malumbres brought together and published Villaverde’s

Supersticiones in the second decade of the twentieth century, at a time when a new colonial

¹⁸¹ Resil B. Mojares, *Isabelo’s Archive* (Mandaluyong: Anvil Pub., 2013); Megan C. Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2012), chap. 3; and Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2005), Prologue. Each of these builds on William Henry Scott, “Isabelo de los Reyes: Father of Philippine Folklore,” in his *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Pub., 1998[1982]), 245-265.

¹⁸² See Juan Fernandez Villaverde, “The Religious Beliefs of the Kiangan Ifugaos,” trans. John M. Caravan and H. Otley Beyer (Manila: s.n., 1912). H. Otley Beyer Ethnographic Collection vol. 12 no 3; and R.F. Barton, *The Religion of the Ifugaos* (Menasha, WI: American Anthropological Association, 1946), 11. Quote from Guillermo Tejón, *Juan Villaverde, O.P.: Missionary and Road Builder, 1841-1897: A History of the Dominican Missions in Ifugao* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 1982), back cover.

¹⁸³ Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados*.

power had demolished Spanish imperium in the Philippines once and for all, he was essentially following in Retana's footsteps, and making his own contribution to the recuperative archive. That these oral traditions appeared as components of larger works that were designed to be used for the reconstruction of a broader history necessarily made the traditions themselves difficult to access and interpret. In each case, the vocal narratives on which these texts were based were many steps removed from what appeared on the printed page.

It is important to underscore that even though a recorded epic was published in the course of creating this archive, accomplishing such was never a specific, premeditated goal. Instead, Retana's publication of a document like *Handiong* was more a result of his goal of bringing together primary materials on native customs in broad fashion. For his part he in fact seems not to have been centrally concerned with the intricate questions of what these texts were or how they were to be interpreted. His first published work, a long-forgotten ethnography titled *El Indio Batangueño* (The Batangueño Indio, 1888), briefly discusses oral traditions in some detail, as I will discuss below. But his treatment of the subject matter is too sparse to draw any grand conclusions about his understanding of folkloric materials. This was true for Malumbres as well, who went on to write many books on the history of Northern Luzon, devotional materials, grammar books, and a dictionary, none of which display any sustained interest in oral traditions as ethnographic or historical primary materials.¹⁸⁴ His desire to publish Villaverde's text was prompted by American colonialism's peculiar fascination with documenting folklore, particularly that of the region in which he and his Dominican colleagues undertook their missionary work. In light of the burgeoning

¹⁸⁴ Julián Malumbres, *Vocabulario en español ytaues yogad gaddan ybanag ysinay* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. del Col. de Sto. Tomás, 1927); idem, *Devocionario Ibanag* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. del Col. de Sto. Tomás, 1923); idem, *Historia de Nueva-Vizcaya y Provincia Montañosa* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. del Col. de Sto. Tomás, 1919); idem, *Historia de la Isabela* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. del Col. de Sto. Tomás, 1918); idem, *Historia de Cagayán* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. del Col. de Sto. Tomás, 1918); idem, *Vocabulario en castellano inglés é ifugao del Quiangan* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. del Col. de Sto. Tomás, 1911); and idem, *Historia de la Conquista de Cagayan por los Tagalos Revolucionarios* (Manila: s.n., 1908).

anthropological and folkloric literature the Americans produced, he did not want his nation or religious order to be seen (by present and future readers) as intellectually incurious.

Publishing Villaverde's *Supersticiones* allowed him to counter claims about the obscurantism that Spanish Catholicism had bred in the archipelago—despite the fact that the Villaverde's work was never published in his lifetime, in good part because there was no Spanish audience for it, religious or secular.

This chapter will consist of four sections. In the first, I will map out the broad historical context of the decline of the Spanish Empire, a conjuncture that powerfully shaped scholarship in the late colonial Philippines. With this background sketched out, I will next examine Retana's thinking, activities, and goals as he sought to build this recuperative archive, which were broadly similar and in ways even more urgent for Malumbres, who wrote during the afterlife of empire. Following this I will discuss the major works of this archive that dealt with oral traditions: Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga's *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas* and Jose Castaño's *Breve noticia* (both of which Retana published) and Villaverde's *Supersticiones* (which Malumbres published). I will show how the peculiar circumstances of their publication made for studies of oral traditions that were at the time generally difficult and perplexing to interpret. Lastly I will conclude by noting how all of this has made for texts that, for the most part, have been difficult to find meaning in today, which is why they are known only to a minority of even oral traditions scholars.

Empire at the Eleventh Hour

Beginning with Simón Bolívar's anti-colonial campaign in Venezuela in 1812, the colonies of Latin America began in a series of mostly lengthy and often bloody battles to liberate themselves from Spanish rule, with the result that by 1829, only Cuba and Puerto

Rico were all that remained of Spain's western hemispheric empire.¹⁸⁵ This "concatenation of political upheavals" resulted in the loss of the lion's share of colonial territory and made it seem as if the days of Spanish imperium were numbered.¹⁸⁶ But through a series of reforms that administratively and economically tied the remaining colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, the Marianas Islands, and a smattering of territories in West and North Africa more closely to the metropole, the empire enabled itself to subsist well into the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁷ This arrangement functioned with relative stability until the late 1860s, when nationalists in the colony that in economic terms was the greatest beneficiary of the new system, Cuba, began to agitate for their own independence. Through a series of liberation struggles, first the Ten Years War (1868-1878), then the so-called Little War (1879-1880), and then finally the last revolutionary war against Spain (1895-1898), Cubans fought for an independence they would actually never receive—because U.S. intervention stopped it in its tracks. Whatever the outcome of the final battles would have been, the colony's historical trajectory seemed clear by the latter decades of the nineteenth century: Cuba would be free of Spanish domination, eventually.¹⁸⁸

By comparison with Cuba, the Philippines was a less conspicuously violent colony, because nothing like the trilogy of wars that were fought in Cuba took place in the Philippines until 1896. Using the occasion of a failed separatist coup in 1872 to brutally enforce its rule, the regime garroted three priests for their alleged (and unfounded)

¹⁸⁵ For a lively survey of these revolutions, see John Charles Chasteen, *Americanos: Latin America's Struggle for Independence* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁶ Perry Anderson, "On the Concatenation in the Arab World," editorial, *New Left Review* 68, second series (Mar.-Apr. 2011): 5.

¹⁸⁷ Josep M. Fradera, "De la perifeira al centro. (Cuba, Puerto Rico, y Filipinas en la crisis del Imperio español), *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* tomo 61 no. 1 (2004): 160-199; and idem, *Colonias para después de un imperio* (Barcelona: Ediciones Bellaterra, 2005). See also Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), chap. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. is an excellent account of the late nineteenth century wars for national liberation. See also Balfour, *The End of Spanish Empire*, Prologue and chap. 1; and Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), chaps. 5-7.

involvement.¹⁸⁹ In so doing, it achieved over two decades of peace. But in the longer run, it at the same time sowed the seeds of its eventual demise because it radicalized a generation of nationalists, whose activism in the metropole, colony, and beyond formed the major source of anti-colonial political agitation during the 1880s and 1890s and led in direct and indirect ways to a Cuban-style war for independence in 1896.¹⁹⁰ Whether the Filipino Revolution against Spain that began in 1896 and continued 1898 after an armistice for two years would have succeeded is a matter of historical conjecture because of the intervention (again) of the United States, whose ability to militarily suppress the Filipino struggle for freedom was as overwhelming as their rationale for conquest was dubious.

Retana was both an observer and a participant in this history. This context not only shaped but in large measure propelled perhaps all of his scholarly work. Defending himself against the charge that his views were as extreme as for instance the fortnightly *La Política de España en Filipinas*, which, because “the Filipinos in their campaign for assimilation insisted much on the level of culture in the Philippines and on the ability of their people...carried on a systematic denigration of all things Filipino, emphasizing all that was unfavorable, and depreciating all accomplishments of the Filipinos,”¹⁹¹ he provided something of a clarification of his earlier thinking in *Aparato bibliográfico de la historia general de Filipinas* (Bibliographic Apparatus for the General History of the Philippines, 1906). As he did this, he also revealed the historical trajectory of the colony as he saw it. Retana described himself at that time as:

a well-defined personality, not that of a reactionary, which I never was, but instead that of a hot-headed Spaniard, and, therefore, that of persecutor of the *literatures*, as

¹⁸⁹ John S. Schumacher, “The Cavite Mutiny: Toward a Definitive History,” *Philippine Studies* vol. 59 no. 1 (2011): 55-81.

¹⁹⁰ John N. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880-1895: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, The Making of a Revolution*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1997).

¹⁹¹ John S. Schumacher, “Wenceslao E. Retana: An Historiographical Study,” *Philippine Studies* vol. 10 no. 4 (1962): 553; see also Gloria Cano, “Wenceslao Retana Visited: A New Historical Assessment,” in Isaac Donoso, ed., *More Hispanic than We Admit: Insights into Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Vibal Pub., 2008), esp. 277-287.

we might call them, of the Filipinos that campaigned for certain reforms, *whose implantation I believed would bring nearer the loss of the Colony for Spain.*¹⁹²

The pattern of “Creole Pioneers” propagating a national consciousness and thereby paving the way for an anti-colonial revolution was replicating itself in the Philippines.¹⁹³ For Retana, the rise of Rizal and his compatriots in the 1880s was the key indication that the Empire’s days in the archipelago were numbered. The renewal of conflict in Cuba in 1895, which directly and indirectly inspired similar actions in the Philippines soon after, was merely a further symptom of this larger trend.¹⁹⁴

If the loss of the colony was inevitable, then, the one thing that could be salvaged was its history. Securing the memory of Spain, by building what I call the “recuperative archive,” enabled Retana to stabilize a massive corpus of texts, including the works that would contain the major pieces of recorded oral traditions during the time of colonial eclipse.

Securing the Past

Doubtless the most talented and industrious Spanish scholar of the late colonial Philippines, Retana made lasting contributions as a historian, biographer, bibliographer, journalist, publisher of older histories, and polemicist especially, but also as a novelist, literary critic, anthropologist, and cultural scholar.¹⁹⁵ His work as editor of the newspapers *La Oceania Española* and *La Opinión*, and as a contributor to *La Española Oriental*, *El Porvenir de Visayas*, and *El Eco de Panay* under the pseudonym “Desengañaos” (“Disabuses You”), placed him at the forefront of the production of news in the colony.¹⁹⁶ A minor

¹⁹² W.E. Retana, *Aparato bibliográfico de la historia general de Filipinas deducido de la colección que posee en Barcelona la Compañía general de tabacos de dichas islas*, vol. 3 (Madrid: Imp. de la sucesora de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1906), 1630. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), chap. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Anderson, *Under Three Flags*, chap. 4.

¹⁹⁵ The notes contained in Schumacher, “Wenceslao E. Retana: An Historiographical Study,” offers the most complete bibliography of his works.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 551.

official who held a number of government posts under successive late colonial regimes, he cast his lot at different points in time with Spanish ultra-conservatives (1890-1895), more moderate voices (1895-1900s), Spanish socialists (1903-, the year he published the novel *La Tristeza Errante*), and Filipino critics of American rule (mid-1900s), until it seemed he had no axe to grind at all (1911-1924). Observers from his time through ours have offered explanations about why he experienced such dramatic shifts of opinion and affiliation, variously attributing it to his links to reactionary Catholic organizations, his position as a colonial official, his desire to sell books, his ideological malleability, or his inveterate perfidiousness. Because of the lack of documentation—he for instance never seems to have kept a diary nor have many of his letters survived—we will probably never have a satisfactory answer to the question. What is clear is that his career as a politically engaged scholar in the Philippines placed him at the forefront of the major political debates from the 1880s to the 1910s, both as a participant (most notably when he battled the Propagandists from 1890-1895) and concerned citizen observer.¹⁹⁷ Through this flurry of activity he not only became aware that copious amounts of historical and other texts penned by Spaniards about the archipelago existed, he made his name by immersing himself in them.

To understand why Retana published works that contained oral traditions we must first examine his thinking about both the craft of history and the function of archiving. Doing this however requires one to examine a body of writings that seems at points to be in conflict with one another, in large part because he wrote under American imperium after 1898. In probably the best illustration of this, he ridiculed Rizal and his fellow nationalists (particularly through his writings in the fortnightly *La Política de España en Filipinas*) in the

¹⁹⁷ For this biographical information, I have relied mainly on the essays by Schumacher and Cano cited above. In addition to those, see: "Retana y Gamboa (Wenceslao Emilio)," *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1923), L, 1378; Vicente Castañeda, "Noticias," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* LXXXIV (1924): 374; Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, *Quién es Retana: su antaño y hogaño: reseña bio-bibliobiográfica* (Manila: J. Fajardo, 1911); and Epifanio de los Santos Cristóbal, *Wenceslao A. Retana: Ensayo crítico acerca de este ilustre filipinista* (Madrid: Estab. Tip. de Fortanet, 1909).

early 1890s, only to have had a volte-face a decade later, when he wrote a sympathetic biography of the man: *Vida y escritos del Dr. José Rizal* (The Life and Writings of Dr. Jose Rizal, 1907); at first he detested Rizal, then, later he sought to memorialize him. If one looks beyond the incendiary things he penned in his polemical works, however, one can detect in Retana a consistent concern for adding to historical knowledge—in a particular way. In precise terms, he advocated for a representation of the past that (to his mind) judiciously and accurately depicted the salutary effects of the Spanish civilizing mission in the Philippines. We can see this for instance in this spirited defense of the role the religious orders played in the colony's history in 1891, written at the time when he, the racist Feced brothers, and others were attempting to counteract the negative portrayals of the friars created by Rizal and his fellow Ilustrados:

The Friars are, *precisely*, the most firm support for Spanish predominance in the Philippine Islands—according to what is attested by hundreds of prestigious writers, ancient and modern, some national, others foreign. The history of the monastic Orders in the Philippines is the history of our pacific domination of that vast archipelago; in politics no less than in the matters social and economic, these Orders are the bedrock [*piedra angular*] of any question named *Filipino*.¹⁹⁸

Years later, when the Americans had become the Filipinos' colonial oppressors, he advocated in 1907 for a similarly conscientious appreciation of Spain's historic role.

Just as Rizal lives on in the memory of the Filipino people, the yearning for a worthy and cultured nation [*patria*] survives in that country. Oh may this memory never dissipate from the Philippines! It will groan under the yoke of another foreign country. And for old Spain, it is preferable that she who was her child live in honorable emancipation, even if poorly so, remembering with affection the ancient bonds, like the support from a stepmother, about which, for their opulence, will always lack that mysteriousness and indefinable affect that is peculiar to genuine maternity.¹⁹⁹

From these passages conceived in quite dissimilar contexts and that treat completely different topics we can see that regardless of whether he was battling Rizal or eulogizing him, Retana

¹⁹⁸ W.E. Retana, *Frailes y clérigos*, rev. ed. (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1891), 9-10. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁹⁹ W.E. Retana, *Vida y escritos del Dr. José Rizal* (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suarez, 1907), 12.

advocated for the production and preservation of a memory of Spain that exhibited all of the positive change it had brought about in the Philippines. For him, this was the function of historical scholarship.

Retana's concern with memorializing Spain's legacy explains why he not only wrote individual monographs on the colony's history and culture, but also published for the first time older, forgotten books of history, created bibliographies, and wrote a number of technical treatises to aid in the reconstruction of the past. This, in a time of impending imperial collapse, was how he constructed the recuperative archive. Throughout his lengthy career he assembled a library of texts, consisting of compilations of primary documents (*Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*), secondary ones (Zúñiga's *Estadismo de las islas filipinas ó mis viajes por este país*, Francisco Combés's *Historia de Mindanao y Joló*), and bibliographies (*Bibliografía de Mindanao*, *Aparato bibliográfico de la historia general de Filipinas*, *Orígenes de la Imprenta Filipina*) that would provide verifiable proof of Spain's role not only in civilizing the Indios (through their conversion to Christianity, reduction to fixed residences, instruction in mechanical trades), but also—and this point is key—in studying, and through the fact of doing, appreciating Indio culture. The era of high imperialism in the late nineteenth century was after all a period in which all truly “civilized” imperialists devoted themselves heartily to the study of their subject populations.²⁰⁰ This is

²⁰⁰ The literature on the subject is vast. A number of representative works I have relied on include: Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2011); Luis Angel Sánchez Gómez, *Un imperio en la vitrina: El colonialismo español en el Pacífico y la exposición de Filipinas de 1887* (Madrid: CISC, 2003); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2002); Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996); Laurie J. Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984).

A few that deal with the Philippines specifically are: Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States & The Philippines* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2006); Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2001), chaps. 7-9; and Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), chaps. 1-3.

why besides simply publishing whatever primary documents or histories of significance he could get his hands on he especially sought after those with information on customs. In his introductory remarks about one of the sources printed in his *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino* (1895), the “Relacion de la entrada del Sultan Rey de Jolo” (Relation of the Entry of the Sultan King of Jolo, 1749), he reveals this particular interest. “The notices referring to the feasts they celebrated,” he writes, “are useful for the study of customs; they do not need me to recommend them, given that they recommend themselves, just as there exist in this Relation other details that will be seen with enjoyment the true lovers of Philippine history.”²⁰¹ To the extent he could dictate what texts he would include in his primary source anthologies like the five volume *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*—what ensures that one document survives and another does not in Spanish Philippine history is pure happenstance—he seems to have attempted to include documents on native culture whenever possible, things that “the true lovers of Philippine history” would appreciate.

We also have some, limited indication about how he himself made scholarly sense of oral traditions. In *El Indio Batangueño* (1888), a long forgotten and brief ethnographic work that seems to have been inspired by his residence in the province, Retana undertook his own foray into studying Indio vocal arts. In the book’s third chapter, “Songs, Dances, Music, and Poetry of the Batangueños,” he not only reviews a few of the vocal genres he encountered in the region, he even goes so far as to reproduce fragments of a few of them, such as the *comintang*, *cundiman*, and *cutan-cutan*, in what seems to be their original Batangueño Tagalog, with accompanying translations into Spanish. His purpose in writing about these cultural phenomena was threefold: most basically, he wanted to provide a general portrait of the folk traditions in the area; second, he sought to use said traditions as primary materials to fill gaps in broader historical knowledge, such as when he speculates that the *comintang*

²⁰¹ Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, vol. 1, xxvi.

originated in the province; and third, he used them to display contemporary Batangueño cultural habits, such as their tendency to imitate, imperfectly, Spanish singing.²⁰² This book tells us that Retana believed oral traditions had their definite scholarly uses for reconstructing Indio cultural history, which formed one part of the larger history of Spain and its colonies. Such explains why he endeavored to bring Zúñiga's *Estadismo* to public light and urged that Castaño draft the *Breve noticia*. However, the fact that he never again devoted himself to their study—*El Indio Batangueño* was the only piece of scholarship Retana authored where he himself examined oral traditions in any sustained way—suggests that while the venture of using folkloric documents was meaningful in its own way, its importance was secondary to that of more traditional documents that could be used for the writing of history.

Estadismo is a wide-ranging work that treats Spanish Philippine politics, history, economics and various manifestations of Indio culture up to the turn of the nineteenth century. Retana's characterization of the work in the book's Prologue indicates the many reasons why he valued it. He writes,

In effect, the pages of these *Viajes* do not make [for] a more or less picturesque description of a topography, but rather a considerable amount of information, observations and opinions which make the *Estadismo* a singular work in Philippine Studies [*la Biblioteca Filipina*]. The history of commerce is uselessly curious; the reflections about agriculture and its future are noteworthy, the moral portraits of the natives, mestizos, Chinese, and covetous Spaniards are most exact, and its denunciations of the vices of the Government and the excesses of its officials is excellent... Although the work might not be of inestimable value insofar as the usefulness of its contents is concerned, it would always have, as it does have, the attraction of being the first book of *Travels in the Philippines* that has been written since that of Monsieur Le Gentil [author of *Voyage Dans le Mers de L'Inde*, 2 vols., 1780-1781], who does not, nor could he, have the breadth of Fr. Zúñiga.²⁰³

Retana's assertion that "the moral portraits of the natives, mestizos, Chinese, and covetous Spaniards are most exact" offers the main indication that he valued Zúñiga's discussions of

²⁰² W.E. Retana, *El Indio Batangueño* (Manila: Tipo-Lito. De Chofre y Cia, 1888), chap. 3, esp. 20-21n1, 22, 24-26.

²⁰³ Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga, *Estadismo de las islas filipinas ó mis viajes por este país* vol. I, ed. W.E. Retana (Madrid: La Viuda de M. Minuesa de los Ríos, 1893), xxiv.

Indio culture. He however says nothing about Zúñiga's treatment of theatre, poetry, pasyons, or other oral traditions, which suggests that even if he valued them in some general way, he was not interested in these aspects of native culture specifically.

The wide-ranging, incisive, and thoughtful nature of the book alone seems not to have been what persuaded Retana to publish it. He approached *Estadismo* additionally because it memorialized the missionary's civilizing beneficence throughout centuries of Spanish rule in the Philippines. He writes, "Few are those like Father Zúñiga who personify the true sense of the word FRIAR." Their supreme gift to the Filipinos was that of the Christian faith, but that was only the first of many things they did. He continues,

They reduced them to settled towns; taught them how to build houses; gave them notions of agriculture, offered them seeds unknown in the Philippines, and they instructed them in arts and industries that the Indios never suspected existed; they founded schools; founded roads; promoted the introduction of the printing press; for the barbaric tribes, who were submerged in a greater level of abjection, they remade them into civilized societies, molding their individuals, to the degree possible, to be able to live in the manner we live, and elevating them to a level of culture that surprises every European traveler: they have meant, then, the friars in the Philippines, something of a means of expansion of the national spirit in that confine of the globe, because they have been assimilators; the most genuine personification of our race in that mass [*muchedumbre*] of islands, most of them Spaniards; a considerable ethnological agent, inasmuch as the civilization of those peoples has been a problem they have been the ones who have worked most at it.²⁰⁴

In the way Retana read it, *Estadismo* proffered not only a history of the many great things Spain brought to the colony for the benefit of Indios, but also an on-the-ground testimonial, from the pen of the quintessential agent of this mission—a friar. The fact that it contained lengthy discussions of Indio poetry, theatre, and other oral traditions contributed to the image of an intellectually engaged, ethnographically studious Spanish colonialism but the studied materials themselves were not central to the work.

Retana's appreciation of Castaño's comparatively minor work fell along similar lines. Based on what he writes in the Prologue to *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, it seems that he

²⁰⁴ Ibid., xxxv.

was the one who urged the missionary to draft the document in the first place. He explains the significance of the *Breve noticia*,

If every region of the Philippines had published a notice as curious as the one about the Bikol region that my respectable and highly learned friend Fr. José Castaño has written expressly for this volume, it would be beyond fortunate for our knowledge, [which is] so full of gaps because of the lack of monographs of note. In ancient times, there were many authors, but their works remained unpublished; in modern times, a certain lack of interest contributes to the fact that works do not deviate from this trend, for many recommendable reasons.²⁰⁵

Here again Retana laments the Spanish public's disinterest in the history of its own civilizing mission. The *Breve noticia*'s principal merit, as he saw it, was that it treated a region about which little had been written in earlier colonial times and almost nothing was being produced in the present. Whether it added to knowledge in any extraordinary way beyond that, revealed something truly novel about Philippine history, or whether there was anything it contained Retana found personally interesting—say a textualized epic—he does not say.

For the remainder of his short introduction to the *Breve noticia* he provides a very brief biographical sketch of Castaño and then writes the following cryptic words.

The work that comes to light today will not, God willing, be the final one that will endear me to this very erudite author. He wished that I impart the following to the profane, I graciously comply with his request: that in the indigenous words the *h* is always aspirated, and it sounds like the Andalusian *j*, quite soft.²⁰⁶

Of all the things discussed in his *Breve noticia*, why did Castaño think it so important for Retana to instruct his readers to correctly produce the Bikolano *h* sound? Although it is tempting to speculate that it has something to do with the *Handiong* epic, the one portion of the document we can be sure had its genesis in vocalized culture, there are no concrete

²⁰⁵ Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, vol. 1, xxxvii.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* About the author, he writes,

Fr. Castaño was born in Hiniesta, Zamora on December 28, 1854: he professed his vows on May 9, 1871, and arrived in Manila in June 22, 1875. After some time, because of his enviable attributes of virtue and wisdom, he was named rector of the Franciscan College in Almargo, after a long residency in the Philippines, where he performed the service of parochial curate in various regions of Bicol [*ibid.*].

indications that such is the case. It might be casual and rhetorical; or it might signify something grander. There is simply no way to know.

For Retana, Zúñiga and Castaño's texts usefully added to the heritage of Spanish historiography on the Philippines, which is why he published them. Doing so constituted part of his labor of constructing the recuperative archive. What his thoughts were regarding the oral traditions contained in the works themselves—Zúñiga's studies of Tagalog poetry and the *komedya* and Castaño's recording of *Handiong*—he never put to paper. In seeking to give permanence to Spanish ethnographic studies, he selected texts, presumably as least somewhat wittingly, that happened to contain the information on oral traditions that would in the following century be seized upon and heralded by post-independence scholars.²⁰⁷ Not many years later Malumbres preformed a similar, even more deliberate sort of action.

The Dominican Julian Malumbres (b. 1858) wrote in a world that the embattled Retana of the 1890s, who died in 1924, half anticipated. From his vantage point in the late nineteenth century Retana saw the signs of the end of the Spanish Empire in the Philippines. But one thing he did not foresee was that it would come at the hands of the expanding American Empire, which would take the place of Spain as the Philippines' colonial master. Another thing he did not anticipate was the explosion of anthropological and folkloric research that the new imperialists would bring about.

The first two decades of American colonialism produced what was probably the greatest burst of folkloric activity in Philippine history. In both the mountainous areas of the far north and far south, as well as to a lesser extent in the uplands of the central islands, the U.S. colonial government unleashed a small army of mostly semi-trained anthropologists and folklorists who, along with their native interlocutors, produced the studies that have become

²⁰⁷ For Zúñiga, see, e.g. Doreen Ferndandez, *Palabas: Essays on Philippine Theatre History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1996), 9; and on Castaño, see, e.g., Merito B Espinas, *Ibálong: The Bikol Folk Epic-Fragment* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas, 1996).

the earliest and in some cases canonical works in the corpus of modern Philippine folklore and anthropology. I will discuss this flurry of activity in greater detail in the following chapter. It is important to make note of here because it led one Spaniard who lived in the colony after the Spanish defeat, the Dominican Julian Malumbres, to want to defend his nation's imperial legacy by countering the U.S.'s exceptionalist claims about its own civilizing mission. He did this by bringing to light his departed friend and Dominican colleague Juan Villaverde's *Supersticiones de los Igorrotes* (1911), the most systematic work of Ifugao oral traditions to have been written up to that point. In the broader project of building the recuperative archive, doing so made him a successor to Retana.

Were it not for Malumbres, Villaverde's great work of Ifugao mythology would undoubtedly still be languishing in some archive. At some unspecified point after his colleague's death in 1897, Malumbres located, assembled, published, introduced, and annotated his *Supersticiones*. In an introductory section he drafted for the work ("By Way of a Prologue"), Malumbres explains its history, reproduces three letters between Villaverde and fellow Dominican José Hévia Campomanes about their comparative studies of Philippine languages, and he provides a brief biography of the author.²⁰⁸ He writes,

As the reader will see from the letters reproduced below, the Illustrious Sir Don Fr. José Hévia Campomanes, Dominican and Bishop of Nueva-Segovia, encouraged the celebrated missionary to the Ifugaos, Fr. Juan Fernández Villaverde, that he publish his final interesting works in *El Correo Sino-Annamita*; but as the aforementioned Father wished to complete and, shall we say, exhaust the material that he carried in hand about mythology, customs, traditions, stories and more about the Ifugao tribe, he did not put into action the advice of the illustrious Dominican prelate. He was surprised by his ultimate fatal illness, and with great forbearance, foreseeing his final departure, had sent to Manila and afterwards to Spain the final fruits of his productive pen. He died aboard the steamship *Covadonga* and [because] the religious who accompanied him found himself in Meridian America, he ignored the whereabouts of the documents alluded to.

²⁰⁸ Juan Villaverde, *Supersticiones de los Igorrotes Ifugaos*, ed. Julián Malumbres. In *El Correo Sino-Annamita* 38 (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas, 1911). This is the title supplied in *El Correo Sino-Anamita*. Malumbres states, "he called it simply 'Supersticiones de Igorrotes,'" which is the name given at the beginning of the text itself. I have also seen it referred to as *Supersticiones y cuentos de los Igorrotes*. For the sake of brevity, I will refer to it as *Supersticiones*.

Finally, after much searching, they were found; and in accordance with the wishes of the man who was the Bishop of Vigan, and given that the material is as applicable now as it was then regarding the Ifugao ways of life, it comes to light with the security that it will make a contribution for the Filipinologists on this and that side of the seas, because of the importance of the subject, and now because of Fr. Villaverde's authority, as he spent some twenty five years among the Ifugaos when he wrote said treatise, that he called simply, "Igorrot Superstitions" [*Supersticiones de Igorrotes*].²⁰⁹

This last sentence, where Malumbres writes, "the material is as applicable now as it was then regarding the Ifugao ways of life, it comes to light with the security that it will make a contribution for the Filipinologists on this and that side of the seas," is an act of sleight of hand because it suggests that there is something of a viable community of "Filipinologists" in Spain, despite that infinitesimally few Spaniards wrote about the former colony. It marks his acknowledgement of the particular time and new political universe he brought the work to light in, neither of which were present when Villaverde drafted the work. This entire lengthy sentence about the Dominican and his work is not merely hagiographic; it is apologetic. In a subtle way, Malumbres was attempting to portray Villaverde as a modern folklorist—which he in many ways was. His purpose in doing so was demonstrate that it was not only the Americans who studied the Philippine natives but also the Spanish. Indeed the Spanish did so long before the Americans even arrived and in a more thorough manner—after all, Villaverde was prevented from finishing his work because he wanted to "exhaust the material."

This is also why Malumbres included a few pieces of Villaverde's correspondence, only one of which has anything expressly to do with the oral traditions he recorded in *Supersticiones*. The three letters treat instead what are more properly matters of comparative linguistics. In episodic fashion, they narrated the conversation between Villaverde and Campomanes as they pondered the linkages between Philippine languages. Campomanes states the peremptory question in the first letter.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 283-284.

My dear friend: I need to ask a favor of you. I am gathering information on the languages of this Archipelago to chart the similarities [*ver la analogía*] that exist among them, and I would be grateful to you from my soul if you would provide for me something about the language that those Igorrots speak, also that of the Silipanes and Mayaoyaos; for instance about their system of counting, how they pronounce consonants, some nouns and a few phrases. I understand that in Bontoc they use many Tagalog words, and that they also pronounce things as [the Tagalogs do], so that [their speech] is not harsh-sounding. I do not believe that anything has been written about a language as variable as that of the Igorrots and of the Negritos, so something should be done.²¹⁰

The second letter contains Campomanes's exhortation to publish in *El Correo Sino-Annamita* Malumbres mentions ("Actually it is quite convenient to publish studies about Igorrot beliefs, customs, and languages, because in this way it fills the gap that exists about these things. [As] you have already done some work, you should publish it the *Correo Sino-Annamita*, even if it is little by little, so that it will serve to stir interest") and both it and the third dwell on various aspects of their linguistic concerns and discuss more banal matters.²¹¹ By providing concrete examples of the ink spilled by Villaverde, Campomanes, and the rest of the Dominican order on matters of comparative linguistics, oral traditions, and native culture as a whole, publishing these letters functioned to demonstrate the longer and presumably richer heritage of Spanish ethnography in the Philippines.

By publishing Villaverde's *Supersticiones* in 1911, Malumbres enabled himself and his countrymen to change the discussion on Philippine ethnology in a small way. This intervention showed that the omniscient Americans were no longer pioneering research in an unknown tropical frontier; they were instead following in the footsteps of their Spanish predecessors, who had tread that ground for far longer and studied it—if perhaps *Supersticiones* was just one study and many more were to come—more completely.

Obscured Utterances

²¹⁰ Ibid., 284-285.

²¹¹ Ibid., 285.

With the histories and functions of these texts sketched out, we can now turn to the sections in them that contain oral traditions: Zúñiga's studies of Tagalog poetry and theatre, Castaño's recording of *Handiong*, and Villaverde's recordings of Ifugao narratives. Seen together, these documents show the range of late Spanish studies of oral traditions. I will treat each one in turn.

Estadismo takes the form of a travelogue with periodic ruminations in which the author goes into greater detail and depth about something he encounters in the course of his journey through the colony. This is how Zúñiga begins his discussions of both the *komedya* and Tagalog poetry. The *komedya* (from the Spanish, "comedia") was a theatrical form first introduced into the colony in the late 16th century, and that had been thoroughly indigenized by Zúñiga's time, as he would amply describe.²¹² His description of this theatrical form is perhaps the most detailed firsthand Spanish account that exists. For the occasion of his visit to the town of Lipa, in Batangas province, the locals staged a performance for him and his companion. He provides a lengthy description of the flurry of activity that took place: how he and his companion were received, how the locals crafted the makeshift stage, what sorts of costumes they wore, what props they used. "Behind the innumerable townspeople," he writes, "could be seen a special type of stage that the Indios were putting together, so that they could perform a *loa* for the General [his companion]; there were also chairs they made for us."²¹³ "Loa" is a complicated term with a multivalent history; it describes various sorts of oral traditions at different (?) all throughout Spanish imperium.²¹⁴ Zúñiga's use of the term here however does little to clarify what it signifies in particular; in his sense it is virtually synonymous with a term like "story" [*cuento*], itself a category of categories. He then goes on to describe the beginning of the play itself. Although earlier he introduced the sort of

²¹² Ferndandez, *Palabas*, 5-6.

²¹³ Zúñiga, *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas*, 1:60.

²¹⁴ D. R. M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (New York: Oxford UP, 2010), 142-147.

theatre he was about to discuss as a komedya (*comedia*), he refers to the monologue-like components of it by the term *loa*.

The person chosen to say the loa is presented [to the audience] in the middle of the stage, decked out as a Spanish grandee. He is seated and reclining in a chair, acting as if he were asleep. Behind the curtains the choir sings a song in a lugubrious tone in the language of the country. The sleeping man awakes and begins to wonder if had had heard a voice or whether it was just a dream. He sits down and sleeps again, and the song in the lugubrious tone is repeated. He wakes up again, stands up, and reflects on the voice he has heard. This scene is repeated two or three more times, until he can be persuaded that the voice tells him that a hero has arrived and that it is necessary to perform a eulogy. Then he begins to say his loa with great enthusiasm, in the style of comedians at the coliseum, in the language of the country, to the delight of those for whom the fiesta was convened.²¹⁵

Zúñiga then goes on at length about the form, content, and style of the performance, which began with an homage to the guests of honor. “In this loa they celebrated the naval expeditions of the Admiral, the ranks and titles conferred on him by the King, and closed by giving him thanks and acknowledging what a privilege it was for him to pass by their town and visit them, unhappily poor as they were.” He discusses the form of the performance. “This loa was in verse, very rhetorically composed in a diffuse style, in conformity with the Asian taste.” He then goes into what made this komedya so “rhetorical” and “diffuse.” “In the delivery of this eulogy are allusions to the expeditions of Ulysses, the travels of Aristotle, the unfortunate death of Pliny, and other passages from historical antiquity they like. All these passages are usually spiced by fables which border on the marvelous and the unusual, because, the more references made to the extraordinary, the more they are appreciated and approved”—notice here he transitions to speaking about the komedya in generalized form—“Of Aristotle, for example, it is said that, being unable to understand the profundity of the sea, he impetuously threw himself into the water and drowned. The same is said of Pliny who hurled himself into the crater of Mt. Vesuvius in order to observe the flames inside. And in this manner they mix tales [*cuentos*] with history.” Zúñiga offers his own hypothesis about

²¹⁵ Zúñiga, *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas*, 1:60.

why the Spanish *comedia* evolved in this strange way in the colony. “I believe that these loas were made by the priests in ancient times.” He recognized that these “fables” contained things “that seem opposed to their [the priests’] way of thinking, as they never say things which are not found in books published in Europe.” Yet they persisted, he claimed, because “they have seemed to me to conform to tastes of little discernment [*poca crítica*] which reigned in previous centuries”—because, in other words, the Filipinos remade them according to their own tastes.²¹⁶ Zúñiga’s meditative, reporterly, and historically minded descriptions of the *komedya* are in fact quite comprehensive. Although he does not reproduce any script-based or improvised lines from the performances, he presents summaries from a number of recurrent story arcs. He speaks at a greater level of specificity about the *komedya* than he does about Indio poetry.

Upon terminating his discussion of the *komedya* Zúñiga immediately launches into one about Indio poetry. Basing his observations on his experience in the Tagalog regions, he broaches the subject by writing, “The poetry of the natives, among whom there are many poets, is a less difficult science in Tagalog than in other languages because of the ease of versification, which does not ask for rigorous consonants, but rather assonants in the final syllable, and meters are achieved by rendering a certain number of syllables, whether they be short or brief.”²¹⁷ In broad fashion he discusses how the language shaped what forms of poetry were possible, hypothesizes about what precolonial Tagalog poetry’s features were, how it evolved, how stanzas and syllables were arranged, and what forms of recitation were considered beautiful or ugly. His comments regarding Indio poetry’s origins are particularly important, not only for their intrinsic value, but also because Zúñiga’s conclusions on early Filipino history received wide acceptance in the nineteenth century not only by Spanish but

²¹⁶ Ibid., 60-61.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 61.

British and other international readers (via Maver's translation).²¹⁸ He theorizes how earlier prehispanic genres evolved into modern ones. He claims first, "Before the coming of the Spaniards, all the poems of the natives were lyric." Next, "Some of our authors believe that they also made use of dramatic poetry, which they based [in the belief] that in the *talindao* one person sang a stanza and another the refrain, and that in the *cundiman* one sang the first stanza and another the next." Yet he disagrees. "If these verses were eclogues like those of Virgil," he writes, "there would be no difficulty in conceding they were dramatic poems. But since all the songs are independent from one other and are composed by the native poets to be sung, aside from that they are danced, I do not see why they should be reduced to the category of lyric poems."²¹⁹ Lastly, he weighed in on whether that most exalted form of European literature, the epic, found any equivalent in the colony. To this question he writes,

They never knew the epic [*epopeya*], if we do not rank as epic poems [*poemas épicos*] some narrations similar to those of our blind [bards], which they composed to eulogize their heroes and that they sang while dancing the *comintang*.²²⁰

For Zúñiga it was a simple matter of definition. The Indios had lengthy hero-centered narratives, but that did not qualify them as epics in his mind.

These are all significant issues and questions about the study of Philippine oral traditions and its history. In *Estadismo* we can see that Zúñiga continued a Spanish conversation about oral literature in the colony that had ranged over the course of centuries. Building upon the insights of the early colonial writers, he sought to add to knowledge about Philippine native culture by synthesizing what was written previously, correcting earlier assumptions in the light of new findings, and broaching newer topics for a contemporary international audience. He attempted to be fairly comprehensive by treating the varieties of

²¹⁸ Ibid., xiii-xviii; Martínez de Zuñiga, *An Historical View of the Philippine Islands Exhibiting their Discovery, Population, Language, Government, Manners, Customs, Productions and Commerce*, trans. John Maver (London: T. Davison, Whitefriars, 1814), Introduction; Isacio Rodríguez, "Introduction" to Joaquín Martínez de Zuñiga, *Status of the Philippines in 1800*, trans. Vicente del Carmen (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1973), 10-25.

²¹⁹ Zúñiga, *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas*, 1:61.

²²⁰ Ibid., 63.

things we today would “folk arts,” including not only theatre and poetry (about which he goes into great detail), but also other Philippine oral traditions like the pasyon, ditties, and dance. As we can see from his discussion of the komediyas at least, he was particularly interested in holistically describing the ritual events during which these traditions were uttered. His observations, reading, and experience of that tradition furthermore supply some points of detail, for instance how Filipinos imagined Aristotle hurling himself into the sea or Pliny into a smoldering volcano. In his discussion of poetry he tells us about its general features, its history, and he weighs in on questions of classification. But in so doing he presents really nothing of the traditions themselves. Such is not surprising however because few until late in the nineteenth century would be interested in the utterances themselves, and even then only exceptionally.²²¹ The fact that he does not cite which of the early authors he consulted in this section (despite that he makes references to San Agustín, Le Gentil and others in earlier and later ones), or provide any real indications about where he gleaned his information on poetry is understandable given that he wrote before the era of modern scholarly apparatuses. But it renders any attempt to access the original poems he wrote about all that much more difficult, indeed even impossible. He synthesized Spanish written accounts, performances that were once live he kept in his memory, and the recent ones performed for the occasion of his visit through the countryside in equal measure. One effect of this was to create great distance between the once actual oral traditions and the writing about them that appears in the book. The late successor to the early Spanish colonial writers on Philippine culture, Zúñiga offers a great deal of general but mostly impressionistic information about oral traditions.

One would expect Castaño’s text, with its recording of *Handiong*, to offer more in the way of a concrete expression of a Philippine oral tradition, and compared to *Estadismo* it

²²¹ Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, Ilustrados*, chap. 3.

does. True to its name, the *Breve noticia* treats at some length Bikolano geography, its ancient history, culture, religion, and superstitions, throughout the course of which its author makes use of many oral narratives. It is best known today because it contains a lengthy narrative of the song scholars now call *Handiong* (after the name of its protagonist), or *Ibalon*, or *Ibalong*. Castaño himself supplied no title for the recording itself. Because it appeared as part of the *Breve noticia*, it has historically been attributed to Castaño, but recent scholarship has suggested the possibility that a certain Bernardino Melendreras recorded it, according to which scenario Castaño merely included the already recorded transcript in his document.²²² The document is worth consideration as perhaps the first recorded epic in Philippine history; the date of its production is uncertain. The recording is not a literal transcription of a song; it is instead a translation into Spanish of (what was at some indeterminable point) an original Bikolano oral recitation. The translation was not a complete one, however, as many of the original Bikolano terms, usually proper names or specialized terms, were left untranslated. The versified form in which it is printed makes it appear as if the text-based rendition mirrors the form of the original chant. However, the fact that the song was formatted into quatrains—a European literary convention—seriously calls this into question. There are, after all, precisely zero examples of such a neat, four-verse stanza structure in all other recorded Philippine epics.²²³ Editorial changes aside, many of the features of a lengthy Philippine oral narrative appear in Castaño’s document, most notably the voice of the chanter Kadungung, the use of second person narration, the inclusion of a

²²² Espinas, *Ibálong*, 59. Cf. Valentín Marín y Morales, *Ensayo de una síntesis de los trabajos realizados por las corporaciones religiosas españolas de Filipinas*, vol. 2 (Manila: Imp. de Santo Tomás, 1901), 569.

²²³ Cf., among the most representative examples, Ma. Delia Coronel, ed., comp., and trans., *Darangen: In Original Maranao Verse with English Translation*, 8 vols. (Marawi City: Folklore Division, University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1986-1995); Elena G. Maquiso, *Ulahingan: An Epic of the Southern Philippines*, 5 vols. (Dumaguete City: Siliman University, 1977-1994); E. Arsenio Manuel, *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding: The Second Song of the Manuvu’ Ethnoepic Twaang* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila UP, 1975); idem, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 1969); and idem, *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky: A Fragment of the Bagobo Tuwaang Epic Cycle* (Quezon City: UP Press, 1957); Francis Lambrecht, *The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bugan at Gondahan* (Baguio City: St. Louis University, 1967).

prefatory or invocatory song, among others. We can see many of these for instance in its opening stanza:

Cuenta, *Caduḡnung*, la historia
de los tiempos de *Handiong*
con esa lira de plata
dulce encanto del *Aslón*

Tell us, Kadungung, the story
about the times of *Handiong*
with that silver lyre
[The] sweet charm of *Aslóng*²²⁴

The formatting into quatrains aside, this is not terribly different in overall appearance from other recorded Philippine epics. Here we can see the name of a narrator, the name of the protagonist, the setting, and even an indigenous musical instrument—which, despite that it translated as “silver lyre” should not be taken to mean it was a European device.

But there are other passages where the recorder, or translator, or publisher, seems to have had a heavier hand, as we can see for instance in the second stanza of the main song:

Es el Bicol una tierra
llana, feraz, de aluvión
del mundo la más hermosa
la más rica en producción

Bikol is a land
flat, fertile, alluvial
in the world, the most beautiful
the richest in production²²⁵

This stanza seems as if it were intended for a Spanish or European audience rather than a Bikolano one. The very fact that it introduces Bikol as a region in the first place makes it suspect. A Bikolano chanter would have had no reason to describe the place where she and her audience lived their entire lives, much less describe its actual geographical features—particularly in the peculiar way that touted its capacity for agricultural exploitation. The whole stanza seems to correspond more to Spanish literary rather than Philippine oral conventions. More significantly, it seems as if it was conceived to inform a *Spanish* audience. Earlier in the *Breve noticia* Castaño himself describes the region as “the most beautiful [*hermosa*] in all of Luzon”—twice—its vegetation “varied” and “exuberant,” and its forests “virginal.”²²⁶ Certainly the last line, that Bikol was “the richest in production,” was

²²⁴ Castaño, *Breve noticia*, 49.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, 5, 7.

at the very least a liberal translation of something into early nineteenth century Spanish economic development parlance, if not (more likely) an outright fabrication. With no original to check the translation against, scholars are forever left to wonder what elements in this recording were the product of Spanish versus Bikolano imaginations.

It is difficult to know for certain what the Spaniards who produced the document thought of it. Neither Retana nor Castaño gives any indication that it was a great piece of literature, a foundational document of a culture, or anything along those lines—qualities contemporary Filipino scholars ascribe to the work. In fact, apart from including it in his *Breve noticia* as a sort of coda to his larger discussion of Bikolano culture, Castaño himself said surprisingly little about the song itself. Bringing his account on customs to a close, he writes, “[There are] many other superstitions they had, which I will not detain myself by referring to, because the ones I have noted so far suffice to be able to form an idea of how the ancient Bikolano Indios were.” Following this, he utters what are the only words any Spaniard ever uttered about *Handiong*.

As a supplement I will reproduce below a small fragment of a particular unpublished manuscript in verse that I keep as a souvenir of old Bicol, and in which, despite the poetic form in which it is written, offers a clear glimpse of certain customs of the Bicolanos in their antiquity.²²⁷

The terseness of his introduction to the work indicates how quaint a thing he thought the recorded recitation to be. He devotes no more than a single sentence to this work, and it is a short one at that, if one considers the prolixity of Spanish literary conventions. Again, Castaño himself does not even supply a title, in this passage or in the any other part of the *Breve noticia*. Instead he refers to the work simply, generically, as a type of poem. And indeed it was a “poem” if it was classifiable as anything, given that “manuscript in verse” and “the poetic form in which it is written” are the only things he writes about its form.

²²⁷ Ibid., 48-49.

Here Castaño states simply, yet with a certain fondness, that he holds onto the text because it is “a souvenir of old Bicol” (*un recuerdo del viejo Bicol*).²²⁸ It is included in his work because it could be used to illustrate “certain customs of the Bicolanos in their antiquity,” the very same sorts of customs his *Breve noticia* sought to bring to light. This was a meaningful act for him, but it was a small one when thought of against the backdrop of the larger world. In that larger world this transcription formed a sort of anthropological curio, a fragment of a cultural world then greatly changed and in the process of further transformation. His recognition of its ethnographic value explains his desire to publish it in part. Yet on a more personal level, it was also something that connected him to the people, culture, and history of Bikol, where he had spent twenty of his best years as a priest.²²⁹ In some sense, then, *this* was the true significance of *Handiong* in its time. To point this out is not to argue he found the work trifling or insignificant, of course; rather, it is to illuminate the significance of the work as Castaño himself viewed it. Yet this was as an evaluation of it that was different and less grandiose than what it is understood to be now. For readers familiar with the cultural esteem *Handiong* currently enjoys as one of the country’s first recorded epics, such brevity likely seems surprising.

Moreover, if one were to read the *Breve noticia* more completely, and not limit oneself to its recorded song component, one would see that Castaño supplied a number of perceptive observations about oral traditions in general. Many of these actually challenge contemporary scholarly thinking about epics like *Handiong*. The fact of their appearance in

²²⁸ In this vein, it is useful to recall that earlier in the work, he rhapsodizes about his knowledge of the his beloved “second homeland.”

Dweller for a long time in such a beautiful country, connoisseur of its various and convoluted languages, aware of its habits and customs, lover of all the good in it that exists, and enthusiastic admirer of its mysteries and beauties; what more that I look upon it with that singular affection that my second homeland deserves? And because I love and have much that is unforgettable about my region of Bicol, it is not because of longing for something that, [in] taking advantage of the moments of leisure that I was permitted in fulfillment of my sacred duty, has been sought out because of great interest. I returned to its historical lineage, studied its past, meditated on its present and penetrated its dark yet foreseeable future (Ibid., 7).

²²⁹ Retana, *Archivo del bibliofilo filipino*, xxxvi-xxxvii.

the document that contains one of the first recorded Philippine epics makes them particularly noteworthy. Castaño had ample opportunities to closely study oral traditions because chanters, storytellers, and poets were ubiquitous in his time. “Even today they lack nothing,” he writes, “these poets who when they toast are able to improvise with much grace and who have their audiences rapt with their amusing stories [*chistes*], laughing without interruption for hours, and even entire nights, a time that because of the agreeableness of the temperature is the one they most like for their functions.”²³⁰ The missionary even supplies the name of one who was particularly renowned during his time.

Among moderns [Bikolanos] I have observed one, recited by a blind man from Ligao, who was given the nickname ‘The Homer of Ibalón,’ and who was the same author that, I was assured, had dedicated a song to the terrible and frightening eruption of the Mayong Volcano, which occurred on Feb. 1, 1814, a poem [that was] worthy of being read for the sweetness of its expression and for the elevation of the Christian sentiments it effused.²³¹

The premier chanter in Castaño’s time was celebrated for creating an epic that was, one, novel, because it treated a recent rather than immemorially ancient event; and two, Christian—both qualities that post-independence day folklorists would have seen as disqualifying it from “true” epic status.²³² He casts serious doubt on contemporary assertions about the age of epics, such as Espinas’s that *Handiong* depicted events that occurred “About 4,500 years ago, the time of Noah’s flood, before Mayón Volcano existed.”²³³

Another point worth mention is that the *Handiong* was probably not the most significant oral tradition ancient Bikolanos chanted—if we presume there was some sort of hierarchical repertoire in the first place. Castaño describes in some detail a religious ritual performed on behalf of Gugurang, whom he characterizes as their principal god.

²³⁰ Castaño, *Breve relación*, 32.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

²³² Beyer claimed, “True epic poetry is today found chiefly among the Pagan groups and the Moros”—and Manuel agreed. H. Otley Beyer and Jaime C. de Veyra, *Philippine Saga: A Pictorial History of the Archipelago since Time Began* (Manila: Evening News, 1948), 111; quoted in Manuel, “Survey of Philippine Epics,” 10.

²³³ Espinas, *Ibálong*, 62.

The order they observed their celebration was as follows: they prepared for the event a table made of bamboo...they placed upon it innumerable viands of all types, and after the *bailana* recited some secret prayers, she intoned the *Soraque*, a religious song sung for the benefit of *Gugurang*, which continued to be sung by a chorus of women who were invited for the event. [Upon] finishing the song they shared among spectators the votive viands, and they were eaten in a friendly manner during the noisy feast, [after which] the feast concluded, or [sometimes it did] because of the drunkenness most degrading, or with fights, brawls and bloody wars between one and another tribe.²³⁴

If *Gugurang* was indeed their main god, and invoking her/his presence involved performing a song that had its own name, “*Soraque*,” as Castaño claims, then surely this was a more significant oral tradition than the chanting of *Handiong*, whose drama and heroics make it seem as if it was mainly a form of entertainment. There is no way to know of course. But this at least suggests that *Handiong* song was not as central to ancient Bikolano culture as contemporary scholars have claimed.²³⁵

Lastly and most pertinently, in discussing the problems he faced in attempting to reconstruct Bikolano history and culture Castaño noted, “Neither can oral tradition be an argument of great value in the investigation of these matters.”²³⁶ Whatever recitations like *Handiong*, the Homer of Ibalon’s chant, or the *Soraque* were—religious incantations, ritually-occasioned chants, entertaining songs, or something else—they were of little use for the historian and anthropologist, because they were so fantastical; they could not be taken literally. Such a statement goes against the spirit of epic collection, which is predicated on recording materials that can be used for the reconstruction of a lost history and culture. It is worth consideration however because it came from the pen of someone who clearly had a great deal of experience studying them in one of their historic contexts.

If we view it as part of the late colonial context in which it appeared and according to the words of the Spaniards who produced it, we see that *Handiong* is an interesting yet

²³⁴ Castaño, *Breve relación*, 31.

²³⁵ Espinas, *Ibálong*, 137-140.

²³⁶ Castaño, *Breve relación*, 9.

inescapably enigmatic recorded oral tradition. There is no doubt that it faithfully reproduces *some* elements of the original chant it seeks to represent. Determining which verses, words, concepts, and more, survived through transformation into print, however, as distinct from the recorder, editor, or publisher's alterations, is at most points impossible. Given that neither the draft of Castaño's text or the *Handiong* recording portion of it seem to have survived, we cannot even determine which parts of the *Breve noticia* Retana changed in the course of publishing it, however slight they might be. We do not even know which Spaniard—Castaño, Melendreras, or someone else—created the *Handiong* recording, so that, effectively, there is no "original" recording we may speak of. These are the reasons why any attempt to translate it "back" into Bikolano constitutes an exercise in sheer guesswork.²³⁷ Just as important, Castaño's own ruminations about the oral traditions he clearly studied very closely suggest that to seek to make literal sense of the places, people, and events depicted in *Handiong* is a fool's errand. Because it was preserved in translation, as an addendum to a treatise on Bikolano customs, and in a volume of primary sources, it never attracted any scholarly attention in its time, and was only rediscovered in the post-independence era, when collecting epics became a significant cultural act. Much of what I have said here about *Handiong*, then, could be said of Villaverde's *Supersticiones*, another cryptic work of late Spanish oral traditions recordings.

Even more than the *Breve noticia*, *Supersticiones de los Igorrotes Ifugaos* (1911) is a text created by two and perhaps even three or more authors. The central subject of the book is a series of oral traditions Villaverde recorded during the course of his missionary work in Kiangan in Northern Luzon (which in nineteenth century Spanish was spelled "Quiangan"). Many of these seem to have been recited by the chanter he identifies as the "Lycurgus Duminong"—in reference to Lycurgus of Athens (b. 396 BCE), the celebrated orator, not to

²³⁷ E.g., Espinas, *Ibálong*, chap. 2.

be confused with the similarly named founder of Sparta—but it is safe to assume he was not Villaverde’s sole informant.²³⁸ In the context of the American ethnological revolution, Malumbres resurrected the Villaverde’s unpublished manuscript, which involved literally searching across an ocean, and published it in one of the volumes of *El Correo Sino-Annamita*, the annual publication of the Dominicans and their correspondence. From the lips of Ifugaos in Kiangan to Villaverde’s pen, to Manila, to the New World along with his other possessions, then back to Manila where Malumbres took possession and published it, this is how *Supersticiones* came into being.

In its semi-finished state, *Superticiones* could be said to be composed of units I will call “chapters,” although they are not labeled as such. These chapters can be grouped into three sections. The first treats Ifugao mythology in an introductory manner: it recounts the principal deities, their activities in the human world, and the origins of their names (Chapters 1-3). The second is the collection of oral narratives itself. This forms the main body of the work and as a result it comprises the largest number of pages by a wide margin (Chapters 3-19). The third section consists contains a number of miscellanea: it begins with what Malumbres titles “Observation” (chapter 20), where he notes that Villaverde’s manuscript on superstitions ended there with the words, “To be continued if God wishes,” and that for the remainder of the book he would append a number of “other stories and curious descriptions that the veteran missionary left for posterity among other unedited papers that were separate from those that composed the previous treatise.”²³⁹ These sundry documents include a brief piece on religious rituals; a very rough and unfinished attempt at creating a typology of oral narratives, organized by deity’s name; an index of “Mythological Beings,” organized alphabetically by name; and a foldout genealogical tree of the Ifugao pantheon (Chapters 21-

²³⁸ William Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1872), 858; cf. 850-858.

²³⁹ Juan Villaverde, *Supersticiones de los Igorrotes Ifugaos*, ed. Julián Malumbres, in *El Correo Sino-Annamita* 38 (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas, 1911), 441, 442.

24). All of the documents in this last section seem as if they were works in progress. In the unnumbered order in which they appear, to which I have added a numerical ordering, these chapters are organized under the following titles:

1. Various Ifugao otherworldly beings and their activities;
2. Their interactions with the human world;
3. Etymologies of deities' names;
4. The story of "Ubing and Donnia";
5. The story of the "Two Vhigánes";
6. "A Storiette about the Sun";
7. "A Story about a Thief Ô Caco";
8. A "Story about a Famous Murderer";
9. "Story about the Souls that go to Cadungayan because of a Natural Death";
10. A "Tale [*relato*] about the Souls that Die a Violent Death";
11. Another about "Those who Die a Natural Death";
12. A "Curious Case about the Previous One"
13. A story about "Brothers who Turned into a Bird and a Deer";
14. A story about the "Transformation of a Hair Bun";
15. A story about "Soothsayers, Male and Female, and how They Foretell";
16. "A Curious Case that Confirms What Was Said";
17. The "Provenance of White Rice from Quiáangan";
18. A "Story about he Origin of Dry Rice in Quiangan";
19. A "Story about How the Sky and the Earth became Linked";
20. An "Observation," written by Malumbres;
21. A section "On Customs and Aniterías";
22. "Traditional Stories from the Quiáangan Igorrots";
23. An "Alphabetical List of Divine and Mythological Beings' Names";
24. A foldout genealogical tree of the Ifugao pantheon.²⁴⁰

As we can see, this is quite an assemblage of Ifugao stories. In Spanish Philippine history, *Supersticiones* forms the first serious attempt to record Indio oral traditions as a discrete set of cultural materials, as opposed to discussing or summarizing them in the process of treating customs or rituals. If Villaverde's goal was to create ethnographic snapshots of the peoples he preached to, so that others might study and appreciate them, then it can be said that he succeeded in some measure. If there was any contemporary Spanish work that could rival de los Reyes's pioneering masterwork of recording of oral traditions, *El Folk-lore Filipino*, this, had it been completed, seems as if it could have been it.

²⁴⁰ These begin, respectively, in *ibid.*, 295, 327, 330, 342, 360, 361, 374, 375, 378, 383, 384, 387, 390, 394, 395, 398, 405, 415, 420, 441, 442, 445, 452, and on the final page as a foldout.

The fact that he never had occasion to finish the work however creates certain limitations for its use. The main problem is that even in their final, published form, the stories mostly take the form of printed notes. In essentially every chapter the oral traditions must share the stage with Villaverde's more general observations, explanations of customs (sometimes even those not directly related to recitation), descriptions of the chanter's process, and analysis of the stories, all in haphazard fashion, such that no two are formatted in the same way. Neither are the stories retold in a uniform fashion. Villaverde sometimes narrates them himself, sometimes writes about Duminong doing so, and in a few he includes lines of dialogue from the characters depicted, so that they supply the narrative. This fact makes it impossible to determine among other things whether the original chants were ritually performed and were recited in prose or in verse. Really all one can say about them with certainty was that they were chanted on one or more occasion, Villaverde heard them, and he then wrote about them. It would be impossible to establish definitive dates, features of performance, and occasions for chanting based upon what is supplied by the text. Thus although according to Malumbres Villaverde had wanted to collect and display more oral traditions before publishing it, what the manuscript needed most was basic revision and editing.

In addition to procuring, assembling, publishing, and introducing the work, Malumbres did one more thing that to an extent functioned to complete the work: he added notes to the stories. He mentions this fact but says little else about it. "The notes that appear in the work," he explains, "are [written] by the undersigned, even as they indicate otherwise."²⁴¹ These notes accomplish a number of things: they provide explanations of Ifugao terms, concepts, and culture, translations of Ifugao and Gaddang text, they form a running commentary on what he views as the proto-Christian qualities of Ifugao myths and

²⁴¹ Ibid., 288.

customs, and they provide supplementary information on the activities of Villaverde and other Dominicans referenced directly or indirectly in the recounting of the myths.²⁴² They thus help the reader to understand the text in an elementary way. The notes add to the text without modifying, reshaping, or otherwise changing it, punctuating but largely leaving intact Villaverde's narrative. More importantly, they provide us with an idea of how Malumbres made sense of the superstitions Villaverde sought to record, analyses that Villaverde no doubt agreed with in whole or large part.

By and large, Malumbres "read" these tales referentially. He attempted to make linkages between events, places, and people depicted in the stories with similar things in history, such as when he noted that a woman whose name came up in one of the text's many genealogies was actually an individual who was baptized by the Order and given a new, Christian name—which if true, incidentally, would serve as further corroboration, after Castaño, of the novelty of oral traditions.²⁴³ The best indication of this analytical tendency was his interpretation of the stories as misapprehended forms of the Christian gospel, which formed a motif throughout his annotations. This was a feature that Spanish missionaries saw in Philippine beliefs since their earliest days, as I discussed in Chapter One. He stated exactly this early in the text:

The truth is that these storiettes unwittingly [*sin querer á la mente*] bring about episodes we tell in the Old Testament, about the Flood, the Days of Genesis, and in this last one about the daughters of Lot and their father who believed themselves to be alone in the world. One will still find other analogies in the course of the relation [*relato*].²⁴⁴

One wonders how "unwitting" this process really was. That Villaverde's recordings bring to mind Biblical allegories raises the question of the extent to which his perception of the

²⁴² These appear, respectively, in *ibid.*, 310n1, 315n1, 319n1, 322n1, 325n1, 329n1, 330n1, 333n1, 342n1, 343n1, 349n1, 350n1, 352n1, 354n1, 366n1, 367n1, 369n1, 405n1, 406n1, 410n1, 413n1, 426n1, 440n1, 449n1, 449n2, and 449n3.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 329n1.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 322n1.

original narratives shaped his translation of them, a process we can only ever conjecture about. Whatever the case, this clues us into how, according to Malumbres, one might make use of these narratives. One can extract from them larger themes, motifs, and items of information that one could conceive of comparatively, whether with other Philippine peoples (recall the epistolary Campomanes and Villaverde's discussion regarding the linkages between languages in the colony), or non-Philippine peoples in mind. Malumbres's Christian theology did not offer the sole prism for analyzing them. One could for instance just as easily apply the Aarne-Thompson classificatory system, as Dean S. Fansler was doing at that very time.²⁴⁵ Despite their unfinished state, then, these narratives can function as a sort of ethnographic archive of Ifugao culture in Kiangan in the late nineteenth century, although one that is exceedingly difficult to interpret.

As a published text in the archive of Spanish writings about Philippine oral traditions, *Supersticiones* has its uses, but they are offset in good measure by its inherent inaccessibility. If we approach it as a primary historical source, we might be rewarded, but we just as likely might be bewildered. If, on the other hand, we conceive of it not only as a scholarly material but also as a symbol of the Spanish heritage of studying its colonial subjects—as a text that was published to be exhibited rather than perused—then we can recognize the exclamatory statement Malumbres sought to make by publishing it. It offers undeniable proof that the Spaniards thoughtfully engaged with the Indios and their oral traditions long before the Americans dreamed of conquering the archipelago.

Unreadable Texts for an Unconcerned Audience

²⁴⁵ See Dean S. Fansler, "Philippine Folk Literature: A Synoptic Study of an Unpublished Manuscript Collection of Folktales," *Philippine Magazine* vol. 34 no. 5 (May 1937): 208-209, 226-228; and idem, review of Mabel Cook Cole, *Philippine Folk Tales*, in *Journal of American Folklore* vol. 30 (1917): 280-281.

Seen as an ensemble, these late Spanish texts show us a range of approaches to the study of Philippine oral traditions that is remarkable in many ways, not least of which is in their anticipation of the research methods and products that would be appear later in the archipelago with the rise of formalized modern disciplines. This was how, after all, a group of supposedly intellectually backwards (?) Spanish priests ended up recording an epic, *Handiong*, and collecting a set of what we might liberally call folktales, *Supersticiones*. Yet the peculiar circumstances under which these texts appeared, as constituent works of the recuperative archive that were designed to be studied for the reconstruction of *Spanish* history in the Philippines, virtually assured that questions about the meaning and function of their Indio oral traditions components would be peripheral, and that they would confound interpretation.

Tellingly, none of the Spaniards involved with the production of these texts advanced any substantive explanations of what the oral traditions contained therein signified. The central architect of the recuperative archive, Retana, said nothing about them. Zúñiga clearly believed they were important to study, discuss, and write about in broad fashion, but he did not explain why doing so mattered. For Castaño, *Handiong* was a memento of the place and people he grew to admire, and seemingly nothing more. Villaverde clearly conceived of it to be meaningful to collect and study Ifugao oral traditions. Despite this, he never saw fit to publish a single recorded story in his life, let alone the larger work we now call *Supersticiones*, nor did he himself append any explanation of his rationale to his unfinished compilation. Nothing in Malumbres's own historical, linguistic, and devotional work indicates a serious interest in the collection and analysis of folklore. Were it not for the explosion of anthropological and folkloric research undertaken by the usurper Americans, one wonders if he would have labored so arduously to resurrect Villaverde's opus.

This greatly complicates the matter of interpreting them as primary historical or anthropological texts. Neither the producers of these writings or recordings of oral traditions or their compilers themselves sought to use them to make any larger points about Indio culture. And in fact Retana and Malmubres were in the ideal position to do so: both of them understood their respective oral traditions texts better than anyone, both were devoted in their own ways to advancing Spanish scholarship on the Philippines, and both were copious, interdisciplinary writers. Yet neither they nor anyone else during the time in which these texts were produced made any scholarly use of them.

Even later on into the twentieth century, when with the benefit of modern disciplines scholars began to make use of these texts, they did so with a great deal of uncertainty. *Estadismo* uniquely among these texts has been put to good use by contemporary scholars for his study of the komedya at least, though not so much of poetry.²⁴⁶ The *Handiong* portion of Castaño's *Breve noticia* has been fairly thoroughly analyzed, translated, and read in classrooms for the last few decades—though not the rest of the document. But many of the assumptions that have guided *Handiong* scholars' encounter with the text (e.g. about its age, ability to communicate Bikolano culture, depiction of actual history, etc.), have been misguided, as I have tried to show above. Villaverde's *Supersticiones* has defied scholarly interpretation from the moment of its publication. The early American anthropologist of the Ifugaos, R.F. Barton, in trying to grapple with Ifugao conceptions of what he termed their "Skyworld" in 1946 for instance wrote, "nor can I make much more out of what Villaverde wrote on the subject in the early nineties."²⁴⁷ The Belgian missionary and anthropologist Francis Lambrecht never saw fit to even mention Villaverde in his *Hudhud* magnum opus.²⁴⁸ Even E. Arsenio Manuel, the doyen of Philippine epic studies, who because of *Supersticiones*

²⁴⁶ E.g., Ferndandez, *Palabas*, 9; and Nicanor Tiongson, *Kasaysayan ng komedya sa Pilipinas, 1766-1982* (Manila: De La Salle Univ. Press, 1982), 17, 19-21, 23-26, 36.

²⁴⁷ Barton, *The Religion of the Ifugaos*, 11.

²⁴⁸ Lambrecht, *The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gondahan*.

went so far as to dedicate the book reissue of his second textualized epic, *Agyu*, to “Fr. Juan Villaverde, O.P. Pioneer Dominican Missionary among the Ifugaw people who deserves a more enduring monument than what this slender volume could stand for,” never used the missionary’s work to make any larger point about the history, theory, or practice of collecting Philippine oral traditions.²⁴⁹ In short, even for what we might describe as the “target audience” for these studies from the early twentieth century to the present day, these were heuristically defiant oral traditions studies—to say nothing about their wider appeal outside of the always historically small community of Philippine book producers and consumers.²⁵⁰

These late Spanish oral traditions studies remain in our time what they were when late Spanish colonials created them: unreadable texts for a disinterested audience. The very fact that Retana had to work so assiduously to create what I have called a recuperative archive of the Spanish Philippines in a sense indicates the general disinterest even metropolitans had in the Asian colony and, even more, its subject people. For the few exceptional individuals who had lengthy experience in the archipelago like Retana, Zúñiga, Castaño, Villaverde, and Malumbres, the ubiquitous vocal traditions they encountered in myriad forms piqued their interest. Yet when they attempted to give material substance to that interest through the medium of a travelogue, report, mythological book, or other, they found great difficulty in translating their fascination for a wider audience.

²⁴⁹ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 1969), iii.

²⁵⁰ Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century: A History of the Book in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 70; see esp. chaps. 1, 2.

CHAPTER FOUR:
PARTING THE CHORUS:

AMERICAN COLONIALISM AND THE ORIGINS OF COLLECTING EPICS

In “Metrical Romances in the Philippines,” an essay published in *The Journal of American Folklore* in 1916, the most talented folklorist of the American colonial era, Dean S. Fansler, described the features of the highly popular oral tradition Filipinos called *corrido*. “Among all the Filipinos,” he wrote, “the word *corrido* means an extended narrative of the life and adventures.” Every published edition he saw has on its “title-page Buhay nang, etc. (“Life of,” etc.) or Salita at Buhay, etc. (“Story and Life,” etc.).” They “vary in length from a few hundred to several thousand lines.” He was persuaded that, “many of the metrical romances must have been circulated orally or in manuscript long before they were put into print.” About their age, he hypothesizes, “we are probably safe in concluding the *corridos* have been popular for three or more centuries among the Filipinos.” “These stories,” he continues,

not only make up the body of most of the entertaining reading of the lower and middle classes, but they also furnish passages for quotation and recitation on every conceivable occasion. The lives of such heroes as Jaime del Prado and Bernardo del Carpio are sung by the small boy driving the cattle to pasture, by the peasant working in his paddy-field, or by the itinerant beggar travelling from one town fiesta to the next. Even in social gatherings the apt introduction into the conversation of moralizing or didactic lines from some well-known *corrido* is received with approbation. In the duplo, or wit-combat often indulged in at funeral feasts, the winner is always the person who has at his tongue's end quotations from the ‘Pasion’ and the *corridos*, that are most appropriate for carrying on the argument proposed. Besides, these stories are often done into dramatic form; and no town's celebration of its patron saint is thought complete without a *comedia*, or *moro-moro* play.²⁵¹

These *corridos* were, in other words, the quintessential oral tradition of the Filipinos. Could one not say then that these were the “epics” of the Filipino people? Yet from the time Fansler studied them, the *corridos*, *comedias*, *pasyons*, *awits*, and other sorts of “metrical romances,” as they came to be grouped, never received recognition as the national epics. Instead, a fairly different type of oral tradition, one that the people who self-consciously conceived of

²⁵¹ Dean S. Fansler, “Metrical Romances in the Philippines,” *The Journal of American Folklore* vol. 29 no. 112 (Apr.-Jun. 1916): 204-205.

themselves as Filipinos had little idea about, came to receive that exalted appellation, a trend that persists today.

The advent of American colonialism in the Philippines (1898-1946) marked a sea change in the study of oral traditions. During the Spanish era, studies of “Indio” vocal arts were diverse, varied widely in terms of quality, appeared irregularly throughout the course of over three centuries, usually as part of larger studies of customs rather than forming a subject matter in and of themselves, often went unpublished, and possessed a significance and function that was often unclear, as we saw in the previous chapters. This would change under American rule, when the government supported studies of ethnography, which included studies of oral traditions, first directly through institutions like the Bureau of Science, and later indirectly through supporting research at state universities. Studies became on the whole more systematic and folkloric work began to be undertaken on a more regular basis. Oral narratives began to be investigated as scholarly objects in their own right. This was something that the nationalist Isabelo de los Reyes pioneered in the late 1880s, of course, but his efforts never became institutionalized; furthermore his brand of scholarship largely abated after the mid-1890s.²⁵² Scholarship tended to be published more regularly rather than privately held and circulated (although there were exceptions to this, as we will see with the case of Beyer). And oral traditions began to have a more definite significance, although the interpretation of such still varied from scholar to scholar. These changes can be seen as result of three related historical factors: the populations that were subjected to anthropological study, the rise of new institutional apparatuses that supported folklore, and the rise of increasingly professionalized scholarly disciplines.

Mostly ignorant about the culture and history of the archipelago when they invaded, the United States quickly set out to study what it conquered. In a basic sense, this meant

²⁵² William Henry Scott, “Isabelo de los Reyes: Father of Philippine Folklore,” in idem, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain: And Other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day, 1982), 263-265.

familiarizing itself with the Philippines in general, towards which end the colonizers produced an enormous literature on the geography, political, and social history of the Spanish regime it had supplanted.²⁵³ Additionally, because the U.S. grounded its rule on its ability to “benevolently” guide the most “primitive” peoples in the colony towards civilization, it focused almost exclusive effort on the supposedly most backward among them—upland peoples in Luzon and Mindanao.²⁵⁴ As Michael Salman explains,

the non-Christian tribes took on special meaning as the inferior other of Filipino nationalists and special wards of the colonial state. Their position in the colonial hierarchy enabled American authorities to recognize Filipino self-government in the assembly and other institutions while grounding the need for further colonialism in the unquestionably uncivilized condition of the non-Christian tribes.²⁵⁵

Towards this end the U.S. unleashed a veritable army of anthropologists to study these upland peoples²⁵⁶—but never the lowland Christian majority—to showcase their savagery and thereby legitimate its rule. During the first two decades of the twentieth century particularly, there was a profusion of anthropological scholarship about such groups.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ The major works are listed in Michael Paul Onorato, *Philippine Bibliography, 1899-1946* (S.i.: American Bibliographical Center, 1969).

²⁵⁴ A good general history of American colonizing ideology, though not as it pertained to the “Non-Christian Tribes” specifically, is Stuart Creighton Miller, *“Benevolent Assimilation”: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1982).

²⁵⁵ Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2003), 144.

²⁵⁶ Although his argument centered on mainland Southeast Asia, much of what Scott characterizes about the peoples of *Zomia* is also true of upland peoples in the Philippines. See James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009).

²⁵⁷ Representative works include: David P. Barrows, *The Negrito and Allied Types* (Lancaster, PA: New Era Printing Co., 1910); R.F. Barton, “Ifugao Economics,” *University of California Publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, vol. 15 no. 5 (Apr. 1922): 385-446; idem, “Ifugao Law,” *University of California Publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, vol. 15 no. 1 (Apr. 1919): 1-186; Laura Watson Benedict, *A Study of Bagobo Ceremonial, Magic and Myth* (New York: Academy of Sciences, 1916); H. Otley Beyer, *Origin Myths among the Mountain Peoples of the Philippines* (Manila: s.n., 1913); Bureau of Insular Affairs, *Official Handbook of the Philippines and Catalogue of the Philippine Exhibit* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1903); Emerson Brewer Christie, *The Subanuns of Sindangan Bay* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1909); Fay-Cooper Cole, *The Tinguian: Social, Religious, and Economic Life of a Philippine Tribe* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1922); idem, *A Study of Tinguian Folk-Lore* (Chicago: s.n. 1915); idem, *Traditions of the Tinguian: A Study in Philippine Folk-Lore* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1915); idem, *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1913); Mabel Cook Cole, *Philippine Folk Tales* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1916); Fletcher Gardner, *Philippine Folklore* (San Antonio: Palm Tree Press, 1941); idem, *Indic Writings of the Mindoro-Palawan Axis* (San Antonio: Witte Memorial Museum, 1939-1940); idem, “Mindoro Folk Tales Translated from the Oral Tagalog,” *Journal of American Folk Lore* vol. 19 no. 75 (Oct.-Dec. 1906): 265-310; John Garvan, *The Manóbos of Mindanao* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1931); Albert Ernest Jenks, *The Bontoc Igorot* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1905); C.R. Moss, “Kankanay Ceremonies,” *University of California Publication in American*

Among the many sorts of information this sizeable body of literature generated was on oral traditions, on a scale without precedent in the Philippines' written history, hence folklorist Mellie Leandicho Lopez's assertion, "To look into folklore research in the Philippines during the American regime is to wade through volumes of ethnographic works in which are embedded folklore materials."²⁵⁸ The study of the oral traditions of these particular groupsthus grew out of the imperative to articulate an ideological rationale for continued colonial rule.

These studies would have ended up as historical footnotes, known to historians of American colonialism as a series of ethnological curios, however, were it not for the educational infrastructure the Americans the built, which in its turn enshrined them as components of Filipino culture and history. It was through the primary and secondary schools, particularly after independence in 1946 even though they were built during this time, that generations of Filipinos began to learn that peoples like the Ifugaos, Manuvu' and others were their kin, and that their oral traditions were genuinely Filipino ones, although this process took some time.²⁵⁹ It was not uncommon for peoples from the urban centers to have

Archaeology and Ethnology vol. 15 no. 4 (Oct. 1920): 343-384; idem, "Nabaloi Law and Ritual," *University of California Publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology* vol. 14 no. 3 (Oct. 1920): 207-342; C.R. Moss and A.L. Kroeber, "Nabaloi Songs," *University of California Publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology* vol. 15 no. 2, (May 1919): 187-206; William Allan Reed, *Negritos of Zambales* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1904); Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1908); idem, *Studies in Moro History, Law, and Religion* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1905); Otto Scheerer, *The Batan Dialect as a Member of the Philippine Group of Languages* and Carlos Everett Conant, "F" and "V" in *Philippine Languages*, 2 vols. bound together (Manila: Bureau of Science, 1908); Otto Scheerer, *The Nabaloi Dialect* and Edward Y. Miller, *The Bataks of Palawan*, 2 vol. bound together (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1905).

²⁵⁸ Mellie Leandicho Lopez, *A Handbook of Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2006), 8.

²⁵⁹ E. Arsenio Manuel writes,

Filipino participation [in folklore] was quite early shown by Isabelo de los Reyes's and Jose Rizal's writings. This has been insignificant, comparatively speaking, however, because of the lack of continuity until recent times. After independence, there has come about a change of attitude and understanding towards native culture. Whereas in pre-war years the study of backward peoples was frowned upon because of its implication on the Filipino's capacity for independence, national freedom has aroused an interest in local traditions and Filipino heritage. Much more should be attributed, perhaps, to the rise of higher institutions of learning in the country which confer higher degrees. As a prerequisite, theses and dissertations are required of students who take subjects of local if not national meaning. So folklore has had a good share of the subject matter of these graduation requirements... This development is gaining in seriousness and is brining about a windfall in folkloristic studies (*A*

had cultural connections with those in the remoter rural areas before this time—de los Reyes would for instance not have been able to produce the first modern ethnography of the Tinguian, *El Tinguian*, in 1888 nor write *El Folk-lore Filipino* in 1889 had it not known something of the language and lifeways of his upland informants—and therefore for some sort of cultural affinity to exist between them.²⁶⁰ What changed with American education was that Filipinos learned that the upland groups from all throughout the Philippine geo-body were their counterparts—not just the particular ones they may have had close geographical proximity to.²⁶¹ The flagship institution that articulated and worked to disseminate such notions was the University of the Philippines (hereafter “UP”), founded in 1907 and located in the capitol, from which place the pioneers of epic scholarship variously taught as professors, became educated as students, and promoted future study, whether Beyer and Fansler during the American era—or E. Arsenio Manuel, F. Landa Jocano, and Juan Francisco after.

The UP was in many ways the “center of authority” for folkloric knowledge in the Philippines during this time; and as such, it is hard to imagine Beyer and Fansler’s careers without it.²⁶² The benefits they derived from their teaching posts at the university were both practical and more abstract. As with any place of learning, it provided them with institutions such as libraries, academic symposia, classrooms, and more, as well as the culture those things fostered. It provided them with a continually renewing stream of students from mostly well-to-do families from all over the archipelago, which allowed them to both gain exposure to the cultural diversity of the colony and to disseminate their teachings, all without leaving

Survey of Philippine Folklore [Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, University of Chicago, 1962], ii. Emphases mine).

²⁶⁰ Isabelo de los Reyes, “El Tinguian,” in idem, *Artículos varios sobre etnografía, historia y costumbres de Filipinas*, 2nd ed. (Manila: J.A. Ramos, 1888), 1-38; and idem, *El Folk-lore Filipino*.

²⁶¹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai’i Press, 1994).

²⁶² Hendrik M.J. Maier, *In the Center of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Ithaca: SEAP, Cornell Univ. Press, 1988).

the capitol. In these students they also found a critical source of physical labor, as Beyer and Fansler assigned them to collect stories from their home regions as part of their coursework. Both professors built extensive personal archives from these student recordings from which they were able to make the scholarly contributions that they became known for. This mostly anonymous, rarely acknowledged national folklore corps achieved for them what they never could have on their own: industrial collection of the oral traditions of regions they could not easily or frequently travel to, places for which they themselves lacked the linguistic and cultural fluency to carry out research. To an extent this made them administrators of knowledge production, particularly Beyer, rather than bona fide in-the-field researchers.

Related to this was the rise of disciplinary knowledge, which provided more formalized, systematic, and professionalized approaches to the study of cultural phenomena. The major figures who studied oral traditions during this time tended to be highly educated. Fansler earned a Ph.D. in English and comparative literature from Columbia, Fay Cooper Cole one in philosophy from the same institution, and Frank Laubach one political science also from Columbia.²⁶³ Even those that did not complete doctoral studies had at least some post-secondary education. Roy F. Barton was mostly a self-taught anthropologist (although he did earn a D.D.S. in 1916), but he was no stranger to operating within the scholarly universe anchored by universities and connected through scholarly fora and journals. Beyer's highest level of education consisted of a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Denver in 1905 and a few graduate level courses in anthropology at Harvard in 1908 and (?) 1909. His lack of formal schooling in anthropology apart from this smattering of courses seems to have in no way hurt his career prospects. After serving as a professor of anthropology at the UP, he became its first chair from 1925 until his retirement in 1954,

²⁶³ Dean Spruill Fansler, *Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose* (New York: Columbia Univ, Press, 1914), viii; Fay-Cooper Cole, *A Study of Tinguian Folk-Lore* (Chicago: s.n., 1915), front cover; Frank Charles Laubach, *Why There Are Vagrants: A Study Based upon an Examination of One Hundred Men* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1916), vi.

during which time he was even offered a faculty position at Harvard. Indeed, he is remembered today as the “father” of Philippine anthropology. Disciplines are what made oral traditions into discrete objects to be investigated as never before during the Spanish era, and provided increasingly systematic ways to do so. To be sure, the advent of disciplinary knowledge did not lead to immediate or uniformly systematized scholarship. Fansler for instance was a punctilious methodologist while Beyer’s methods were already passé in his own time as an ethnologist and he was chaotically haphazard as a hoarder of data. Professionalization of scholarly methods in the Philippines merely began during this time, and would continue its maturation for decades even after the Americans left.

These developments set into motion the institutional arrangements and cultural practices that would result in the post-independence practice of collecting and venerating epics, which nonetheless proceeded for quite different reasons, as I will discuss in the following chapter. Many of the contemporary assumptions about epics—that they are the quintessential expressions of a culture, that they are centuries and even millennia old, that they function as literature, that they represent “Filipinoness”—originated during this period. The American encounter with Philippine oral traditions, similar to what Hendrik Maier has found for colonial engagements with Malay literature,

could serve as a good illustration of the Bakhtinian thesis that concepts such as authenticity, purity, identity, and order tend to become issues only when outsiders actively interfere in a language they do not use as their first language—while at the same time refusing to fully familiarize themselves with that language and everything it stands for.²⁶⁴

In this chapter I will chart the rise of folklore studies and epic collection specifically by focusing on the contributions of the American period’s three pioneers of epic recording, H. Otley Beyer, Roy F. Barton, and Frank Laubach, and its most talented folklorist, Dean S. Fansler, who did not record epics. I will show how Beyer, Barton, and Laubach each

²⁶⁴ Hendrik M.J. Maier, *We are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 16.

contributed in their own ways to the novel practice of recording epics, and in so doing paved the way for the explosion of epic collection that would take place during the post-independence period (1946-1970s). My main contention will be to show that they effected what I call a “parting of the chorus,” a bifurcation of the study of Filipino oral traditions in which certain voices, those of the “primitives” of the mountainous areas of Luzon and Minanao mainly, came to be seen as the proper subjects of folklore while others, those of the Christian Filipino majority, came to be disqualified. Fansler departed from this trend; he in fact promoted a more inclusive approach to the study of Filipino folklore, one that did not polarize the archipelago. For this reason, in addition to examining Beyer, Barton, and Laubach, I will revisit Fansler’s lost vision of oral traditions studies. My organization will be roughly chronological. I will treat each scholar according to the dates his studies were written, although not necessarily published.

Beyer and the Production of the Authentic

H. Otley Beyer (1883-1966) is remembered as the “Father of Philippine Anthropology,” to the extent he is remembered at all. Within the Philippines, he is highly regarded for his lengthy career from the early 1900s to the late 1950s devoted to studying the country’s prehistory. Outside of the Philippines he remains an obscure figure, seldom remembered in anthropology, the field he ostensibly worked in, and is known only to a handful of students of Filipino history and culture. In his pursuit of prehistory, he collected and analyzed a number of oral traditions, including epics. His collecting efforts were so prodigious that he was able to create what remains the largest archive of folk documents on the Philippines ever to be assembled, the *Philippine Ethnographic Series* (1912-1922; hereafter PES) and *Philippine Folklore, Customs, and Beliefs* (1941-1943?; hereafter PFCB). For that reason he is a critical figure in the history of Philippine oral traditions, even if he

published very few studies of folklore proper himself—a conservative accounting would number his works at one—“Origin Myths among the Mountain Peoples” (1912).²⁶⁵

Paradoxically, although he himself did not publish a great deal of recorded oral traditions, Beyer was the individual most responsible for the elevation of the epic to the foremost position among folklore genres. He was in fact the first scholar in Philippine history to ascribe the appellation “epic” to the lengthiest traditions in any consistent way. He did not apply the term to all lengthy chants, however, only to those that were recorded from “primitive” groups, such as the Ifugaos. How and why he did this was a result of his peculiar approach to anthropology.

Beyer never himself explained his obsession with articulating the Philippines’ prehistory. No clear statement of his thinking or methods can be found in any of his works. To understand what prompted his career, we must turn to his former students’ recollections of working with him and other scholars’ appraisals of his career, mostly written posthumously.²⁶⁶ By any accounting, Beyer’s biography was a peculiar one. Born in Iowa in

²⁶⁵ A number of biographical sources exist, see Andrew Gosling, “An American in Manila: Otley Beyer and His Collection in the National Library,” *National Library of Australia News* vol. 7 no. 10 (July 1997): 6-8; Mario D. Zamora, “Henry Otley Beyer, 1883-1966,” *American Anthropologist* vol. 76 no. 2 (June 1974): 361-362; Wilhelm G. Solheim II, “H. Otley Beyer,” *Asian Perspectives* 12 (1969): 1-18; Frank Lynch, “Henry Otley Beyer 1883-1966,” *Philippine Studies* vol. 15 no. 1 (Jan. 1967): 3-8; Juan Salcedo, “H. Otley Beyer: Anthropology and the Philippines,” in Mario D. Zamora, ed., *Studies in Philippine Anthropology (In Honor of H. Otley Beyer)* (Quezon City: Alemar Phoenix, 1967), pp. 1-5; Pedro Melendez and Josephine Caccam, “The U.P. Department of Anthropology: 1914-1965,” in Zamora, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology*, pp. 6-22; E. Arsenio Manuel, “H. Otley Beyer: His Researches and Publications,” in Zamora, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology*, pp. 23-31; idem, “A Checklist of the Writings of H. Otley Beyer,” in Zamora, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology*, pp. 31-47; and idem, “H. Otley Beyer 1883-1966: Anthropologist,” in Miguel Ma. Varela and Marcelino A. Foronda Jr., eds., vol. 2, digital ed. (S.i.: Science and Technology Information Institute, 2004), unpaginated. Tellingly, many of these accounts (Solheim, Lynch, Manuel to an extent), were highly critical of Beyer while at the same time being appreciative of his work.

²⁶⁶ Andrew Gosling, “An American in Manila: Otley Beyer and His Collection in the National Library,” *Naitonal Library of Australia News* vol. 7 no. 10 (July 1997): 6-8; Mario D. Zamora, “Henry Otley Beyer, 1883-1966,” *American Anthropologist* vol. 76 no. 2 (June 1974): 361-362; Wilhelm G. Solheim II, “H. Otley Beyer,” *Asian Perspectives* 12 (1969): 1-18; Frank Lynch, “Henry Otley Beyer 1883-1966,” *Philippine Studies* vol. 15 no. 1 (Jan. 1967): 3-8; Juan Salcedo, “H. Otley Beyer: Anthropology and the Philippines,” in Mario D. Zamora, ed., *Studies in Philippine Anthropology (In Honor of H. Otley Beyer)* (Quezon City: Alemar Phoenix, 1967), pp. 1-5; Pedro Melendez and Josephine Caccam, “The U.P. Department of Anthropology: 1914-1965,” in Zamora, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology*, pp. 6-22; E. Arsenio Manuel, “H. Otley Beyer: His Researches and Publications,” in Zamora, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology*, pp. 23-31; idem, “A Checklist of the Writings of H. Otley Beyer,” in Zamora, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology*, pp. 31-47; and idem, “H. Otley Beyer 1883-1966: Anthropologist,” in Miguel Ma. Varela and Marcelino A. Foronda Jr., eds., vol. 2, digital ed.

1883, he died and was buried in Ifugao territory according to Ifugao ritual, in 1966. He lived nearly his entire social and scholarly life in the Philippines—he published almost exclusively in the, attended scholarly fora in few other places, and he taught at one university all throughout, the UP. That he married a Filipina in the first place would have made him an object of ridicule; worse still was that she was an Ifugao woman—a “primitive.” E. Arsenio Manuel, who seems to have known more about the marriage than anyone else, which is still not that much, tried to piece together how it all took place.

Something else happened in [1910]. He noticed that one of the village girls had grown up since he left not more than a couple of years ago; she was in fact the daughter of the cottage chief of Amganad. Her name was Lingayu Gambuk. Beyer’s earlier picture of her was with bare bosoms, the breasts hardly showing as yet, now she was fully a maiden. Beyer must have contracted marriage following Ifugao customs sometime in the latter part of 1910. He spent two bagful [*sic*] of silver coins to distribute to all the relatives of his wife. They had a couple of children, but the first one died in infancy.²⁶⁷

From all that we know of the man, it seems that he was difficult to get along with. Manuel described him as “an obstinate man; he would sometimes listen to friends, but he did not care much about their counsels.”²⁶⁸ Another former student, Wilhelm G. Solheim II, the eminent Southeast Asian archaeologist, described as, “a lonely man,” and, “extremely independent.”²⁶⁹ The facts of his life make clear that he desperately wanted two things: to anchor himself to the “prehistoric” part of the Philippines, which was cemented by his marriage to Lingayu Gambuk, and he wanted to become the preeminent figure to articulate the country’s prehistory *to its people*. He wanted to give the Filipino people the gift of its prehistory for one reason: so that it would establish him as the father of their nation. In this way he could create a genealogy of the Filipinos that married their colonial past (literally and figuratively) to that of the United States, effacing the entire Spanish era. This impulse is what

(S.i.: Science and Technology Information Institute, 2004), unpaginated. Tellingly, many of these accounts (Solheim, Lynch, Manuel to an extent), were highly critical of Beyer while at the same time being appreciative of his work.

²⁶⁷ Manuel, “H. Otley Beyer 1883-1966,” second unnumbered page.

²⁶⁸ E. Arsenio Manuel, “The Wake and Last Rites Over H. Otley Beyer in Ifugaoland,” *Philippine Studies* vol. 23 no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 120.

²⁶⁹ Solheim, “H. Otley Beyer,” 15.

inspired his major works like “Origin Myths among the Mountain Peoples,” “The Philippines before Magellan” (1921), *A History of the Orient* (1926, with G. Nye Steiger), “Recent Discoveries in Philippine Archaeology” (1928), “the Philippine People of pre-Spanish Times” (1935), “Cradle of the Human Race—Philippine and Oriental Archaeology” (1939), *Philippine Saga: A Pictorial History of the Archipelago since Time Began* (1947), *Philippine and East Asian Archaeology, and Its Relation to the Origin of the Pacific Islands Population* (1948), among numerous others.²⁷⁰

About his former mentor’s method of practicing anthropology, the social scientist Frank Lynch wrote, “As far as Beyer was concerned (and he wasn’t especially), there were two legitimate pursuits for anyone claiming the name of anthropologist: ethnology and prehistory, preferably the latter.” Lynch describes his process of gathering data in charitable terms: “he was an incurable collector, a scrupulous cataloguer, and a man for whom horizon lists and classifications had an almost fatal fascination.”²⁷¹ (Solheim put it another way, “A visit to Beyer’s Museum and Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, on the second floor of the old Watson Building in Manila, would convince an uninformed person that Beyer was a human pack rat and an antiquarian”).²⁷² Lynch continues, “What freed him from their spell and made him think in broader terms was his childlike faith (unquestioning but questionable) in the sufficiency of progressive evolution and migratory diffusion to explain man’s cultural growth in general and in any particular case. With evolution and diffusion as his guides and with an ample supply of both empirical archaeological data—mostly on surface finds—and facts and ideas contributed by a coterie of likeminded colleagues, Beyer ultimately struck out bravely into the uncharted wastes of prehistoric interpretation.” Concluding this summary, he notes that Beyer “was quite unconvinced of the weakness of this typically 19th-century approach,” and prognosticated, “the grand and vulnerable syntheses he created will

²⁷⁰ For a complete list, see Manuel, “H. Otley Beyer: His Researches and Publications.”

²⁷¹ Lynch, “Henry Otley Beyer 1883-1966,” 7.

²⁷² Solheim, “H. Otley Beyer,” 4.

predictably be the target of more cautious professionals for years to come.”²⁷³ Beyer arrived in the Philippines for the first time in 1905, just before Boasian anthropology became accepted science in the metropole.²⁷⁴ Yet Beyer “seemed to know little, and care less, about many developments in general anthropology, widely hailed as significant, that had occurred in the 40 years since he had been at Harvard.”²⁷⁵ His approach to anthropology was outmoded really from the moment he began to practice it, and became especially so as his career progressed. Yet he obstinately stuck with it until his dying days.

Beyer’s peculiar scholarly goals and antiquated practice of anthropology are evident in all of his studies, including his oral traditions works. Interestingly, in his first publication, “The Igorotes” (1907), whose cursory nature he conceded in writing, “The writer has but scratched the surface where future delvers may find mines of gold,” he displays little concern or even awareness about the Ifugao oral traditions he would later make his name by studying. His words on the subject are limited to, “The religion of the Ifugaos and Silipanes is very simple, and well suited to their needs. They believe in two Gods—Wigan and Bugan—male and female. They believe in a future life and that the spirits of their ancestors are constantly

²⁷³ Lynch, “Henry Otley Beyer 1883-1966,” 7. For a fuller assessment of his work, see Solheim, “H. Otley Beyer.”

²⁷⁴ Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, *A History of Anthropological Theory*, rev. ed. (New York: Broadview Press, 2003), 73-75; Regna Darnell, *Invisible Genealogies: A History of Americanist Anthropology* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2001), chap. 1; Alexander Lesser, “Franz Boas,” in Sydel Silverman, ed. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 1-34.

²⁷⁵ The full quote reads,

But let this be clear: it is one thing to be honored and quite another to be declared a consummate anthropologist. Beyer, for one, had no illusions about himself. Even in his prime, he was far from being a Boas, a Kroeber, or a Kluckhohn. The understanding these giants had of the theoretical and substantive concerns of anthropology was of a scope that surpassed, if not Beyer's capacity, then certainly his interest. There were whole areas of the discipline which, till the end, remained for him terra incognita and, as his close associates well knew, terra non grata besides. When I worked with Beyer he seemed to know little, and care less, about many developments in general anthropology, widely hailed as significant, that had occurred in the 40 years since he had been at Harvard. For him there might just as well have been no Durkheim, no Radcliffe-Brown or Malinowski, no Radin, no Sapir, no Benedict or Mead. For Beyer, social anthropology was a snare and a delusion; personality-in-culture studies, so much nonsense; the phoneme, a foreign body [Lynch, “Henry Otley Beyer 1883-1966,” 6].

watching over them and protecting or afflicting them in their daily life.”²⁷⁶ The complexity of Ifugao religion is of course something that Villaverde appreciated, and that volumes upon volumes would be written about in the ensuing decades by Lambrecht (*The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonhadan*, 1961) and Barton (*The Mythology of the Ifugaos*, 1955, and *The Religion of the Ifugaos*, 1969) among others. In the following years, however, the ubiquity and frequency of all types of oral traditions in the Ifugao territory, where he conducted recurrent field trips and visited his wife, was such that he eventually became impressed by their cultural importance. Thus, by 1912, he drafted his first serious publication on oral traditions, “Origin Myths among Mountain Peoples,” which he “intended as an introduction to a series of more complete studies in Philippine mythology and religion,” although that larger study never materialized.²⁷⁷ 1912 was also the same year he began amassing sources for the PES, and he continued to do so for at least the next decade, if not afterwards.

After presenting the paper at the Philippine Academy in 1912, Beyer published “Origin Myths among Mountain Peoples” in the *Philippine Journal of Science* the following year. It is neither a groundbreaking nor even particularly insightful piece, which is why no one reads it today. At its best, it could be seen as a brief synopsis of published American and a few late Spanish era writings on origin myths up to 1912. Its major insight was that through these myths one could see the varying stages of cultural development—“primitive” to “mediocre” to “highly developed”—the “primitive” peoples of the Philippines exhibited. After all, as Beyer wrote in *Population of the Philippine Islands in 1916*, “Almost the whole history of human economic and social evolution may still be studied in actual existence within the

²⁷⁶ H. Otley Beyer, “The Igorotes,” 10. Typescript mss. Fred Eggan Papers, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, Box 107, Folder 3. Originally published in *Philippine Education* vol. 4 no. 4 (Sept. 1907): 14-18.

²⁷⁷ H. Otley Beyer, “Origin Myths among the Mountain Peoples” (Manila: s.n., 1913), 85n1.

boundaries of the Archipelago.”²⁷⁸ The essay is worth consideration nonetheless for the specific way it seeks to make sense of oral traditions. Beyer opens the essay by claiming,

Beliefs as to the origin of the earth, and of the men, animals, plants, and various topographical features found in it, seem to survive with greater persistence than any other trait of primitive culture. These beliefs lie at the base of nearly all religions, and the myths in which the beliefs are preserved are the foundation of literature. The preservation and study of origin myths is, therefore, of much importance in the reconstruction of the history of mankind which is the chief aim of anthropology.²⁷⁹

The denial of “primitive” groups like the Ifugaos’ coevalness—including, therefore, his own wife’s—was a pillar of his anthropological praxis.²⁸⁰ While he is not dealing specifically with things he terms “epics” in this essay, we can nonetheless see in this passage the tendencies that characterize his approach to the study of oral traditions. First, he elevates one type of lengthy oral tradition to a place of preeminence among all others. Second, he claims that this particular type, uniquely, can be put to profitable scholarly use. Moreover, the sorts of questions it will allow scholars to unravel are large-scale ones, to wit, “the reconstruction of the history of mankind.” Third, the way to carry out this research was to assemble as many samples of this higher type of oral tradition as possible, whether by culling from published sources or transcribing performances on one’s own, and examine them as a group. Based on the examples included in the essay, it seems as if it did not matter for Beyer why or how such folklore was transcribed. He expresses no concern whatsoever for the form of the original chant (recited in verse or prose, for the occasion of a ritual or non-ritual event, etc.) or the means of its transcription (verbatim or loose, how it was translated). This is one of the reasons his student E. Arsenio Manuel wrote much later on, “Beyer... hardly touched methodology.”²⁸¹ The problems with them aside, these were the hallmarks of his process of producing folklore scholarship, which brought him recognition in his time and influenced

²⁷⁸ H. Otley Beyer, *Population of the Philippine Islands in 1916* (Manila: Philippine Education Co., 1917), 86.

²⁷⁹ Beyer, “Origin Myths among the Mountain Peoples,” 85.

²⁸⁰ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2002).

²⁸¹ E. Arsenio Manuel, “Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice,” *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* vol. 8 no. 1 (1980), 7.

later generations of epic collectors. They are particularly visible in his one work of epic transcription.

Buried deep in the Ifugao series of the PES is really the only actual epic recording he ever produced, a short piece entitled “Extract from the ‘Manhûdhûd’ (One of the two great epics of the Ifugaos).” Beyer himself did not transcribe the document. Rather, a certain unnamed “civilized Gaddang” did so, from the lips of “León of Kutûg, an Ifugao from Kiáñgan clan, now dead,” whom Beyer describes as a “famous priest,” in 1902. In a preface to the epic, he writes, “The Ifugaos have two great epic poems, the Alim and the Hûdhûd. The first corresponds in general type to the Hindu Ramayána, and the second to the Mahabarata (or Mahabharata). This correspondence refers to type only, of course, and not to the contents, which are very different.” This “correspondence” Beyer identifies between Indian and Ifugao epics is more than a matter of similarity of form. It implies that the Filipinos have a national literary heritage on par with those of the other great civilizations of world history, and that, more pertinently, the essence of that heritage emanates from a “primitive” group like the Ifugaos. This was not something he would ever attempt to say about the Christian Filipinos, whose culture he did not once evince the slightest scholarly interest in. He discusses in brief the length of Hudhud performances (which in their entirety, he asserts, “would require more than 14 hours actual time to sing”), the occasions for chanting, the principal characters, and the language it was chanted in. The importance of this epic, he writes, “is great, both as pure literature and because [it] may be one of the greatest helps in solving the problem of the origin of the Ifugao people.”²⁸² What he intends by referring to this text as “pure literature” seems to have to do with a tacit comparison with the literature of the Christian Filipinos, which for centuries had been created under Spanish colonialism and was therefore “corrupted” because of it—this is a view that Fansler would

²⁸² León of Kutûg, “Extract from the ‘Manhûdhûd’ (One of the two great epics of the Ifugaos),” with a preface by H. Otley Beyer, in H. Otley Beyer and Roy F. Barton, eds., *The History and Ethnography of the Ifugao People* vol. 9 paper 19, 1-2.

react against, as we will see in the next section. It might or (more likely) might not have been the case that this document “may be one of the greatest helps in solving the problem of the origin of the Ifugao people,” but it was not something Beyer would ever find out. He never followed up this question with any serious or substantive studies; he simply left it unanswered and unaddressed for the next half-century. He did oversee the recording of other lengthy narratives in prose form, which like this “Extract” he included in his archives.²⁸³ But he never used them to answer the very questions he himself posed. Yet again he made grandiose claims, made use mostly of the work of others (that he orchestrated at least in part), and left the research agenda he himself set out unfinished.

“Origin Myths among Mountain Peoples” and “Extract from the ‘Manhûdhûd’” allow us to see that the great twentieth century pioneer of recording Philippine epics, the “Father of Philippine Anthropology” himself, acquired his reputation to speak about the things he designated as “epics” based on an extremely meager corpus of his own work. Indeed, he mostly left the actual work of recording to others—and the work of analyzing them incomplete. Yet because he created such massive archives of folklore materials in the PEB and PFCB, because he was the preeminent authority on Philippine anthropology based in the country’s flagship university, and because he trained innumerable undergraduate students and a few key graduate students to carry on the work he began (such as E. Arsenio Manuel), he came to exemplify not only folklore studies but epic collection specifically. Post-independence scholars consequently did not go on to question his assertions about the epic genre late in his career, such as “True epic poetry is today found chiefly among the Pagan groups and the Moros”; instead they ratified such claims and pursued research along the lines he set out.²⁸⁴ Although their reasons for doing so differed from his, as I will show in the

²⁸³ E.g., Julpa Schuck, “Parang Sabil (A fragment of Sulu Epic poetry),” in H. Otley Beyer, ed., *Moro Ethnography* vol. 7 paper 70.

²⁸⁴ H. Otley Beyer and Jaime C. de Veyra, *Philippine Saga: A Pictorial History of the Archipelago since Time Began* (Manila: Evening News, 1948), 111; quoted in Manuel, “Survey of Philippine Epics,” 10.

following chapter, it was ultimately Beyer who showed and even trained a few of them to carry on the practice of recording epics.

The “Affectionate Attitude” for Epics: Roy F. Barton

Not as well known as Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, or some of the other major figures of early American anthropology, Roy Franklin Barton (1883-1947) was nonetheless one of the early discipline’s most perceptive practitioners and likely the most talented who worked in the Philippines during the first half of the twentieth century. Sydney Mintz upholds him as an exemplary fieldworker whose persistent drive to return to the field serves as a model for anthropologists today. “Even if we cannot become Bartons,” he writes, “we can learn from him.”²⁸⁵ By Kroeber’s own admission,

Barton produced some of the most gifted ethnography ever written in English, and especially on the Philippine peoples. He possessed an unusual insight into the salient physiognomy of institutions, an intense interest in their functioning, and consuming curiosity as to human motives within this functioning. He was wholly self-taught—in fact as well as temperamentally. This contributed to certain limitations in his work. But it also left him in full command of a freshness of attitude and a creative vigor which formal professional training unfortunately tends to dull and dim in our graduate students even when they come equipped with these endowments.²⁸⁶

His *Ifugao Law* (1919), *Ifugao Economics* (1922), *The Half-Way Sun: Life among the Headhunters in the Philippines* (1930), *Philippine Pagans: The Autobiographies of Three Ifugaos* (1938), *The Religion of the Ifugaos* (1946), *The Mythology of the Ifugaos* (1955), and *The Kalingas: Their Institutions and Custom Law* (1973) are still read within the field; both *Ifugao Law* and *Philippine Pagans* have become classics, and have been reissued (in 1969 and 1963, respectively). The former has been described as both a “[p]ioneer study” and “The

²⁸⁵ Sydney Mintz, “Sows’ Ears and Silver Linings: A Backward Look at Ethnography,” *Current Anthropology* vol. 41 no. 2 (Apr. 2000): 173-174, quote taken from 173.

²⁸⁶ A.L. Kroeber, “Roy Franklin Barton, 1883-1947,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, vol. 51 no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1949): 91.

greatest contribution to the anthropology of politics between 1898 and 1919.”²⁸⁷ In various studies that centered on law, economics, custom, religion, and more he recorded and interpreted a number of oral traditions he referred to either as “myths” or “epics.”

In his earliest anthropological studies, Barton’s interest in oral traditions was indirect. His first published essay, “The Harvest Feast of the Kiangan Ifugaos” (1911), made use of oral traditions as source materials, but it did not treat them as a subject matter in and of themselves. This was true also of his subsequent pieces “An Ifugao Burial Ceremony” (1911; co-authored with H. Otley Beyer) and “The Funeral of Aliguyen” (1912). With his lengthy monograph, *Ifugao Law* (1919), however, he began the study and recording of oral traditions proper. In this book, which remains well-regarded even today, Barton set out to understand the customary legal system of the Ifugaos, who had neither bureaucratic government nor written laws, at a time when very few studies about them existed.²⁸⁸ *Ifugao Law* provides theoretical discussions of their family, property, penal, and procedural laws, whose state of being in force he illustrates with actual and hypothetical case studies. In the book’s second appendix, “Connection of Religion with Procedure,” he reprinted a myth he titled “How Balitok and Bugaran Obtained Children.” He explains why:

Partly because of its connection with the Ifugao marriage ceremony, partly because it illustrates so well the use to which the Ifugao puts his myths—rarely telling them for amusement, but reciting them in religious ceremonies as a means to magic—and partly because it is so characteristically Ifugao, I have decided to append the following myth, despite the fact that it might more properly appear in a work on religion.²⁸⁹

Reprinting this myth might not have been the most direct and effective means of substantiating his claims about Ifugao law, but it did serve to illustrate something of wider

²⁸⁷ Laura Nader, Klaus Koch, and Bruce Cox, “The Ethnography of Law: A Bibliographic Survey,” *UC Berkeley Previously Published Papers*, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1q4300jk> [accessed 15 Feb. 2013], 22; Joan Vincent, *Anthropology and Politics: Visions, Traditions, and Trends* (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1990), 136.

²⁸⁸ First published as R.F. Barton, “Ifugao Law,” *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnography* vol. 15 no. 1 (1919): 1-186.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

ethnographic interest. Reproducing it additionally served to display something that was “so characteristically Ifugao,” which seems to be an expression of the ubiquity of their oral traditions. For Barton, Ifugao myths were both so engagingly peculiar as social phenomena and culturally commonplace that they deserved sustained analysis in a book that was only tangentially connected to them. Thus even at this early point in his career he evinced a fascination with recording, studying, and reproducing oral traditions.

In fits and starts following *Ifugao Law*, he began to draft the major works of Ifugao mythology that constitute his legacy for Philippine oral traditions scholars, *The Religion of the Ifugaos* (1946), the final work published during his lifetime, and *The Mythology of the Ifugaos* (1955), which was in the process of being published when he unexpectedly died. These might not have been his only contributions, had not World War II taken place. “During the Japanese invasion,” he writes in the Preface to *The Mythology of the Ifugaos*, “all my field notes and several manuscripts were lost. I already had nine such manuscripts, five of which I cite in this work under the abbreviation ‘BRR’ (Barton Research Records).” The fourth volume of these he called “‘Ifugao Myths, Folktales, and Legends.’” It was unfortunately lost during the war.²⁹⁰ In his obituary, Beyer suggested that had such a work been published, it might have become Barton’s most meaningful and heartfelt contribution.

The war caught him at the very peak of his productive career, and cost him the serious loss of practically all his fieldnotes and collected data from important new researches approaching completion. However, it is probable that his greatest disappointment lay in the futile loss of three and a half years of valuable time—which he had hoped to devote to rounding out, completing, and publishing his last major research on the beliefs, social culture, and above all the epic poetry and sagas of the Mountain Province peoples.²⁹¹

What would have undoubtedly been one of the finest works of Philippine oral traditions studies thus went unfinished.

²⁹⁰ R.F. Barton, *The Mythology of the Ifugaos*, 7.

²⁹¹ H. Otley Beyer, “Philippine Science Loses a Friend,” *Baguio Midland Courier*. Newspaper clipping found in Fred Eggan Papers, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, Box 112 Folder 9. Originally published in *Manila Daily Bulletin*, vol. 130 no. 28 (May 14, 1947), p. 8.

The Religion of the Ifugaos represents Barton's attempt to make sense of the sprawling pantheon of Ifugao deities and the profusion of rituals during which they were evoked. This was no simple task given that, by his reckoning, there existed upwards of "1500" gods, and in fact, "probably more," any "two up to fifteen" of which are invoked during a particular ritual.²⁹² To do this, he organizes his discussion of spirit beings into major categories such as "Locally Least Variable Deities," those that deal with social relations, affect the weather, cause disease; and following that minor types such as deities of war, crops, ghosts, cannibalism, and more. He introduces each group individually and then provides a listing of its major figures. This sets up his discussion of the rituals. He characterizes the rituals' meanings, procedures, and the occasions during which they are performed. It is in this section that Barton reproduces the stories, invocations, myths, epics, and other traditions that folklorists have come to know him by. Some traditions are provided in their original, Romanized Ifugao with accompanying English translation (of these some are organized in parallel columns, others with Ifugao text followed by the translation); other traditions are reproduced only in translation. Some are rendered in poetic form, others in prose. Most appear to be more or less word-for-word transcriptions of Ifugao speech acts, but in a few places he reproduces excerpts from his field notes about a particular narrative, thereby interjecting his voice into the conversation. Some traditions were conversationally related; others in a more ritualistically recited, higher register. If this sounds like a motley, even messy assemblage of oral traditions, it is because it is. Unlike other folklorists of the American era such as Fansler, Fay-Cooper Cole, Mabel Cook Cole, and others, who limited their discussions of folklore to a single genre at a time and wrote about them in a uniform manner, Barton here recorded, studied, and reproduced oral traditions largely as he

²⁹² R.F. Barton, *The Mythology of the Ifugaos*, 11, 13-14.

encountered them.²⁹³ This makes for a much less focused, perhaps even inelegantly assembled study. But on the other hand, it better approximates the heterogeneity of oral culture that existed among the Ifugao, as in any society. By crafting his book in this way, Barton more faithfully captures the randomness, everydayness, and contingency of Ifugao vocally expressive life.

In contrast with its predecessor, *The Mythology of the Ifugaos* (1956) is much more singularly devoted to oral traditions themselves rather than having them serve as mere source material. Barton opens with a lengthy introduction in which he lays out the social functions, recitative forms, literary attributes, classifications, and motifs found in Ifugao myths. This is all to provide a background for the three sorts he has recorded: “Poetic Recitatives in Ifugao, with Line-by-Line Translation,” “Prose Texts in Ifugao, Followed by Translation,” and “English Translations Only, with Synopses and Notes,” reproductions of which form the main subject of the book. Contemporary Philippine folklorists would probably classify each of these as separate genres: the first would be epics, the second myths, and the third myths, folktales, or folk stories.²⁹⁴ Barton would however contest these last two designations as he maintained there was a vast gulf of difference between Ifugao myths and folktales, on the basis that myths were “sympathetic magic”²⁹⁵—his thesis about the function of oral traditions that recurred throughout all of his works—and that folktales were mainly a form of entertainment.²⁹⁶ He reproduces each myth individually and along the way makes general comments on things such as the etymology of terms, how people, places and things found in the narrative are situated in Ifugao culture, how such things compare to oral traditions

²⁹³ Cf. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales* and “Metrical Romances in the Philippines”; Fay-Cooper Cole, *A Study of Tinguian Folk-Lore*; and Mabel Cook Cole, *Philippine Folk Tales*.

²⁹⁴ See Mellie Leandicho Lopez, *A Handbook of Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2006), for general taxonomic information and E. Arsenio Manuel, “Survey of Philippine Epics,” *Asian Folklore Studies* vol. 22 (1963), for information on epics specifically.

²⁹⁵ Barton, *Ifugao Law*, 111; idem, *Autobiographies of Three Pagans*, 14-15; idem, *Religion of the Ifugaos*, 203-204; and idem, *The Mythology of the Ifugaos* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1956), 3, 4.

²⁹⁶ Barton, *Mythology of the Ifugaos*, 30.

recorded in other places, and more. In the first part, “Poetic Recitatives in Ifugao, with Line-by-Line Translation,” he does this mainly with endnotes; no synopsis or comment in the body of the text is provided. In the other two, he does this in the body of the text, in brief ruminative sections titled simply “Comments.” Such information is not designed to be a comprehensive nor exhaustive guide to understanding the myths—as for instance Lambrecht’s “Ifugaw Hu’dhud” (1960, 1961) or his masterwork *Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonhadan* (1967) attempted to be²⁹⁷—but it allows the reader, whether anthropologist, folklorist, linguist, or literary scholar, to have some idea of how to understand them within the context of Ifugao society and to better grasp how they reflect some aspects of the culture. At the time of its publication, , it contained the most numerous assortment of Philippine oral traditions that could be found in a single volume.²⁹⁸

From this survey of his work, we can see from the earliest stirrings of an interest in oral traditions he expressed in *Ifugao Law* to his full fledged studies *The Religion of the Ifugaos* and *The Mythology of the Ifugaos*, Barton became one of the most dedicated interpreters and recorders of Philippine oral traditions in general and epics in particular. Yet he was in many ways an enigmatic figure whose explanations of the personal reasons and understanding of his own scholarship is difficult to pin down. His epic scholarship epitomizes this. In none of the oral traditions studies for which he is known does he ascribe any larger significance to the enterprise of collecting, transcribing, and translating epics. In his application for a Guggenheim fellowship in 1941, however, he provides some indication of his motives. He notes in one place that he has “an affectionate attitude toward native

²⁹⁷ Francis Lambrecht, “Ifugaw Hu’dhud,” *Folklore Studies* vol. 19 (1960): 1-173; idem, “Ifugaw Hu’dhud (Continued),” *Folklore Studies* vol. 20 (1961): 136-273; and idem, *The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonhadan* (Baguio City: St. Louis Univ., 1967).

²⁹⁸ See the table in E. Arsenio Manuel, “The Epic in Philippine Literature” *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* v. 44 nos. 1-4 (Jan.-Dec., 1980): 319. Mysteriously, Manuel left Barton’s works off of this list, even though he was aware of them.

‘documents’ and their translation.” One reason he collected epics, then, was because they fascinated him. In another place,

Any extract from so vast a series, even the 50 pages I have recorded(?), can give only a vague idea of the whole. I anticipate pages of tiresome detail and ritual repetition. I know that there will be many pages of considerable cultural and psychological significance and numerous bright spots. The outstanding quality of Ifugao literature is naiveté—the more fascinating because so earnest. There is a good chance too, that from some passage or the whole, it may be possible to draw important historical inferences about the cultures and movements of prehistoric peoples in Southeastern Asia.²⁹⁹

He goes on to note how his Ifugao recording, “reminds one a little of a Dayak epic,” and “it is reminiscent of Dr. Cole’s (Tinguian) ‘Tales of the Mythical Period.’”³⁰⁰ In brief, transcribing epics was a means of creating highly useful, if difficult to interpret, scholarly texts for the study of traditional studies, many of which produced no written records. Like Beyer, he thought in broad terms; but unlike him, he came to more sensible, empirically-based conclusions. In many places throughout his works, he for instance reiterated that Ifugao epics and myths were a means of enacting “sympathetic magic,” performances that were undertaken to elicit the gods to help humans achieve some goal.³⁰¹ That they were might tell us something about humanity at large, but he never generalized his findings beyond the community from which they were adduced. The fact that these assertions were written into a grant application might lead one to question whether he exaggerated their importance and his ability to interpret them. But based upon his actual work, both of these things seem to have been true.

That Barton created epics as scholarly instruments meant that his work would only be of significance to scholars, and not nations. This is why he is mostly forgotten in the Philippines today, even among, ironically, most oral traditions scholars. E. Arsenio Manuel

²⁹⁹ R.F. Barton, application for a Guggenheim fellowship, from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, New York, 1941.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Barton, *Ifugao Law*, 111; idem, *Autobiographies of Three Pagans*, 14-15; idem, *Religion of the Ifugaos*, 203-204; and idem, *The Mythology of the Ifugaos* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1956), 3, 4.

made a tabulation of collected Philippine epics in 1980 that seems to be complete except for the fact that it does not mention Barton's *The Religion of the Ifugaos* or his *The Mythology of the Ifugaos* once. The reasons for this are unclear, because he almost certainly knew of Barton and his works. And many of the recorded epics included in the list are fundamentally formally similar to many of the ones Barton recorded, especially those in *The Mythology of the Ifugaos*.³⁰² One guess is that because Barton had such tenuous connections to institutions and people in the colony—which was true of his interactions everywhere he went—he never left any significant imprint on its local scholarly culture. Although he occasionally collaborated with Beyer, he never became a denizen of the UP for even a short amount of time.³⁰³ He was far more comfortable with Ifugaos and Kiangans than Manila-based academics. Perhaps that explains why they have tended to overlook his work.

Degrees of Difference: The Lost Vision of Dean S. Fansler

Uniquely among the scholars I will examine in this chapter, and in some ways uniquely among his Philippine American contemporaries, Dean S. Fansler (1885-1946?) was a methodologically rigorous, academically pedigreed, consummate folklorist. Having earned his Ph.D. in comparative literature from Columbia in 1914, he became the most talented folklorist who worked on the Philippines during that time. His *Filipino Popular Tales* (1921) was acclaimed at the time of its publication and has the distinction of still being read today, something that cannot be said about most works from the period. Its continuing importance for posterity indicates why it was reissued in 1965, nearly half a century after its original publication and long after its author's death. In the Foreword to the reissue, the anthropologist Fred Eggan explains that the book, “had no rivals either in scholarship or

³⁰² E. Arsenio Manuel, “The Epic in Philippine Literature” *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* vol. 44 nos. 1-4 (Jan.-Dec. 1980): 319.

³⁰³ E.g., R. F. Barton and H. Otley Beyer, “An Ifugao Burial Ceremony” *Philippine Journal of Science* vol. 6D no. 5 (1911): 227-252. Barton also contributed pieces to Beyer's PES.

range—so far as the Philippines were concerned. And today, over four decades later, it still occupies a central position with regard to Philippine folk literature, despite the considerable amount of collecting and research carried out by both American and Filipino scholars since that time.³⁰⁴ In addition to this work he penned a great deal of others, such as the essay on metrical romances cited at the beginning of the chapter. Unfortunately, he never had occasion to finish and publish most of them, some eleven other studies and translations. The reasons for this are unclear, but probably have to do with the chaos created by the Japanese invasion in 1941. He also amassed a collection of some 4,000 folktales he and his students gathered, but they seem to have been lost.³⁰⁵ The fact that he produced such a great deal of scholarship, that he collected so many traditions himself, and that he was so punctilious in his approach to categorizing and analyzing them earned him the respect and admiration of many folklorists who followed in his wake.

For Fansler, folklore provided a means of charting the Philippines' cultural history over the course of millennia. The archipelago was for him a single place where any number of cultures had unevenly left their imprint on folk traditions. As he put it,

A glance at the map and at the history of the Islands reveals the archipelago as a veritable ocean center of the streams of story. Successive waves of folk migration and subsequent domination or occupation by Malaysians and Hindus from the west, Chinese and Indo-Chinese from the northwest, Japanese from the north, Spaniards and Americans from the east, and successive layers of religions—pagan, Buddhist, Mohammedan, Christian—all have left their mark on traditions current in the Philippines to-day.³⁰⁶

Judging by his published work, his main goal seems to have been to begin the work of cataloguing as many of the oral traditions that existed as possible so that scholars might be able to map out the Filipinos' interactions with other peoples from the first millennium BCE onwards. His process was fairly straightforward. He, or one of his students, would first listen

³⁰⁴ Fred Eggan, "Foreword" to Dean S. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1965), v.

³⁰⁵ Eggan, "Foreword," xiii.

³⁰⁶ Fansler, "Philippine Folk Literature," 208.

to a folktale in a regional language (Tagalog, Bisaya, Ilokano, etc.); either transcribe it in that language and then immediately translate it into English, or simply transcribe it in English, translating as he or more likely one of his students wrote (which procedure prevailed is unclear); determine which type of story type it could be reduced to—"Monkey and Turtle," "Indolent Husband," "The Helpful Monkey (Philippine Puss-in-Boots)," etc.; create an inventory of those story types; and lastly, use said inventory to determine which traditions were localizations of "foreign" ones and which were indigenous, among other things.³⁰⁷ This explains his interest in folktales (which easily lent themselves to cross-cultural comparison) and metrical romances (a genre whose appearance and evolution in the Philippines could easily be traced), the two types of folklore he is best known for having studied. While his main purpose in *Filipino Popular Tales* was simply to give literary expression to a number of folk stories that had never before been printed, in the grander scheme of folkloric research, this was what he attempted to accomplish.

Fansler's sensitivity to his source materials and careful study of the Philippines' cultural history led him to conclusions that scholars today regard as elementary truths. To take one instance, he expressed an early and thoughtful explanation of the process by which Filipinos domesticated outsiders' oral traditions and remade them as their own, a view that did not receive widespread acceptance until the publication of Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* in 1979. He wrote in *Filipino Popular Tales*,

the Visayans, Bicolans, and Tagalogs in the coast towns feared the raids of Mindanao Mussulmans long before white feet trod the shores of the Islands, and many traditions of conflicts with these pirates are embedded in their legends. The Spaniard came in the sixteenth century, bringing with him stories of wars between Christians and Saracens in Europe. One result of this close analogy of actual historical situation was, I believe, a general tendency to leveling: that is, native traditions of such struggles took on the color of the Spanish romances; Spanish romances, on the other hand, which were popularized in the Islands, were very likely to be 'localized.'³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ See Dean S. Fansler, "Philippine Folk Literature: A Synoptic Study of an Unpublished Manuscript Collection of Folktales," *Philippine Magazine* vol. 34, no. 5 (May 1935): 208-209, 226-228.

³⁰⁸ Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales*, vii.

Using what he knew of the history and oral traditions of both the precolonial Philippines and Spain, he pieced together an assessment of cultural reappropriation that explains the peculiar form of Filipino metrical romances that most scholars would concur with today. Here is a place where the dispassion brought about by his commitment to scientific procedures within his discipline led to a high degree of perceptiveness. He concluded this passage by noting, “A maximum of caution and a minimum of dogmatism, then, are imperative, if one is to treat at all scientifically the relationship of the stories of a composite people like the Filipinos to the stories of the rest of the world.”³⁰⁹

One remarkable feature of his approach that has so far gone unheeded even by the more astute students of his work is the way he treated the Philippines as a unitary folklore region. Unlike Beyer and so many of his contemporaries, Fansler did not conceive of the country as being composed of bifurcated “Christianized” and “non-Christian” regions. He was highly skeptical that dividing the country in such a way would assist in the piecing together of its history; doing so would in fact obscure more than it revealed. He questioned the practice pointedly in *Filipino Popular Tales* in 1921.

[W]hat is ‘native,’ and what is ‘derived’? The folklore of the wild tribes—Negritos, Bagobos, Igorots—is in its way no more ‘uncontaminated’ than that of the Tagalogs, Pampangans, Zambals, Pangasinans, Ilocanos, Bicol and Visayans. The traditions of these Christianized tribes present as survivals, adaptations, modifications, fully as many puzzling and fascinating problems as the popular lore of the Pagan peoples.³¹⁰

He continues, disputing the notion that certain groups lived in complete isolation (e.g. the “Ifugao [were] maintainers of the richest and best-preserved exotic culture”), which went part and parcel with the supposed pristineness of their oral traditions.³¹¹

It should be remembered, that, no matter how wild and savage and isolated a tribe may be, it is impossible to prove that there has been no contact of that tribe with the outside civilized world. Conquest is not necessary to the introduction of a story or belief. The crew of a Portuguese trading-vessel with a genial narrator on board might conceivably be a much more successful transmitting-medium than a thousand *praos* full of brown

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid., vi.

³¹¹ Kroeber, “Roy Franklin Barton,” 91.

warriors come to stay. *Clearly the problem of analyzing and tracing the story-literature of the Christianized tribes differs only in degree from that connected with Pagan tribes.*³¹²

This was clearly a reaction against scholars like Beyer, who he does not name, but whose work was built on the assumption that the “savage and isolated” tribes like the Ifugaos were fundamentally Other than the Christian Filipinos. As a retort to such conceptions of Filipino cultures, Fansler sought to highlight the complex social dynamics at play that more accurately explain the cultural changes that became evident in their oral traditions. In fact it is against such literatures, in the pursuit of a more sensitive and sophisticated approach to the subject that he wrote this book.

In this volume I have treated the problem entirely from the former point of view, since there has been hitherto a tendency to neglect as of small value the stories of the Christianized peoples. However, for illustrative material I have drawn freely on works dealing with the non-Christian tribes, particularly in the case of stories that seem to be native; and I shall use the term ‘native’ to mean merely ‘existent in the Islands before the Spaniards went there.’³¹³

Amidst a colonialist discourse that subdivided subject populations according to their degrees of distance from civilized ways of living, Fansler adopted a relatively more egalitarian stance. He still maintained the broad distinction between civilized and primitive, but through his study of Filipinos’ oral traditions, he came to disregard all together the elaborate hierarchies of uncivilized difference that Beyer would make his name of articulating.

This was not the first time that folkloric research led a scholar to see a fundamental oneness of Filipino populations. Isabelo de los Reyes, the pioneer folklorist in Philippine history, himself came to such a conclusion much earlier. He wrote around 1890, “There are Aetas whose intelligence exceeds that of the Tagalogs; and it is already known that the Tagalogs are at the same intellectual level as that of the Europeans.”³¹⁴ This was a radical assertion not only according to the standards of the Spanish colonizers like Retana and Pablo

³¹² Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales*, vi. Emphasis added.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Quoted in Wenceslao E. Retana, *Sinapsismos (Bromitas y Critiquillas)* (Manila: Librería “Amigos del País,” 1890), 43.

Feced; but also according to de los Reyes's compatriots, who endeavored to demonstrate they were as Graciano Lopez Jaena put it, "as Spanish as Spain" (*tan española como la vuestra*), and *not* fundamentally similar to "savages" like the Aetas.³¹⁵ Obviously Fansler and de los Reyes's positions in the colonial hierarchy differed when they wrote these things. What this shows, nonetheless, is that for at least a couple of the more exceptional Philippine folklorists, sustained oral traditions research brought them to the conclusion that Filipinos were all more alike than not.

Whereas Beyer collected widely and chaotically, perfunctorily analyzed his folk records, and concocted grandiose claims based upon them—or more often set up his evidence to fit his conclusions—Fansler concentrated his efforts on garnering a massive collection of one type of oral tradition, the folktale, examined his recordings judiciously, and proposed working theses about Filipino history and culture only so far as his source materials would allow him to do so. These facts explain contemporary scholars' use and appreciation of his works today; they also explain why despite his superior scholarship he did not achieve the fame of a Beyer, a Jose E. Marco (the infamous fabricator of prehispanic historical materials), or any of his other contemporaries who contoured their work to fit nationalist narratives.³¹⁶ His studies were interesting in their own ways, but they did not contribute to a distinctly *Filipino* cultural history. Or, at least, the ways in which they did were more difficult to grasp from the vantage point of the 1910s and 1920s. After all, the very names of the metrical romances—corridos, pasyons, comedias—not to mention their characters, settings, etc., were all things that clearly indicated an original Spanish provenance, despite their wild popularity throughout the Philippines for centuries and up to Fansler's time. On a

³¹⁵ Graciano Lopez Jaena, "Filipinas en la Exposición Universal de Barcelona," in *Conferencias públicas relativas á la Exposición universal de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Tipo.-Lito. De Busquets y Bidal, 1889), 240.

³¹⁶ Michael Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines: What the Social Life of Jose E. Marco's Forgeries and Ahmed Chalabi Can Tell Us about the Epistemology of Empire," in Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2009), pp. 260-272.

superficial level, then, his work could be seen as validating the *lack* of Filipino originality because of its dependence on “foreign” traditions, even though, as I have tried to show, his studies were much more nuanced. This is why he never achieved the posthumous fame in the way Beyer did. Fansler was, in that way, quite unlike another American who pioneered the recording of a distinct epic, Frank Laubach.

Laubach and the “Odyssey of Lanao”

Frank Charles Laubach (1884-1970) lived a long and fruitful life as a global missionary. His signature achievement was the creation of the literacy program “Each One Teach One,” which made use of simplified phonemic charts of keywords with images to teach illiterates to read in sometimes as little as an hour. Once a student acquired a rudimentary comprehension of orthography, she could, in turn, teach another person to read just as rapidly, hence its name. It was an innovative, inexpensive, and highly effective way to teach masses of people who did not have the benefit of classrooms or formally trained teachers to read. In its earliest iterations it was referred to as “The Philippine Method” or “The Lanao Method” because Laubach developed it while sojourning in Mindanao as a missionary from 1915 to the 1930s. Once they learned to read, the Maranaos clamored for any type of printed materials they could find. Given the absence of a widespread literary tradition in the Lanao region (although not writing altogether), Laubach and his colleagues labored feverishly to translate works of fiction and nonfiction into Maranao, founded the bilingual fortnightly *Lanao Progress* (its motto: “Packed to the Corners with Important Knowledge”), and collected and published local folklore to meet the need. It was while collecting folklore that he came across a lengthy oral tradition he published in two installments as “An Odyssey from Lanao” (1930). This was in fact the first recording of the epic now called *Darangen*. Unbeknown to Laubach, thirty years before, a surgeon in the U.S.

Army recorded an oral tradition he called “The Story of Bantugan” (1902), which centered on the epic hero of the *Darangen*, but he published his recording in prose and in so doing did not convey the form in which it was originally recited; hence whether it was an lengthy or short performance, recited in verse or prose, part of a ritual or non-ritual event, among other questions, is unclear.³¹⁷ Because Laubach recorded what he termed to be an “epic,” and because he devoted so much of his energies in the 1930s to collecting Moro literature and articulating its cultural significance, he has become the figure who has received recognition as the “pioneer worker” and “pioneer mover” of Maranao literature.³¹⁸

Laubach came to the Philippines originally to spread Christianity, not literacy. The story of how he experienced a conversion of sorts, transforming from an ordinary Protestant missionary into a literacy evangelist, and how his experiment in Dansalan (now Marawi) became a global program, is suitably recounted in his biographies.³¹⁹ The crucial moment in this story for the history of Philippine epics is when, after he was able to teach a handful of Maranaos to read in 1929, and they in turn were able to teach others, he had to meet the insatiable demand for reading materials. So he and his wife and a few colleagues set out to manufacture literature for the Maranaos, in every way possible. One solution to the problem was simple: import books. For the gradually increasing population among them who could read English, he imported whatever books he could from friends inside the colony and beyond and stored them in what he the “Lanao Library” he founded, which loaned out books to the community on an honor system. By February of 1932, not even three years into his

³¹⁷ Ralph S. Porter, “The Story of Bantugan,” *Journal of American Folklore* vol. 15 no. 58 (July-Sept. 1902): 143-161.

³¹⁸ N. Timan Madale, “Maranao Forms of Oral Literature,” in Francisco R. Demetrio, ed., *Dialogue for Development: Papers from the First National Congress of Philippine Folklore and Other Scholars* (Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro, December 27-30, 1972) (Cagayan de Oro: Xavier Univ. Press, 1975), 311; and Nagasura T. Madale, “Maranao Forms of Oral Literature,” in his *Tales from Lake Lanao and Other Essays* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2001), 5.

³¹⁹ David E. Mason, *Frank C. Laubach, Teacher of Millions* (Minneapolis: T.S. Denison, 1967); idem, *Apostle to the Illiterates* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Pub. House, 1966); Marjorie Medary, *Each One Teach One: Frank Laubach, Friend to Millions* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1954); Helen M. Roberts, *Champion of the Silent Billion: The Story of Frank C. Laubach* (St. Paul: Macalester Park Pub. Co., 1961). His autobiographical account is, Frank C. Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak* (New York: Friendship Press, 1943).

sojourn in Dansalan, its holdings could boast over three thousand volumes.³²⁰ And by 1938 he reported that upwards of three hundred books per month were being borrowed, which is why he was constantly soliciting donations for more.³²¹ Another way to meet the need was to bring in a printing press and help the Maranaos to create their own reading materials. Laubach printed a large volume of materials himself in both Maranao and English. He notes, “In the ten-year period preceding [1931-41] we had published booklets with stories of the Old Testament prophets, running both the Bible and Koran accounts in the same volume. We had printed *Luke* in Maranaw; and when the war broke out the American Bible Society was in the process of printing *Acts*. We had printed three editions of an English-Maranao dictionary, with definitions of ten thousand words.”³²²

More important than these borrowed books and smaller publications were the two major types of reading materials whose production he oversaw, the bilingual fortnightly newspaper *Lanao Progress* and Maranao folklore. Given present-day Marawi’s deplorable lack of news coverage—there is no local newspaper, television station, or even regionally-focused website, which compounds the tendency of larger media outlets, whether Manila- or Mindanao-based to focus only rarely on the “Islamic City,” and even then only seemingly when it furthers the image of a den of criminality and terrorism—*Lanao Progress* probably ranks historically as the most important attempt to create a vehicle for gathering and disseminating information on the Lake Lanao region. The paper was published continuously every two weeks, generally without interruption, from 1933 to 1940. Spanning four eight and one-half by eleven-inch, double-sided pages in length in its first year, it expanded to twelve or more thereafter. Its title page often included photographs of local events, people, or

³²⁰ *Lanao Progress* vol. 1 no. 4, 1932, “More Books for Lanao,” February 15.

³²¹ Laubach to his friends, April 8, 1938, Frank C. Laubach Collection, Syracuse University Library, Special Collections Research Center, Box 98 Folder 2.

³²² Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak*, 74.

settings, and was framed by a design inspired by Maranao architectural forms.³²³ Its page layout typically consisted of two columns, the first in English and the second in Maranao translation, although this was not always the case; at times whole sections would be in one language or the other with no accompanying translation. It was financed at first with donations and Laubach's own money, but later grew to subsist off of subscription fees and advertisements, which usually appeared on its latter pages. The range of topics it treated was wide and diverse. As one would expect, it covered items of local, national, and international news, typically written in an instructive tone, because its audience had never before had so much exposure to events outside at such regular intervals. The paper also provided information designed to ease and facilitate modern living, such as explanations of the chemical properties of everyday objects, guidance in matters of hygiene, scientific advice on agriculture, and more—pedagogical items of every sort. Laubach and his staff penned most of these items, particularly during the newspaper's early years, but they also encouraged and printed stories, news items, and notifications from members of the community. Given the absence of other printed media from the time, it is difficult to fully know how Maranaos in provincial Lanao understood this novel form of news.³²⁴ Based upon the obviously community-authored entries (about social events, local businesses, and more), however, it would seem they took to publishing and reading the paper enthusiastically. Aside from quotidian topics, *Lanao Progress* also promised something that distinguished it from the typical newspaper, something that was also of immediate use and significance but that was conceived of with an eye towards posterity: the first publications of Maranao folklore.

Laubach's interest in Maranao folklore began unexpectedly. "I knew that the Moros were fond of singing," he wrote,

³²³ Cf. Abdullah T. Madale, *The Maranao Torogan* (Quezon City: Rex Book Store, Inc., 1996).

³²⁴ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "The News in the Provinces," in Renato Rosaldo, ed., *Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2003), pp. 192-222.

but I did not know anything about the quantity or quality of their songs until last February [1930] when I spent two days on a boat with 35 of the leading Moros, who had been up to the annual carnival in Manila. Two men sang all day and part of the night. When I inquired what these songs were, I learned that they told the stories of the ancient Moro heroes, particularly Bantugan, the fabled ancestor of them all. So upon my return to Lanao I began to inquire about Bantugan, and soon found men who could give me parts of the tale while I wrote phonetically on the typewriter what they recited.³²⁵

What began as an incidental interest transformed, two years later when he began *Lanao Progress*, into a culturally significant undertaking for missionary and Moro alike. Seeing the potential collecting and publishing folklore and *Darangen* epics in particular offered as reading materials, Laubach urged the Maranaos to collect whatever they could so that he could publish it in their newspaper. Because such recordings symbolized the literary and cultural revolution he sought to initiate, he assigned them a prominent place, as the final page of most issues in the paper's run. They were always published in Romanized Maranao alone, without English translation—or even explanation. If one was not already familiar with the language, the paper itself, the community, or the missionary's interest in epics, one would not know what these were. One would be able to guess that, based upon its form, it was some sort of poem, but that would be all that one could surmise.

This was all very unique in the history of Philippine oral traditions. At no other time had a collector of epics sought to publish recordings for immediate consumption in the communities from which they were drawn. In Dansalan in the 1930s, the epic became an insouciantly readable, comprehensible, locally valuable document. Even if readers could not make out every word in the text, they could more or less understand most of it—at least more than any reader of untranslated epic materials before or since. Maranaos also understood the performative conventions found on the printed page, such as the term *Tamat*, which ends an oral narrative. It was community-based epic production and consumption. Although Laubach began the process of collecting, it was the Maranaos who took on the reins thereafter and did

³²⁵ Frank Laubach, "An Odyssey from Lanao," *Philippine Public Schools* vol. 3 no. 8 (Nov. 1930): 359.

the lion's share of recording. And unlike perhaps every other recorder in Philippine history, they did so for the express purpose of creating readable documents, and fostering local pride. The *Darangen* published in *Lanao Progress* represented the exceptional instance of a community being the prime movers behind the recording, printing, and then reading their own epics—once Laubach got the ball rolling.

Contemporary scholars make some mention of *Darangen* recordings first published in *Lanao Progress*, but the other sorts of folklore Laubach showcased in the paper have been forgotten completely. In addition to epic chants, he used the fortnightly to circulate recordings of folk stories, legends, proverbs, and other various sorts of oral traditions. Over time, he culled and published them as a small book titled *Fascinating Glimpses of Lanao*, which went through four printings by 1940. Its foreword explains: “The folklore contained in this volume was first printed in *Lanao Progress*. It was contributed by young Maranaws and others who collected the material from older men and women. No similar collection can be found in any other volume in the world.”³²⁶ Nearly impossible to find today, it was obviously a literary sensation in its time and place.

Ironically, however, these oral traditions published in *Lanao Progress* are not the ones he is remembered for. Laubach is known instead to Philippine folklorists today for “An Odyssey of Lanao,” his translation into English of the *Darangen* that was published in two installments in the teachers' journal *Philippine Public Schools* in 1930. In its time teachers, missionaries familiar with Laubach and his work, and the very small cadre of oral traditions scholars, primarily Americans, read it. Today the recording exists as a historical footnote, known to a very small number of anthropologists and folklorists, and read only by a minority of them, usually in some literary anthology. It was even difficult to find in the Philippines in the decades following its publication. Although Asuncion David Maramba excerpted it in her

³²⁶ Frank Laubach, *Fascinating Glimpses of Lanao: Folklore, Customs, Wise Sayings, Sacred Places*, 4th ed. (Dansalan: Maranaw Folk School Press, 1940), Foreword.

literature textbook *Early Philippine Literature: From Ancient Times to 1940* (first edition, 1965), it was nearly impossible to find otherwise. E. Arsenio Manuel, the most intrepid of researcher of epic materials and a highly adept scourer of Philippine archives, complained in 1969 that he could not find a copy of the piece anywhere in the Philippines; nor could he find copies of *Lanao Progress* to consult for the untranslated originals.³²⁷ Of course, with the publication of Ma. Delia Coronel's magnificent multivolume *Darangen* (1986-1993), serious readers today—the precious few that exist—have little reason to consult Laubach's historical curio.

In his first installment of “An Odyssey of Lanao,” Laubach includes a preface to his textualized recording in which he discusses how he stumbled upon the song, its general features, its cultural significance, what Maranaos themselves say about it, and his process of recording it. Without knowing so, he reiterates a lot of the information about this sort of oral tradition that earlier scholars, most notably Alzina, had discovered: that they are “full of words never used in ordinary conversation,” that they are sung at night, that they have “a great deal of repetition,” and more. His opening words indicate how Laubach viewed the epic's significance.

The Moros of the Lake Lanao region have an amazingly rich literature, all the more amazing since it exists only in the memories of the people and has just begun to be reduced to writing. It consists of lyric and epic poetry, with the epic greatly predominating. These Moros are in their Homeric period. Their ‘Iliads’ [*sic*] and ‘Odysseys’ they call *darañgan*.³²⁸

Not merely a masterpiece of the Maranaos own heritage, it was a clear indication they possessed the vitality of other great civilizations like the Ancient Greeks. What is most significant about this passage, however, is not this actual claim. Rather we should consider

³²⁷ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 1969), 21. He seems to have been unaware that some issues could be found in the National Library and at the school library at Dansalan College, which Laubach himself founded decades before.

³²⁸ Laubach, “An Odyssey from Lanao,” 359.

the man who uttered it, the moment in which it was written, and what the function of making such claims really is.

As far as he seems to have been aware of it, the history of the Maranaos had changed very little up until into Laubach's time. As he writes,

the friars never controlled Lanao because Mohammedanism arrived first. It did not come with the sword, and, even if it had tried, could not have destroyed the earlier culture. As a matter of fact, the Islamic priests made no effort to stamp out pagan songs, but on the contrary enjoyed them as much as the rest of the people. This is why, for the first time, you are to read a very remarkable survival of the period before either Islam or Christianity had ever heard of the Philippines. Portions of the poem you are about to read may be a thousand years old.³²⁹

What had changed in their history was the arrival of the Americans, and especially the entry of Laubach and his literacy program into Dansalan. He was the reason that this "amazingly rich literature... has just begun to be reduced to writing." Through the medium of the written word, he was able to monumentalize their oral epics so that they themselves and others might recognize and venerate them. He mainly sought to provide them with a means of connecting themselves to others, of engaging the modern world. Publicizing their epics through this journal article did function on one level to instill admiration for his beloved Maranaos. But on another, more subtle level, it also left a historical imprint of this missionary's work. If, after all, these Moros were as great as the Ancient Greeks, why did it take a highly educated, outsider from the metropole to state as much so emphatically? The epic alone was not worth consideration; so too was its recorder.

Laubach's recording of what he called "An Odyssey of Lanao" was one of many publications that grew out of his literacy campaign in Lanao in the 1930s, most of which have been long forgotten, but it was in many ways the perfect symbol of everything he hoped to accomplish by teaching illiterates to read and write. The publication of the epic showcased the progress the Maranaos made in transitioning from the portion of humanity he termed

³²⁹ Ibid., 360-361.

“The Silent Billion”—an ironic label for these rich oral cultures—into being fully literate, modern beings, who could attend schools, read newspapers, vote, and so on. Writing allowed them to render visible their cultural heritage, which otherwise remained invisible to the world at large—which is not something that ever seemed to matter to them before. While Laubach was not an egotist in the mold of Beyer, he was neither a silent author in this process. He was the catalyst for these changes, and his historic first recording of the *Darangen* serves in part to leave an imprint of his evangelical labors.

The Lure of the Primitive

The American folklore revolution in the Philippines during the first decades of the twentieth centuries resulted in a number of approaches to the study of oral traditions. In some cases the lengthy oral traditions were called “epics” by their recorders; in others, they were not. Fansler never showed any real interest in recording and venerating epics in the way that Beyer and Laubach did; he was joined in this effort by Fay Cooper Cole, his wife Mabel Cook Cole, Fletcher Gardner, among many others. Yet on balance, the work of all of these anthropologists and folklorists seems to have effected the rise of one genre above all others—the epic—even as many other sorts were still collected. How and why this happened has to do with a few factors—Beyer’s prominence, his work’s resonance with colonial rule, the lack of any challenging vision, and the work of the post-independence scholars.

Despite the highly problematic nature of his scholarship, for better or for worse Beyer was the voice of Philippine anthropology in the Philippines for the first half of the twentieth century. As Lynch put it, “Beyer’s paramount claim to honor, the ultimate source of his greatness,” was that he, “started the anthropological enterprise in the Philippines, and he kept it going, single-handed, a long, long time.”³³⁰ He had the unmatched ability and authority to

³³⁰ Lynch, “Henry Otley Beyer,” 7.

impose his vision of scholarship over generations of Filipinos, without serious challenge. However spurious his findings were, however unsystematic his process was did not matter. Nor did it matter that the whole field had moved far beyond anthropology as he practiced it. In the field of Philippine anthropology, he was king—or perhaps datu? His understanding of oral traditions—that epics were preeminent, that they could provide us with answers to our great questions, and that they should be recorded towards that end—became hegemonic within the field.

A large part of Beyer’s success is attributable to the tendency of his scholarship to reinforce colonialist thinking. One of his most influential ideas was his so-called wave migration theory, which posited that cultural differences among present day Filipinos were the result historic periods of immigration by discrete peoples such as the Indians, Chinese, Arabs, etc.³³¹ He first promulgated this theory in his essay “Non-Christian Peoples of the Philippines,” which he prepared for the 1918 census.³³² In the ensuing decades he amassed copious amounts of evidence—which consisted not of skeletal remains taken from various sites throughout the globe as was the convention but instead of potsherds taken from archaeological dig sites within the Philippines alone, whose provenance he never made clear—which he employed to supposedly validate his theory. Thirty years later, he gave the theory even wider currency by publishing it as a supplement to the periodical *The Evening News* (1947) and in the “Historical Introduction” to E. Arsenio Manuel’s *Chinese Elements in the Tagalog Language* (1948)—timely moves given the growing interest in the Filipino past that followed independence and, by that point, Beyer’s well-established stature as an

³³¹ For a brief overview of the rise and demise of the wave migration theory, see William Henry Scott, *Looking for the Prehispanic Filipino* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), 8-9; and idem, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1994), 10-11.

³³² See the excerpted volume, H. Otley Beyer, *The Non-Christian Peoples of the Philippines* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1921).

archaeologist.³³³ Textbooks subsequently reprinted the theory and thereafter generations of Filipinos learned it in schools. Although a few but declining number of high school primers still perpetuate the idea as accepted science,³³⁴ no serious anthropologist accepts it today. After all, as the historian William Henry Scott has pointed out, “the fact that Filipinos in Manila eat (?) at McDonald’s hamburgers but those in Bontoc do not does not require one more wave migration to explain it.”³³⁵ What is worth remarking about the wave migration theory is its resonance with colonialist conceptions of history. It is, as Rafael has pointed out, a

narrative of the peopling of the archipelago [that] imagines the Philippines to have been a tabula rasa settled by successive waves of colonizers. As such the racial and tribal diversity of the population can be explained in temporal terms as the inevitable retreat of darker-skinned, more savage inhabitants in the face of advancing groups of lighter-skinned, more civilized, and physically superior conquerors. Indeed, the epochal break between the prehistoric to the properly historical era occurs only with the arrival of the Spaniards. Racial differences result then from a long history of colonization culminating, presumably, in the arrival of the strongest, most progressive, and lightest-skinned colonizer to date: whites from the United States. The effect of racializing both the social structure and cultural history of the Philippines is to position the population in a derivative relationship to the outside. It is as if the country was naturally destined for conquest just as the United States was manifestly destined to colonize it.³³⁶

The wave migration theory naturalized the presence of outsiders like Beyer in the Philippines and legitimated their domination. It epitomizes how his scholarship worked to authorize not merely American colonial authority, but his own. On a more general level, Beyer’s romanticization of his beloved Ifugaos had resonance with powerful officials like Dean C. Worcester, a Secretary of the Interior, who harbored notions of noble savagery.³³⁷

Perhaps Fansler’s more sober, thoughtful, methodologically rigorous vision of folklore

³³³ H. Otley Beyer and Jaime C. de Veyra, *Philippine Saga: A Pictorial History of the Archipelago* (Manila: The Evening News, 1947); and H. Otley Beyer, “Historical Introduction,” in E. Arsenio Manuel, *Chinese Elements in the Tagalog Language: With Some Indication of Chinese Influence on Other Philippine Languages and Cultures, and an Excursion into Austro-Asiatic Linguistics* (Manila: Filipiniana Publications, 1948), pp. vii-xxv.

³³⁴ E.g. Gregorio F. Zaide and Sonia M. Zaide, *Philippine History and Government*, 6th ed. (Quezon City: All Nations Publishing, 2004), chap. 3.

³³⁵ Scott, *Barangay*, 11.

³³⁶ Vicente L. Rafael, “White Love: Census and Melodrama in the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines,” in his *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), 36.

³³⁷ Rodney J. Sullivan, *Exemplar of Americanism: The Philippine Career of Dean C. Worcester* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, Univ. of Michigan, 1991), see esp. chap. 6.

studies could have posed a challenge to the status quo, but he died sooner, invested himself less in UP academic society, and seems not to have had half of Beyer's megalomania. He also moved around a lot; he took up a revolving series of teaching posts at universities in the colony and metropole. He was at the Philippine Normal School from 1908-1910, the UP from 1910-1914, Columbia from 1914-1921, the UP again from 1921-1924, Brown from 1927-1931, Far Eastern University in 1937 after a hiatus from teaching, and finally back to the UP from 1938-1941, the year of the outbreak of the war.³³⁸ The reasons for this are unclear—he left a small paper trail and none of his colleagues or students seem to have known him well enough to say anything about him. The one person who might have been able to offer an alternative vision of oral traditions scholarship proved unable to do so.

Finally, because of his prominent position, Beyer was able to attract a number of bright graduate students whom he trained and through them perpetuated his brand of scholarship in some ways. I have cited a few of their recollections of him in this chapter, such as Lynch, Solheim, and Manuel's. The most important for the history of recording epics is Manuel, who largely pioneered the field in the post-independence era, as I will discuss in the following chapter. Manuel cut his teeth as one of Beyer's assistants in gathering folklore materials at the UP. He went on to become a much more methodologically rigorous, prolific, and thoughtful folklorist and epic recorder particularly than his mentor ever was. Manuel never questioned Beyer's core assumptions about the procedures of epic scholarship, even though he undertook such research in the pursuit of distinctly different goals.

³³⁸ E. Arsenio Manuel, "The Contributions of Dean S. Fansler to Philippinesian Folk Literature," *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* vol. 46 nos. 1-2 (Jan.-June 1982): 99-100.

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE GARDEN OF E. ARSENIO MANUEL

Philippine literature as part of world literature is budding and about to flower. Yet a full flowering, not many know, had already taken place long ago in many aboriginal gardens. What is needed today is that these flowers of literature be picked and collected steadily and quickly lest they disappear forever. Then can we have a bouquet from every ethnic culture (each an aspect of Philippine literature) that can be made available in both original text and translation for literate men everywhere.

Manuel, *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*³³⁹

I have raised myself a monument not made by human hands,
The path of the people to it will never grow over,
Its insubordinate head has risen higher
Than the Alexandrian Pillar

Pushkin, *Exegi Monumentum*³⁴⁰

“The returns for pioneering work” of folklore collection, E. Arsenio Manuel wrote in his *Guide for the Study of Philippine Folklore* (1985), “or significant writings on the traditional literature of any ethnic or social group is eternal: lasting remembrance for the student by the ethnic or social community studied, and most likely even the nation itself. I need not cite here, the monumental works of the Grimm brothers, nor of Lonnrot for the Finnish nation. In our country, the names of Pedro A. Paterno, Jose Rizal, Isabelo de los Reyes, Carlos Ronquillo and others are already inscribed in its roll of honor.”³⁴¹ This was the message Manuel wanted to communicate to high school and university students about the meaning of folklore collection, that to go to far-off provinces and record oral traditions would result in the recorder—and not necessarily the recordings themselves—being turned into an object of veneration. What then was the significance of the folk tradition itself? Earlier he asserted, “The where or who of this collecting activity does not matter much,” and one would think this were true given that his work contained repeated and passionate exhortations to record

³³⁹ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding: The Second Song of the Manuvu’ Ethnoepic Tuwaang* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1975), x.

³⁴⁰ This is taken from Catriona Kelly, *Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 11.

³⁴¹ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Guide for the Study of Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City: Philippine Folklore Society, 1985), third unnumbered page (iii?).

folklore in workmanlike fashion.³⁴² Perhaps in this *Guide* he was simply trying to speak to increasingly self-aware Filipino youths, people who were in the process of determining the course of the rest of their lives. But here he seemed to be saying that the function of folklore collection was to bestow recognition on the creator rather than foster an appreciation of the creation. Hence his statement that the American era folklorist Dean S. Fansler's "*Filipino Popular Tales* was the result of his assiduous effort and a true monument to his scholarship."³⁴³ It was a monument to Fansler's scholarship but not to the Filipinos who invented them? Was this the ultimate purpose of folklore: to create a pantheon of collectors whose names were "inscribed in its roll of honor?"

The rise of folklore studies in the post-independence period (1946-1980s) raised these and a number of other vexing questions about the growing practice of collecting oral traditions. This was the time when recording epics became the professionalized, highly methodical, culturally meaningful enterprise we recognize today. Although, as we have seen, there were precedents reaching as far back as the late nineteenth century, nothing equaled the scale of collections that took place beginning in the 1950s. There were several folklorists during this time that pioneered its practice. Francis Lambrecht, Belgian missionary of the C.I.C.M. order, produced a monumental study and textualization of the Ifugao *Hudhud* and two of the Kalinga *Ullalim*; E. Arsenio Manuel two recordings of the Manuvu' *Tuwaang* and one of the Ilianon *Agyu*; F. Landa Jocano the Panayan *Epic of Labaw Donggon* and *Hinilawod*; Elena Maquiso a multivolume collection of the Manobo *Ulahingan*; Juan Francisco *Maharadia Lawana*; and Ma. Delia Coronel the Maranao *Darangen*. All of them

³⁴² E. Arsenio Manuel, "Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* vol. 8 no. 1 (1980), 8. This is a slightly revised, shortened version of an earlier piece, "Philippinesian Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice," in *Proceedings of the 3rd National Folklore Congress, November 26-30, 1976*, intro. Alfredo Tiamson, published as *Mindanao Journal* vol. 4 nos. 1-4 (July 1977-June 1978): 45-76. It is unclear why he changed the title from the first to the second versions. Because the latter is less concerned with providing a running bibliography of folkloric works than the former, I will refer to that one most often in this chapter.

³⁴³ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 1969), 9.

were professors at state universities, libraries or museums in the Philippines, most of which had been established under American colonialism. As one practitioner asked and answered, “Who are our folklorists today? The majority of researchers in the field, as in other areas of Philippine studies, come from the graduate schools.”³⁴⁴ Lambrecht alone, a missionary, departed from this trend. He was part of a Catholic order that originated in Belgium but which was tied ultimately to the Vatican. Each recorder made their particular contribution to the enterprise of collection but in terms of writing about the importance of the epic genre—its formal features, history, meaning, methods for collecting, value—none of them wrote as voluminously or passionately as Manuel. More than any other single collector, it was Manuel who indefatigably worked to articulate and campaign for the importance of the epic genre in the post-independence Philippines. As one of his colleagues put it in a paragraph devoted to a single sentence: “The dean of them all is the Filipino Pioneer E. Arsenio Manuel whose contribution to folklore theory and research in the Philippines is remarkable.”³⁴⁵ More than any other body of texts his writings relate to us the history of the field as it evolved from 1946 onward.

In this chapter I will discuss the early post-independence history of Philippine epics, from roughly the late 1950s to the 1980s. I will do this by focusing mostly on Manuel’s career as a folklorist, but will occasionally pivot to the works and efforts of other recorders where relevant. My principal aim will be to show that collecting epics provided a means of monumentalizing Filipino culture, of creating something truly indigenous in the face of an absent colonial past. I will begin by examining an early call to collect oral traditions by the poet and later epic recorder Amador Daguio, “The Malayan Spell and the Creation of a Literature,” which turned out to be very influential for a number of post-independence folklorists, including Manuel. Daguio’s essay helps to explain why oral traditions, and epics

³⁴⁴ Erlinda Alburo, “Continuing and Emerging Directions in Contemporary Philippine Folklore Studies,” *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* vol. 20 no. 2/3 (June/Sept., 1992), 210.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

in particular, took on a singular value as literary forms. Next I will chart the rise of the practice of epic collecting through an examination of Manuel's career against the historical backdrop of a gradual but increasing cultural nationalism that peaked during the Marcos era. Following this I will examine what Manuel and his colleagues' highly specialized approach to recording epics transformed the vocal narratives into. Lastly, I will conclude by exploring what broader social changes the post-independence recorders brought about in their pursuit of popularizing folklore.

A Nation from Nothing

The nationalist project to collect epics grew out of a yearning for a heritage Filipinos in some ways uniquely lacked. Michael Salman has aptly characterized their condition of an absent past.

Philippine history is not just punctuated with lacunae, as are all national histories; it is periodized by the near total absence of precolonial monuments and surviving precolonial indigenous written sources. Whereas other nations of Southeast Asia point, however fancifully, to the monuments of ancient dynastic and religious centers as evidence of their past (Angkor, Borobudur, Ayutthaya), Filipinos have not inherited similar court traditions and stone remains.³⁴⁶

With no ancient remains to which they might anchor their sense of self, nationalistic Filipinos sought for other means of articulating who they were. Wittingly or not, this was the impetus that underlay the rise of epic collection of that began in the late 1950s. If monuments did not exist, then they could perhaps be created.

In a practical sense, the fact that the epic was held up as the foremost literary genre after independence should seem at least somewhat strange. If one were to search for a literary form that could be used to monumentalize the Filipino people, surely one could find a more practical candidate. Recorded oral epics are, after all, highly stylized oral narratives in their

³⁴⁶ Michael Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines: What the Social Life of Jose E. Marco's Forgeries and Ahmed Chalabi Can Tell Us about the Epistemology of Empire," in Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 263.

origination, they are recited in languages few Filipinos speak, and are accordingly laborious to collect; they resist translation, make for wearying reading, and confound interpretation. The question becomes, then, why did the post-independence anthropologists like Manuel, labor so passionately towards the cause of its collection and valorization. The answer is, mainly, because recording epics made possible the production of a uniquely Filipino literature. The most exceptional novels, for instance, were generally written in colonial languages, whether in Spanish during the nineteenth century or English during the twentieth; and as such they were conceived in imitation of European models.³⁴⁷ Folklore offered something different; it was, by contrast with novels, say, something that could be said to have had definite roots in the archipelago. Although the practice of recording epics itself began in Europe in the 1820s, when Elias Lönnrot assembled the songs that became the *Kalevala*, the transcription of one's local oral traditions made for literary products that were "indigenous" in ways other literary genres could never aspire to be, at least in the Philippines. The idea that oral traditions could be used as the basis for a national literature and culture was something at least a few Filipinos began to think very seriously about during the late American era.

A short essay written in 1937, Amador Daguio's "The Malayan Spell and the Creation of a Literature," published in *Philippine Magazine*, had a profound effect on a number of post-independence epic scholars.³⁴⁸ It is not clear when he first read it, but the

³⁴⁷ The quintessential Filipino novel is Rizal's *Noli*, of course. About Rizal and his colleagues' literary movement, see Megan Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). On the American period, see, e.g., Edna Zapanta-Manlapaz, *Filipino Women Writers in English: Their Story, 1905-2002* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2003); Francisco G. Tonogbanua, *Philippine Literature in English* (Manila: Delna Enterprises, 1984); Josephine Bass Serrano and Trinidad Maño Ames, eds., *A Survey of Filipino Literature in English, from Apprenticeship to Contemporary, with a Preview of the Early Stages of Filipino Literature* (Quezon City: Phoenix Pub. House, Inc., 1988); Visitacion de la Torre, ed., *A Survey of Contemporary Philippine Literature in English* (Quezon City: National BookStore, 1978); and Richard V. Croghan, ed., *The Development of Philippine Literature in English (since 1900)* (Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Pub. House, 1975). There are, of course exceptions to this. See, e.g. Resil G. Mojares, *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel until 1940*, 1998 ed. (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1998), chaps. 5 and 6; and Rio Alma, *Unang Siglo ng Nobela sa Pilipinas* (Pasig City: Anvil Pub., 2009).

³⁴⁸ Rio Alma, *Huling Hudhud ng Sanlibong Pagbabalik at Paglimot para sa Filipinas Kong Mahal* (Quezon City: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2009), 29; Florentino H. Hornedo, "Why Folklore and Traditional Oral Literature?" *St. Louis University Research Journal* vol. 13 nos. 1-2 (Mar.-June, 1982): 117; Manuel, *Agyu*, 7-10;

essay served as a call to arms for Manuel, who cited it in a number of his works and even responded directly to its assertions. In the essay, a young Daguió, looking back into the oblivion of Filipino national history, laments the absence of a literary tradition and as a means of creating one, proposes the collection of oral traditions. Its well known first paragraph (among oral traditions scholars) reads,

We suffer from a variety of handicaps in creating a national literature. We do not, in the first place, possess a literary tradition. Other peoples have their Homer, their Virgil, their Shakespeare, their Cervantes, their Moliere, their Dante, their Goethe. America shares in the literary traditions of England. We have nothing to which we can refer, nothing that serves us as a stimulus or a pattern for autochthonous work. Whatever our forebears achieved of that nature has now been lost. We have no natural fathers; we are like adopted children, ignorant of whatever inheritance of genius may course through our veins. We have, it is true, our oral traditions and our songs, but they appear to be trifling.³⁴⁹

The Filipino nation's novelty—something Daguió takes for granted or is unaware of completely—leads him to see the vast empty space that characterized its prehistory. Here we can see him attempting to think through why such was the case. He goes on to bemoan how the Filipinos' orphan existence was a result of the country's languid climate and geography, and how those natural forces failed to transform the Filipinos into a hearty, literature-creating people—which is itself a melancholic instance of how deeply the author had himself internalized colonialist discourses about his brown inferiority. He then utters the key words that were to animate the spirit and in some cases the actual physical labor of the post-independence folklorists.

When I have suggested to our writers, therefore, the need of going back to our own folklore for inspiration rather than to follow foreign models, it was not because I believed that our own background is richer or as rich as that of other peoples, but because I am convinced that in an effort to recreate the Malayan spirit we might be

and idem, E. Arsenio Manuel, *Documenting Philippineasian: An Inquiry into the Ancestry of the Filipino People, Their Early Culture and Prehistory, Before the Christian Era* (Quezon City: The Philippineasian Society, 1994), 7.

³⁴⁹ Amador Daguió, "The Malayan Spell and the Creation of a Literature," *Philippine Magazine* 31:9 (317) Sept. 1934, 372. Both Hornedo ("Why Folklore and Traditional Oral Literature?") and Manuel (in both *Agyu* and *Documenting Philippineasian*) in fact cite this entire passage in their respective works and frame their discussions of folklore in response to it.

able to achieve something at least more worthy of ourselves than what is merely a ridiculous aping of what is foreign and foreign to our own feeling and thought.³⁵⁰

Here we see why he earlier described oral traditions as “trifling.” The notion that these utterances, the products of the uncivilized primitives of the mountainous interiors of the country, could be used as the basis for a “Filipino” literature was utterly repellant to literary authors in his day, a class of people who were mostly university educated, urban-dwelling (probably in the capitol), cosmopolitan, middle class, and English-speaking. From a cultural standpoint, their traditions and those of the Ifugaos, Manuvu’, and others, were worlds apart. For them, “Literature” referred to things like the authors Daguio cites, Virgil, Shakespeare, Dante, wrote, *not* folklore. Debates about literature in the post-independence era for the most part centered on just those genres of texts.³⁵¹ In advocating for the collection of oral traditions in 1937, Daguio was a lone voice howling in the wilderness.

The relatively privileged population of readers of *Philippine Magazine* probably came across “The Malayan Spell and the Creation of a Literature” when it appeared, but the piece slowly faded into obscurity thereafter, except, crucially, in the minds of a number of oral traditions scholars. For them, it in fact proved a continuing source of inspiration, if not outright provocation. We know of at least two consequences that happened as a direct result of the essay. First, in 1952, Daguio himself made good on his genuine desire to see oral traditions transmuted into literature by submitting a recording of an Ifugao *Hudhud* song for his MA thesis in English at Stanford, “Hudhud hi Aliguyon: A Translation of an Ifugao Harvest Song.”³⁵² It was one of the very first complete recordings of what is arguably the best known Philippine epic today. Second, it seems to have powerfully influenced Manuel, who reproduced its first paragraph in full and commented on it in two of his works, *Agyu*

³⁵⁰ Daguio, “The Malayan Spell and the Creation of a Literature,” 372.

³⁵¹ Caroline S. Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2000).

³⁵² Amador Taguinod Daguio, “Hudhud hi Aliguyon: A Translation of an Ifugao Harvest Song,” masters thesis (Stanford: Stanford Univ., 1952).

(1969) and *Documenting Philippineasian* (1994). Indeed, it could even be said that Manuel's entire career was devoted to validating Daguio's claim that oral traditions could be used as the basis for the national literature. It is unclear when Manuel first came across the essay. But what he did as a result of reading so is beyond doubt. Inspired by Daguio's call to arms, he would go on to pioneer the enterprise of recording epics as a cultural and nationally significant undertaking.

E Arsenio Manuel and the Rise of Epic Collection

So that we might have some idea of the man whose name became synonymous with recording epics, I will briefly sketch his biography. Esperidion Arsenio Manuel, the first of seven children, was born on Dec. 14, 1909, in Santo Domingo, a town in Nueva Ecija province in Central Luzon. Manuel later recalled that the town was "about half Ilocano and half Tagalog," and thus offered "a wealth of customs and practices which a mixed constituency offered for study, especially those related to marriage and burial, types of houses and wells, gardens in the fields, and so on." He was especially close to some of these customs, because his "father was a well-known storyteller and anecdotalist."³⁵³ Oral traditions were thus an intrinsic part of his culture. He completed elementary and middle school in his hometown. His early scholastic aptitude can be seen in his earning recognition as valedictorian in the seventh grade in 1923. He moved to the capitol region at some point thereafter for secondary education at East Manila High School, which he completed in 1927, and later undergraduate education at the University of Manila, which he completed in 1935. He continued his studies in the Philippines by completing coursework in library science prior to World War Two and earned an MA in anthropology at the University of the Philippines (hereafter "UP"), in 1954. Quite late into his life, well after he had begun his career as a

³⁵³ Manuel, "Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice," 7.

practicing folklorist, he completed his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Chicago in 1969. He published his dissertation as *Manuvu' Social Organization* in 1973.³⁵⁴

The UP was central to Manuel's career. Aside from being the place where he received his education, it was also the place where he worked for most of his life, even prior to becoming an academic. The first job he mentions having is as a student assistant for the Department of Anthropology at the UP, which he held from June 1927 to December 1929. Following this he became a library assistant, then senior bibliographic assistant and curator of archives before World War Two, and finally a law librarian from June to December 1945 at the UP Main Library. This work as a librarian, particularly during the Japanese occupation, seems to have impressed upon him the importance of archiving.³⁵⁵ The fact that war destroyed not only so much human life but also irreplaceable pieces of the country's patrimony—including many of his own family's personal possessions—had a traumatic effect on Manuel and would animate his future scholarly trajectory. It was after the war that he became a professor—alongside epic recorders Jocano (anthropology) and Francisco (Asian studies)—first of the Tagalog language and literature from 1946 to 1948 and then of anthropology from 1948 until his retirement in 1976. He continued to teach irregularly after his retirement as an emeritus.³⁵⁶ He died in 2003 at the age of ninety-four.

Manuel modeled his scholarly career on that of his mentor, H. Otley Beyer. Like Beyer, he collected folklore on a massive scale, tasked his students with recording for class assignments, and created a sizeable personal archive based upon these materials (which he called "The Pasig Papers"; they have unfortunately been lost). His approach to the study of oral traditions was similar too, although only in a basic sense. He upheld what was seemingly the most complex and lengthiest type, the epic, as the foremost among genres, claimed that it

³⁵⁴ Manuel, "The Contributions of E. Arsenio Manuel to Knowledge and Philippineasian Studies," p. 1, E. Arsenio Manuel Papers, Special Collections, University of the Philippines Main Library, University of the Philippines, Quezon City, Box 1.

³⁵⁵ Manuel, "A Checklist of the Writings of E. Arsenio Manuel 1933-1983," 207.

³⁵⁶ Manuel, "The Contributions of E. Arsenio Manuel to Knowledge and Philippineasian Studies," 1.

was the type that could be most profitably studied by scholars, and that posited that it had a much grander humanistic and national cultural significance.

But he also differed from his mentor in a few key respects. First, he was, simply put, a far more rigorous scholar. He had a much lengthier academic pedigree, dabbled in more numerous and diverse disciplines (biography, history, library science, linguistics, and literature, in addition to anthropology and folklore), published far more, and was much more involved with the scholarly world inside the Philippines and internationally, and not just small sections of it as Beyer had been. Second, obviously, was that Beyer was a white colonialist and Manuel a nationalist; the American expressed himself through his scholarship to Filipinos as a foreigner while Manuel did so as one of them. The most critical difference was in their different understandings of the meanings of oral traditions and the function of collecting them. For Beyer, recording the lengthy chants of the Ifugaos helped to map out the prehistory of mankind as it survived in these “primitive” Others. For Manuel, that same activity was a means of documenting the *national* past, not humanity’s. The Manuvu’, for instance, were not a strange race of aborigines fundamentally similar to their counterparts in Australia, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere; they were bona fide Filipinos. Studying their culture amounted to, “looking back at our primitive selves or appreciating the craft of our nonliterate brothers,” as Manuel put it in *Agyu*.³⁵⁷ Manuel’s singular concern with articulating the prehistory of the Filipino nation alone, perhaps the best expression of which can be found in his *Documenting Philippineasian* (1994), explains why he eschewed the larger history of the Philippines’ historic interactions with the larger Southeast Asian region and beyond throughout his career.³⁵⁸ Additionally, what Beyer viewed as a simple process of

³⁵⁷ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 1969), 10.

³⁵⁸ For a few of the canonical works, see O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1999); idem, *Early Southeast Asia: Selected Essays*, ed. Craig J. Reynolds (Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2008); George Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Sue Brown Cowing (Honolulu: East-West Center

such groups' relative isolation from colonialism, Manuel recast as anti-colonial resistance. As he saw it, these groups held onto and guarded a genuinely Filipino culture while others, those who lived within the ambit of Spanish colonialism, lost it over time. Collecting their epics allowed Manuel and his colleagues to showcase Filipinos' cultural authenticity, what was distinctive about them, much in the same way that national museums display and articulate the significance of their objects.³⁵⁹ They were the Filipino nation's essence.

Although he is mostly remembered as a folklorist and anthropologist, Manuel's first scholarly contributions had nothing to do with the study of oral traditions. In the 1930s and 1940s he produced sundry studies on Rizal, early Philippine history, and biographies of significant Filipinos—many of which he would later collect and publish in the multivolume *Dictionary of Philippine Biography*, first published in 1955—among other minor works.³⁶⁰ This was because, as a former student of his recalled, “he said he had originally planned to be a historian, but since his friend and contemporary Teodoro A. Agoncillo was already plowing that field, he decided to shift to anthropology and started by becoming one of the assistants of H. Otley Beyer.”³⁶¹ This is why it was not until 1952, when Manuel was in his early forties, that he published his first work on folklore, a short essay titled “Folk Literature,” for the short-lived journal *Philippines Quarterly*, which contained articles written mostly by young scholars on arts, culture, and current events, but which were intended for a larger reading audience.³⁶² It however impresses the reader as being more of a draft of an essay rather than a finished product. Perhaps because of this, he revised, expanded, and republished essentially this same essay three years later as “Notes on Philippine Folk Literature” for the *University*

Press, 1968); Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988 and 1993).

³⁵⁹ Benedict Anderson, “Census, Map, Museum,” *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), chap. 10.

³⁶⁰ Manuel, “A Checklist of the Writings of E. Arsenio Manuel 1933-1983,” 203-212.

³⁶¹ Ambeth Ocampo, “A Passion for History,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 18 Nov. 2008. Available online at: <http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/columns/view/20081121-173457/A-passion-for-history> [accessed 4 Oct. 2012].

³⁶² E. Arsenio Manuel, “Folk Literature” *The Philippines Quarterly* vol. 2 no. 1 (June 1952): 24-29.

of Manila Journal of East Asiatic Studies. This revised version contained an only slightly reworked (and better organized) discussion of the types of Filipino folklore, as well as a fuller elaboration of its significance. For that reason, it is the essay that merits our attention as Manuel's first true foray into folkloristics, as the first expression of field.

"Notes on Philippine Folk Literature" (1955) conveys many of the early, inchoate expressions of the methodology, thinking, and passion that would characterize Manuel's mature studies of oral traditions and epics in particular. In a basic sense, the purpose of the essay was simply to introduce Filipinos to the study of folklore. The fact that he is able to do so without a great deal of explanation serves to usefully indicate that post-independence Philippine folklore grew out of its American predecessor; it was not a novel discipline but a received one. Manuel says a few words about what the discipline is, provides a rough survey of its genres, includes examples of each, and concludes with a call for further collection. But the essay was more than a simple technical piece. Alongside his discussion of the subject, he lays out the larger political goals towards which the performance of folklore collection must be pursued: the discovery of a distinctively Filipino literature (which he conceives of against a literary establishment that "has sympathies for exotic molds; hence it is groping—some of its courtezans thinking that they have found the straw in foreign mediums and audiences"—clearly an echo of Daguió) and, through that process, the articulation of a truly national Filipino people.³⁶³ By collecting the oral traditions of the cultural minorities, processing and storing them in capitol, and disseminating them outward, Manuel contended, the Filipinos could become one people; through this process the differences of culture, language, region, etc., would be effaced. "Notes on Philippine Folk Literature" is the perhaps earliest place where the notion that the hinterlands groups portrayed as "primitives" during the American

³⁶³ E. Arsenio Manuel, "Notes on Philippine Folk Literature," *University of Manila Journal of East Asiatic Studies* vol. 4 no. 2 (1955): 153. This was a necessary means of carving a space for folklore amidst a conservative literary establishment. After all, as Casanova has noted, "Rejections of the established order are in fact violent attempts to seize literary power" (Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. Debevoise [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004], 165).

period made up the cultural essence of the Filipinos—a radical notion when he penned it, one that would take years to gain wide acceptance among urban Filipinos. The essay does not seem to have been very widely read, however; in his “Survey of Philippine Epics” (1963), probably his best known and most widely read work, Manuel devoted a paragraph to critiquing then Director of the Philippine Institute of National Language Jose Villa Panganiban’s *The Literature of the Filipinos* (1957, for not having read it, among other deficiencies.³⁶⁴

Manuel published his first recorded epic in 1958, *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky: A Complete Song from the Bagobo Folk Epic Tuwaang*. Funded by the newly formed Institute of Asian Studies at the UP (now the Asian Center), its centerpiece was a lengthy Bagobo/Manuvu’ song centered on the folk hero Tuwaang, whom Manuel describes as “their Jose Rizal.”³⁶⁵ His foray into epic recording was a dutiful but tentative one. Manuel ascribes no larger significance to his effort, other than simply seeking to transcribe and translate a “folk epic,” and in the process map out for scholars something novel about a traditional Filipino culture and its oral repertoire. Probably because it was one of the first works of its kind among the Bagobo/Manuvu’—the American anthropologist Laura Watson Benedict alone had preceded him in studying them—Manuel was even unsure as to whether his transcript was a bona fide epic. He notes that, “further recordings” would be needed “to determine whether its substance is epical.”³⁶⁶ It was nonetheless a consummate piece of scholarship, and was well reviewed as such.³⁶⁷ Because it was mainly a work of scholarship, and furthermore one from a small field with relatively few practitioners, very few Filipinos read it when it appeared.

³⁶⁴ Manuel, “Survey of Philippine Epics,” 7-8.

³⁶⁵ E. Arsenio Manuel, *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky: A Complete Song from the Bagobo Folk Epic Tuwaang*, recorded and trans., Saddani Pagayaw (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1958), 15.

³⁶⁶ Manuel, *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky*, 3.

³⁶⁷ R.R., review of Maiden of the Buhong Sky, *Anthropos* vol. 54 no. 5/6 (1959): 1050-1051; and Charles O. Frake, review of Maiden of the Buhong Sky, *The Journal of American Folklore* vol. 72 no. 286 (Oct.,-Dec., 1959), 364.

The lack of interest in Manuel's early oral traditions works was not due to any deficiencies they might have had, but rather because Filipino interest in folklore was in its incipience in the 1950s. Folklore and epics were just beginning to appear in literature textbooks with recurrent frequency during this time.³⁶⁸ This was the time when short articles about epics like *Hinilawod*, *Darangen*, and others, began to appear in weekly periodicals.³⁶⁹ Probably more widely circulated than these were the films that depicted the lives of the archipelago's cultural minorities such as *Badjao: The Sea Gypsies* (1957) and *Ifugao* (1954) and folkloric subjects *Ibong Adarna* (1955).³⁷⁰ Folkloric subjects were beginning to appear with greater frequency, but they were still a novel subject matter.

As interest in folklore and epics began to gradually grow among Filipinos, Manuel pressed forward, producing among other things the works that helped to consolidate the emerging field of Philippine oral traditions studies such as *A Survey of Philippine Folklore* (1962), "Survey of Philippine Epics" (1963), and *Philippine Folklore Bibliography* (1965). He also authored a number of smaller studies on a number of areas of folk traditions, such as on traditional games, riddles, and other sorts of folk narratives.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Among the most widely circulated are Jose Villa Panganiban, Consuelo T. Panganiban, Genoveva E. Matute, Corazon E. Kabigting, eds., *Panitikan ng Pilipinas*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Quezon City: Bede's Publishing House, 1992)—this is a thoroughly updated version, translated into Filipino, of what was in its first iteration, José Villa Panganiban and Consuelo T. Panganiban, eds., *The Literature of the Filipinos* [Manila: Alip and Sons, 1950]; see also Jose A. Arrogante, Nunilon G. Ayuyao, and Vilma M. Lacanlale, eds., *Panitikan Filipino: Antolohiya*, rev. ed. (Mandaluyong: National Book Store, 2007[2004]); and Bienvenido Lumbea and Cynthia Nograles Lumbea, eds. *Philippine Literature: A History and Anthology* (Manila: National Book Store, 1982), and subsequent new editions (1997, 2005). For an American-era literature textbook that covered the *Pasyon* among other oral traditions, see Teófilo del Castillo y Tuazon, *A Brief History of Philippine Literature* (Manila: Progressive Schoolbooks, 1937).

³⁶⁹ F. Landa Jocano, "Hinilawod: Epic of Panay," *Sunday Times Magazine* vol. 12 no. 43 (June 9, 1957): 16-19; Armando J. Malay, "The Darangen Epic: A Tale of the Proud Maranaws," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Dec. 4 1954): 12-13; Jose A. Quirino, "The Dung-aw: Homage to the Dead," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Oct. 9 1954): 26-27; "Say it with a Song," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Feb. 26 1955): 30; and Jose F. Rodriguez, "Parang-Sabil, Epic of Moroland: for Allah Almighty," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Dec. 11 1954): 28-30.

³⁷⁰ *Badjao: The Sea Gypsies*, directed by Lamberto V. Avellana (Manila: LVN Pictures, 1957); *Ang Ibong Adarna*, directed by Manuel Conde (Manila: LVN Pictures, 1955); and *Ifugao*, directed by Gerardo de Leon (Manila: Premiere Productions, 1954).

³⁷¹ For a bibliography of his works penned during this time, see E. Arsenio Manuel, "A Checklist of the Writings of E. Arsenio Manuel 1933-1983: As Listed and Annotated by Himself," *Philippine Humanities Review/Rebyu ng Arte at Literatura* vol. 1 nos. 3-4 (July-Dec., 1984): 215-229.

Although Manuel, Jocano, Francisco, and others worked assiduously to promote folklore research at the UP, they were constrained by the lack of government support in the early years of the post-independence era. It was not until 1964, for instance, that any sort of executive level institution devoted to promoting Filipino culture appeared: President Diosdado Macapagal's National Commission on Culture. This was, however, short-lived; it ceased to exist when the newly elected president, Ferdinand Marcos, ended its funding in favor of his own projects.³⁷²

The watershed came during the Marcos years (1965-1986), when funding for Filipino cultural productions became more regular—even conspicuously so. Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut has described this history through an examination of the three major new institutions that promoted Filipino culture during this time, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Philippine High School for the Arts, and the National Museum.³⁷³ The Conjugal Dictatorship, as Marcos and his equally profligate wife Imelda have been called, did this in large part to mythologize themselves and thereby strengthen their rule. At the same time, however, they were responding to a growing cultural nationalism fostered most powerfully through the educational system.

This more favorable environment beginning in the late 1960s was ideally suited for the nationalistic praxis of folklore Manuel had been advocating for in the previous ten plus years. It is no strange coincidence that the first Philippine folklore congress took place during this time, in 1972, or that the volume that emerged from it was dedicated “To Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos. First Lady of the Philippines. Patron of Folk Arts and Culture.”³⁷⁴ Its theme was “Folklore and National Development.” The notion that collecting the oral traditions of the cultural minorities would help to solidify the nation, to “awaken national

³⁷² Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut, *Institutions and Icons of Patronage: Arts and Culture in the Philippines during the Marcos Years, 1965-1986* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Press, 2012), 13, Appendix A.

³⁷³ Baluyut, *Institutions and Icons of Patronage*.

³⁷⁴ Francisco Demetrio, ed., *Dialogue for Development: Papers from the First National Congress of Philippine Folklore and Other Scholars* (Cagayan de Oro: Xavier University, 1975), iv.

consciousness of our identity as a people,” as one convener put it, was gaining increasingly wide currency.³⁷⁵

The ascendance of the field of Philippines folklore studies beginning in the late 1960s can be seen in the assured tone that characterized Manuel’s second and third works of epic textualization, *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (1969) and *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding: The Second Song of the Manuvu’ Epic Tuwaang* (1975). The tentativeness and blandly academic dispassion that characterized *Maiden of the Buhong Sky* are both gone. In their place are hopeful and increasingly confident assertions about the significance and potential of oral traditions research. *Agyu* is composed of five chapters, only the last three of which pertain to the actual recorded chant—the third chapter forms an introduction, the fourth the text, and the fifth an analysis. In the first chapter, Manuel describes the two main schools of Philippine folklore “that are emerging and gaining ground”: “One is related to the interest of folklorists in tracing the association and provenance of oral narratives and the other to the eagerness of humanists in discovering what is that body of native literature that has been enjoyed by preliterate [notice, not ‘primitive’] societies and whether this could form part of the national literature.”³⁷⁶ It is this second course of study he obviously favors. He goes on to describe that branch of the discipline’s history, which begins with de los Reyes and Rizal in the 1880s, continued into the American era, was conceived of anew by Daguió in the 1930s, and began to truly flourish in Manuel’s time. This sets up his statement about the function of collecting epics. His use of a neologism he coined to describe the Filipino nation’s prehistory, “Philippineasian,” indicates a maturation in his thinking vis-à-vis his craft and his growing sense of scholarly authority.

If there is going to be a harvest of traditional Philippineasian literature, I think it is to be found in its proverblore, riddlelore, folksongs, ballads, folktales, and epics. Most significant of all these genres are the ethnoepics. Significant because these are of

³⁷⁵ See the introductory essays, Luis F. Torralba, “Welcome Address”; and Brent Ashabanner, “Folklore and National Development,” in *ibid.*, 1-3 and 4-11, respectively. Quote on 2.

³⁷⁶ Manuel, *Agyu*, 1.

undoubted age, they have sustained length, transmitted in a dignified language that can be identified as belonging to the culture, and they have a beauty of their own that can be enjoyed as literature. The epics, in other words, are the pieces of enduring value in traditional Philippine literature, the representatives par excellence of that literature.³⁷⁷

One way to view this passage is as a repurposed elucidation of the function of collecting epics proffered by Beyer, albeit a far more fully thought out and sophisticated one. The characteristics he ascribes to the epic, which explain its greater importance among other folklore genres, would seem truthful enough at first glance. His own work, however, provides us reasons to question them. First, in another place, he hypothesizes that some of the traditions he recorded in Mindanao, “could come from the middle of the nineteenth century,” while others “can take us to the beginning of the 20th century only.”³⁷⁸ These estimates might have been true, but he had no way to verify them. If we assume they were, however, that would mean that their “undoubted age” was not terribly ancient—they were perhaps not even as old as the first Filipino novel, Rizal’s *Noli* (1887). Second, it is true that they were “transmitted in a dignified language,” but none of the intended Filipino readers could understand epics in their original languages; this wondrous quality would never be something that they would have access to, or, therefore, could form an appreciation of. Third, the epic texts Manuel created made for wearying reading, an example of which we will see below. How then could they “be enjoyed as literature?” Of all their imputed qualities, only the one he attributes to their length stands up to scrutiny. But perhaps focusing on the facticity of his assertions misses the point. How the epics functioned in actual use, for instance as reading materials, was not as important as what they signified: a uniquely Filipino and monumental source of literature and culture.

In *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding* Manuel laid out an even more ambitious goal. It was at this point, in 1975, that he first put to writing the possibility that the Filipinos could follow

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 8.

³⁷⁸ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Harvests of Songs: Constituting the Manuvu’ Tuwaang Epic Cycle* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines, 1999), 14.

Lonnröt's example and create a national epic. So that we might understand what he had in mind, I must first briefly sketch how Lonnröt created the *Kalevala*.

A medical doctor by training but a Herderian nationalist and language enthusiast in his heart, Elias Lonnröt (1802-1884) made no less than ten trips to the Finnish countryside, particularly eastern Finland, from 1828-1844, for research into oral traditions. Over the course of these forays into fieldwork he witnessed a number of cultural practices and oral performances that he wrote about and published. Many of the oral traditions, different types of poems, lyric songs, and more, he transcribed verbatim. He found the recurrence of narratives about the heroes Väinämöinen, Ilmarienen, and Lemminkäinen in disparate localities throughout the Finnish countryside striking. This led him to ponder the possibility of a unified epic that linked all of these smaller traditions. With the examples of Homer and the Norse mythological work *Edda* in mind, he gradually began to attempt to assemble various collected parts into a whole. This was no simple task, however, as the variable nature of oral performances meant that there were minor to major differences from one recording to the next. Highly fluent in the dialects—not different languages—of the rural traditionalists by this point, he decided to string together whole sections to smaller components of transcripts into a single, coherent epic, editing and adding his own text in the style of the oral traditions where necessary to produce a fluid document. This was how Lonnröt created the *Kalevala*, the feat Manuel sought to emulate.³⁷⁹

Returning to *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, the dozens of recordings Manuel made of Bagobo/Manuvu' oral traditions during his intermittent fieldwork from 1956 to the 1970s, most of which were stories related to the protagonist Tuwaang, led him to ponder whether they all formed part of a larger, unified, master epic. In *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, he writes, "While I feel that the ethnoepics of Mindanao are related to one another, a more

³⁷⁹ For this information I have relied on Lauri Honko, *Textualising the Siri Epic*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998), 169-176.

definitive study of this aspect of epic studies can be made only at a later time when epic scholars will have put their texts in print.” After indicating some of the American and post-independence era scholarship that led him to believe such was possible, he continues, “Philippine folklore scholarship will have achieved a significant goal once it has strung these constituent songs of the various ethnoepics together into whole necklaces that the Filipino people can relish and study. If this could be done with the Finnish *Kalavela* [*sic*], why not with the Mindanao epics?”³⁸⁰

This is the first of the two mentions he makes of the Finnish national epic, the other being the passage from his *Guide for the Study of Philippine Folklore* ten years later in 1985 with which I began this chapter. The fact that he does not mention Lonnröt’s role in creating the *Kalevala* here suggests that he valued the creation of a national epic above all other things, including the bestowal of recognition on its creator. Here, at least, the question of who would accomplish it was secondary. After all, this was in a sense what he had always been searching for: something the nation could anchor itself to. How such a cultural product was created mattered less than the fact that it was created. This is nearly opposite of what he writes in the *Guide*: “The returns for pioneering work or significant writings on the traditional literature of any ethnic or social group is eternal: lasting remembrance for the student by the ethnic or social community studied, and most likely even the nation itself.” It is difficult ultimately to know with certainty which goal, the creation of a national epic or the attainment of personal recognition, he valued more, and when and if he began to favor more one than the other. Clearly, however, had both in mind as he ruminated on the nature of his work.

³⁸⁰ Manuel, *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, 5, 7.

Following *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, Manuel did not publish any more of his epics, despite that he had some fifty songs in total recorded.³⁸¹ This was in part because he was discouraged by their lackluster reception. As he put it in *Harvests of Songs* in 1999, “Though two songs of the Tuwaang cycle have been published, the reception accorded them is not very encouraging, though now are both out of print.”³⁸² His last major publications dealing with epics were an essay he published in two slightly separate versions in 1976 and 1980, “Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice,” which was a sort of a state-of-the-field piece; “Filipino Experience as Seen through Epic Literature: A Developing Vision” (1979), a reflective piece on the history of the epic genre up to that point; “The Epic in Philippine Literature” (1980), which examines how his effort to have the recorded oral epic be seen as literature fared up to that point; and *Harvests of Songs: Constituting the Manuvu’ Tuwaang Epic Cycle* (1999), a memoir and inventory of the numerous songs he had recorded but did not have occasion to publish. Of these later works, the most significant is “Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice,” because it lays out his other major objective in collecting epics besides creating a Filipino *Kalevala*.

In “Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice,” Manuel describes what he believed the process of analyzing epic traditions should accomplish. With the fact that his stated objective was to use folklore as a basis for creating a national literature in mind, he proposes a six-step method for filtering out what motifs, characters, and other elements of Philippine oral traditions had their analogues in those of other places (India, Polynesia, China, etc.), so that Philippine folklorists could locate something that was the product of no other culture. He sums this up in point six:

Sixth: If all other foreign elements and influences (Indonesian, Malay, etc.) in our folklore can finally be isolated and stripped off by a process of analysis and elimination, should we not then get at a corpus of oral traditions which are genuinely

³⁸¹ For a complete list of his recordings, now all seemingly lost, see Manuel, *Harvests of Songs*, chap. 4.

³⁸² Manuel, *Harvests of Songs*, 15.

indigenous to the Philippines?³⁸³

This was how Manuel could use oral traditions research to monumentalize Filipino culture, by finding something in this archipelago that served as a cultural crossroads for many groups throughout time that was irreducibly its own. This was not the first time such a line of research had been proposed. During the American era, Dean Fansler, who was another one of Manuel's teachers at the UP, described something similar. In *Filipino Popular Tales*, he announced his intention to use folklore studies to determine "what is native and what imported."³⁸⁴ But what for Fansler was a mainly an academic question became for Manuel an exercise in self-definition and discovery. For Manuel this was no mere abstract, disciplinary matter.

While it was regrettable that he never published subsequent recordings, given especially his estimation in "The Epic in Philippine Literature" that "the work is not yet one-tenth done," and that, worse still, those recordings seem to have been lost, there were reasons for Manuel to feel hopeful from the standpoint of the early 1980s.³⁸⁵ Epic collection and folklore research was coming into its own. To take a few of the most obvious signs of this development: Elena Maquiso was already beginning to publish her multivolume collection of the *Ulahingen* epics, Damiana Eugenio was compiling in as comprehensive of a fashion as possible all of the folk genres in her multivolume anthologies (1977-1993), and, in 1986, Ma. Delia Cornel would begin her greatly collaborative project of publishing the *Darangen* (1986-1993), whose 8 volumes constitute the most ambitious attempt to record and publish a Philippine epic so far.³⁸⁶ Added to the efforts of these nationalistic scholars were a number of

³⁸³ Manuel, "Philippine Oral Traditions: Theory and Practice," 12.

³⁸⁴ Dean S. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales* (New York: American Folk-Lore Society, 1921), vi.

³⁸⁵ E. Arsenio Manuel, "The Epic in Philippine Literature" *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* vol. 44 nos. 1-4 (Jan.-Dec. 1980): 321.

³⁸⁶ Elena G. Maquiso, *Ulahingen: An Epic of the Southern Philippines*, 6 vols. (Dumaguete City: Silliman Univ. Press, 1977-1993); for Eugenio, see the projected eight volume series on Philippine Folk Literature that she edited and compiled, published in Quezon City by the University of the Philippines Press, 1981-; and Ma. Delia Cornel, ed., comp., and trans., *Darangen: In Original Maranao Verse with English Translation*. 8 vols (Marawi City: Folklore Division, University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1986-1995).

other epic recorders from outside the country, most notably Nicole Revel, whose efforts to document the “intangible cultural heritage” through collecting Palaweño epics I will discuss in the following chapter. What Manuel wrote about the field in 1980 was therefore quite true: “From this harvest of epics,” which had been collected only up to that point, “we would not hesitate to say that the future is bright for Philippine epic studies.”³⁸⁷

Manuel’s odyssey of over three decades to make meaningful and institutionalize the practice of recording the epics of the Ifugaos, Manuvu’, and others, to transform it from an academic act into an enterprise of national cultural significance, was at the very least gaining traction by the late 1970s and early 1980s. Once these songs had been transcribed, translated, and published, they could be offered to the Filipinos to be read, primarily in the schools. But the matter of reading one of them was neither a straightforward nor simple one.

From Provincial Chants to Classroom Texts

As a paragon of the professional, highly trained, methodologically conscientious academic, Manuel developed a rigorous procedure for recording and reproducing epics. His general, fairly elaborate explanation of how oral traditions should be collected can be found in his *Guide for the Study of Philippine Folklore*; his definition of what made an oral tradition an epic is most fully laid out in his “Survey of Philippine Epics.” His application of these procedures to the collection and study of simpler oral tradition forms such as riddles made for scholarship that fairly straightforwardly comprehensible and readable.³⁸⁸ What his training led him to make of the lengthiest folklore genres was much more complicated.

From all three of his textualized epics works, we can discern a fairly consistent strategy of reproducing epics. First, he begins each book with an introductory section. In *Maiden of the Buhong Sky* this component is fairly brief but quite informative: in it he

³⁸⁷ Manuel, “The Epic in Philippine Literature,” 321.

³⁸⁸ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Bagobo Riddles* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1962).

summarizes what previous research had been done on Bagobo oral traditions, introduces the basic features of the epic, how it was recorded, discusses the community's oral repertoire including but not limited to the things he terms "epics," the introductory song (called "Tabbayanon") that accompanies the epic, how the tradition is sung and danced, what the social function is of singing more generally, and finally how he transcribed and translated the text.³⁸⁹ In the pursuit of creating a transcribed epic, then, he also created a miniature ethnography of the chanting community. The next section of the book is devoted to the transcribed Tuwaang epic itself. After reducing Bagobo voices to Romanized text with only one addition, the deployment of the International Phonetic Alphabet character ϕ for the "sixth vowel... which sounds between a and o," he made one other major editorial modification to the transcribed text: breaking it up into stanzas. This original Romanized transcript of the performance was laid out in columns on the left side of the page and accompanied by a line-by-line translation on the right. In between the two renditions was a line count. Manuel also supplied a fairly copious number of footnotes, which explained individual terms, concepts, or background information on Bagobo culture and history. To gain a sense of how this all appeared, I will reprint the first three stanzas of *Maiden of the Buhong Sky*. I will use numbers within parentheses to represent footnotes in the original.

Duan lad si Tuwa.ang Id'unsad ta pinaangk ϕ n buwawan (1) Kib ballatan ta ikam na pauyaman Na ap ϕ y kib ballatan don Nid lapisan poron mandon Ta lambis don na sapiay Na ikam na saundangin.		There he was Tuwaang Seated on a dais of gold Spread over with the <i>pauyaman</i> mat (2) But even so covered Still another was spread over it The already ancient <i>sapiay</i> (3) And the mat <i>saundangin</i> . (4)
Sa iyan d ϕ b pakaunsad Ka narangin na balingas Ka napamilin bahani'.	10	Only those who could sit there Were the renowned gallants The tested heroes.
Na kanna k ϕ b pakanongnong T ϕ d ϕ ggung na managkisan		One wouldn't think of anything more Because of the buzzing <i>managkisan</i> (5)

³⁸⁹ Manuel, *Maiden of the Buhong Sky*, chap. 1.

Sud ollob Taddat kavokarat sapiay
Na lumb ϕ y na pauyaman.

Sipping the flowers on the sapiay
The buds on the *pauyaman*.³⁹⁰

The third and final section of the book is an index, a fairly good one in fact. This basic structure we see in *Maiden of the Buhong Sky*—an introductory section with general information on the epic itself and people who chanted it, the transcribed chant with parallel translation and notes, and an index—would be replicated in his later epic works. If he modified it in any way it was to add to it, as we saw for instance with *Agyu*.

All of this makes for highly profitable reading—for scholars like himself. After all, *Maiden of the Buhong Sky* only totals a mere seventy pages; yet it contains a wealth of ethnographic information. For centuries before Manuel scholars described lengthy chants, often said something about the ritual occasions during which they were performed, and tried to extract larger information from them about Indio, Filipino, or “primitive” culture. None of them had done so as thoroughly or completely as he had. Although not exhaustively, Manuel attempted to convey everything about the chant and its creators he conceived of as relevant. This included information that did not directly relate to the text of the chant, the thing he was most interested in. This is why he for instance offered his readers glimpses of other aspects of the performance such as the dances and pantomime that accompany it, aspects scholars have only recently begun to look at. Manuel’s epic textualizations were thus more than mere oral traditions recordings; they were expertly scholarly texts.

In Manuel, then, we see the written textualization of Philippine oral epics brought to its maximal use. He wrote down every detail that could reasonably be captured, given the technology available during his time. He only came short of describing every single movement, variation in intonation, facial expression, etc., which, after all, would have greatly freighted his effort. To the extent possible, given that there was only so much information his publishers were willing to include, he also used other media besides the written word to

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 17.

capture and reproduce the epics, such as photography and audio recordings. In *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, for instance, his least meagerly published epic work, Manuel includes six black and white photos of chanters and people playing instruments.³⁹¹ Because he created audio recordings he also hoped that the songs would be listened to. As he explains in the same book, “The epic songs can be appreciated aurally by listening to their taped versions. Since the written text does not fully bring out the poetic quality of Manuvu’ verse, which is inseparably tied up with the singing, even one who understands the Manuvu’ language can glean only a partial foretaste of Manuvu’ poetics from the text.” By listening to the tapes, one could experience, “not only the weirdness and wild fantasy, but also freshness and aboriginal power that hold one captive from the beginning to the end. The wild force and strangeness of the music soon fades away after so many performances, but each song invites interest since it unfolds a narrative different from all others.”³⁹² Those that have had the opportunity to listen to epic chants could likely agree with what he says, or at least understand how their radical difference from conventional forms of music led him to write these words. But there was no practical way to make the audio recordings of chants available for a larger audience in Manuel’s time. Unless one took one of his classes at the UP, there was no viable way for an urban Filipino to hear an epic in the way he envisioned it.

For Manuel, these were not the only measures that had to be undertaken to render the epic consumable; one further step had to be taken. In *Agyu*, he notes that once “collections of such floating literature are made from each ethnic group in the country, then anthologists can work selections from them. I am sure there will be pieces worth reading and rereading just as we find them in the works of creative writers in literate societies.”³⁹³ This is the only place in any of his writings that he makes explicit how it was he believed recorded epics should be read. While presumably a literature anthology can be read anywhere by anyone, clearly the

³⁹¹ Manuel, *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding*, 30-31.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 26, 27.

³⁹³ Manuel, *Agyu*, 7.

setting he had in mind for such a means of engaging with the epics was that of the classroom, even if this is implicit in what he writes. This would be the principal means by which Filipinos came to know the lengthy narratives he, Jocano, Francisco, Maquiso, Coronel, and others created. Thus, even if he hoped that more Filipinos would peruse his epic works more than actually did, he realized that the practice of reading such works in their entirety (which in the case of his recordings was still not all that much, because the epic portions approximated forty to fifty pages in length each). From provincial chants uttered in the Philippines' hinterlands to classrooms all across the archipelago, this was how epics were recorded and read in the post-independence period.

It is a great irony that this impeccably scholarly approach to recording epics, which did the least amount of violence to the performances possible, at the same time rendered them unpalatable for leisurely reading. This is largely due of course to the nature of the traditions themselves. They were highly stylized, always variable, marathon narrations, which were never meant to be preserved through writing but instead memory. The printed medium proved an ill-suited vehicle for representing them. For these reasons, they could not be more dissimilar from the more familiar genres of written literature such as novels, short stories, poems, etc. If they had any analogue among these, it would be in theatre scripts—another genre that was never meant to be silently read—in which case they would function like an extreme, and in many ways “foreign” manifestation of such, at least from the perspective of cosmopolitan, modern Filipinos. What Maier has said about reading *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the quintessential Malay epic, is also true of the Filipino oral epic recordings Manuel created: “One does not have to be a very deeply tried and tested in European philology to realize that reading an older Malay text from beginning to end easily becomes an unrewarding if not boring activity. In most of the tales the often extensive scenes of battle, wandering, and love only serve, it seems, to postpone the end; they are repetitive, long

winded, loosely connected, and not very consistent in their playing around with referentiality.”³⁹⁴ Reading a textualized epic was neither a smooth, nor simple, nor even particularly enjoyable undertaking for most Filipinos in the latter half of the twentieth century, which is why so few of them engaged epics in that way.

The change in the medium of their presentation was accompanied by a host of other transformations in the manner they were consumed. First, the epics, which were often chanted for entertainment in their home communities, became pedagogical materials that had to be compulsorily (and laboriously, or at least effortfully) read, and this was undertaken within the institutional setting of a local school or state university; both the setting and purpose changed. Second, the casual experience of listening, in which the pleasure of hearing the sounds of the chant took precedence over the words being recited, was replaced by a form of consumption that prized textually represented words and phrases (in translation). What was being “said” took on a literal importance as never before. One consequence of this was that other forms of non-verbal expression that the performances embodied were forgotten, making the textualized epic a much narrower archive than it originally was.³⁹⁵ Third, readers of epics would not have occasion to experience an entire song (which they could intermittently tune in and out of) but instead would “completely” read a prepared and edited “excerpt” of one, which they would encounter after reading some sort of introductory notes about it that explained what type of literature it was and why it was significant. Fourth and finally, if epic recordings were able to be listened to, either for instance because a Manuel, Jocano, Francisco, or other such professor played them for their students, because music recording technology became cheaper and more easily reproducible (as with compact discs), or because of the rise of digital technology—although these latter two took place late in Manuel’s life, if they took place at all—they became pure sound rather than intelligible

³⁹⁴ Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Leiden: KITLV, 2004), 82-83.

³⁹⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2003).

linguistic expression, because few Filipinos understood the specialized Ifugao, Manuvu', Maranao, etc. used in oral recitation. University students who listened to them might experience their "weirdness and wild fantasy," their "wild force and strangeness," but it would not be something they could readily comprehend. Even after a recorded chant had been transcribed and translated, it underwent a further series of changes that distanced it from the original.

"The Returns for Pioneering Work"

A difficult question is whether it can be said that Manuel's goals as he conceived them met with success. Overall, in spite of he and his colleagues' dedicated efforts, the recorded epic did not become a popular, widely read, or circulated genre in the Philippines during of after the Marcos era (1965-1986). Or, at least it did not in the highly overproduced, scholarly textualized form in which they represented them. It did, however, gain a wide readership through literature anthologies that students would read, an event whose repercussions I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter.

Many of his loftier goals went unfulfilled. Firstly, his epic textualization works themselves never achieved any higher status as literary or scholarly works outside of the academy. They never became, as he put it in *Agyu*, "pieces of enduring value in traditional Philippinesian literature" for the nation at large. Once he published them, and the few people and institutions that were interested in the works purchased them, they slowly began to fade from memory, to the extent they entered into it at all.

It is probably this underwhelming reception of his textualized epic works that led to his statement I began the chapter with: "the returns for pioneering work or significant writings on the traditional literature of any ethnic or social group is eternal: lasting remembrance for the student by the ethnic or social community studied, and most likely even

the nation itself.” Looking back onto his career in late age (he was then in his mid-70s when he wrote this), he realized that in fact the textualized oral epic, in the form he created it at least, was not something Filipinos were terribly interested in reading, or even concerning themselves with, despite his diligent, decades-long efforts to convince them of its importance. This is perhaps what led him to shift his emphasis from hoping that a Filipino *Kalevala* was recorded, a thought he expressed in *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding* in 1975, to considering the possibility that the recorder himself might achieve recognition. Perhaps it was a means of consolation.

His most notable failing was that he was never able to create a Filipino *Kalevala*, which was something that, we should bear in mind, might have been an impossible goal anyways. Throughout the years he continually reflected on the possibility of recording the entire Bagobo/Manuvu’ repertoire, which he estimated in *Harvests of Songs* constituted “about 100 songs more or less.” If so, this would have meant the work was half complete, because he himself had recorded about fifty of them; someone only needed to record the other half. But he believed that such was not possible at the turn of the twenty-first century. Posing the question, “What are the best possibilities or prospects of completing the Tuwaang epic cycle?” he answered, “the best time for doing this, candidly speaking, has long ago passed,” because the bards who kept the tradition alive, “must be long dead by this time.” “The only hope remaining,” he continued, “is to visit every mountain patch and forest hedge, every settlement, hamlet or village in Davao and Cotabato provinces where quite a number of these singers have found a slope or ridge to own, plant, and cultivate. There is some hope, perhaps but the problems of survival are many and insurmountable.” There was one additional problem. As far as he was able to determine, “we do not have the beginning of the cycle, or are not very certain about the first song initiating the cycle, and much more so about

its end.”³⁹⁶ The Tuwaang epics were a seemingly endless series of oral narratives without clear beginning or end. Manuel’s grand dream of creating a Filipino *Kalevala* turned out to have been just a dream.

Probably his greatest accomplishment, although it was not of course his alone, was in transforming the textualized oral epic from an anthropological curio into a culturally significant, venerable, Filipino tradition. In the following chapter, we will see the extent to which notions about the epic’s intrinsic quality as a Filipino cultural product he and his colleagues labored to promote took root among generations of Filipinos, particularly after the 1970s. Here it is worth noting that even if Filipinos never read one of Manuel, Jocano, Francisco, Coronel, Maquiso, or other folklorists’ textualized epics from cover to cover—and there is good reason to think that very few actually did—they certainly knew something about the genre these folklorists aimed to pioneer. They had some idea of epic protagonists like Lam-ang, Bantugan, Labaw Donggon, probably of their exploits, and presumably something even about the recorders that brought them to life for a national audience. In this sense, Manuel’s efforts met with great success.

Although this is more difficult to assess, Manuel also seems to have contributed to raising the profile of the most distant provinces and the plight of their people among urban Filipinos. His own research ended up involving him in political disputes between the national government in Manila and communities in Mindanao.³⁹⁷ There is no reason to doubt that he must have had students who followed his lead. On a larger scale, through his scholarship and especially his teaching, he helped to put places like mountainous Central Mindanao on the imaginative national geographies of Filipinos.

Moreover, even if few Filipinos actually read his books, he did at least receive a great deal of recognition from his peers. In 2000, when he reached his ninth decade of life, Manuel

³⁹⁶ Manuel, *Harvests of Songs*, 24.

³⁹⁷ Manuel, “The Contributions of E. Arsenio Manuel to Knowledge and Philippine Studies,” 8-11.

was awarded the Gawad Alab ng Haraya (Spark of the Imagination) by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. He was given this award, the organization asserted, because of, “His pioneering work with the peoples of Central Mindanao as well as his striving to provide clear-cut guidelines and principles by which such study is to be undertaken earned him the title ‘Father of Modern Filipino Folklore Studies.’ However, even this designation fails to capture the essence of the work of E. Arsenio Manuel, one that spans more than half a century of painstaking and detailed research and documentation.”³⁹⁸ It is a fitting characterization of his scholarly work across five decades. Manuel was the only epic recorder so far to have received this honor.

Manuel’s legacy was thus an ambiguous one. On the one hand, his campaign to make epic collection a noble enterprise within the Philippines succeeded, despite that recording epics was not necessarily a labor many Filipinos would actually seek to undertake. However, in popularizing the epic, his work gave others a basis to remake them further into consumable stories, whether in print, on stage, or in the cinema, particularly after the 1970s. In this sense, he created what we might ironically call “originals,” that others could in their turn, remake again. After all, once the epic had been transformed into a meaningful cultural product, Filipinos were able to multiply and spectacularly re-present it. Because of Manuel and his colleagues’ efforts, they came to celebrate, much later on, the epic in remixed form. It might not have been exactly the sort of veneration he imagined. But it would have been impossible without him.

³⁹⁸ National Commission for Culture and the Arts, “2000 Gawad Alab ng Haraya Awardee,” http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca/org-awards/gawad-dangal/e-arsenio_manuel.php [accessed Sept. 12 2012].

CHAPTER SIX:
OF PERMANENCE AND PROTEANISM:
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PHILIPPINE EPICS

Our work consists first in perceiving, observing, and receiving. This leads to an ethnographic description, a monograph. Then comes analysis and synthesis that delve deeper and deeper into the matter. Step by step, we are able to detect and to bring to surface the hidden structure that underlies the society and the culture we have committed ourselves to understand. As days pass, many other interrogations arise: how does the mind of the singer of tales function without any written support? How is empirical knowledge accumulated? How are logical and abstract knowledge, poetic, symbolic, melodic knowledge set into motion? Here we are confronted mainly with an aural world and we have to document an intangible heritage relying on different and specific cognitive processes.

Nicole Revel, "The Teaching of the Ancestors"³⁹⁹

The importance of our epics, however, is not in their originality (which is well nigh impossible to reach back into) but in the analysis of their themes as assimilated and deduced from various or conflicting versions, inasmuch as it is in these that we discover the values persisting in our culture which affect our way of life even as identifying factors of our nationality and race. It is with this thought in mind that I worked out this Jocano-translated account into a play—a play that delights and entertains even as it exposes the aspirations of the people of our tribal past as motivated by their ideals. It is with this thought in mind that I made use of 'artistic license' and touched up structure and plot, invented dialogue, eliminated or modified superficial details of form and manner and emphasized character and theme as I perceived them.

Mig Alvarez Enriquez, *Three Philippine Epic Plays*⁴⁰⁰

The recent history of Philippine epics has been broadly characterized by two very different, and in many ways opposing approaches to the subject. In the first, spurned especially by the advent of new audio- and video-recording technologies, scholars brought the act of recording to its technical apex. While in some sense this marked a continuation of the practice that became systematized in the post-independence era with the work of Manuel and his colleagues, as we saw in the previous chapter, the logic behind collecting epics in the late twentieth changed: it functioned not to create cultural monuments that Filipinos could anchor their nation to but instead to "document an intangible heritage," as the quote above from Nicole Revel, the major proponent of this movement, indicates. Towards this end she deployed the most advanced technology and highest level of institutional support possible to

³⁹⁹ Nicole Revel, "The Teaching of the Ancestors," in idem, *Literature of Voice* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2005), 6.

⁴⁰⁰ Mig Alvarez Enriquez, *Three Philippine Epic Plays: Lam-Ang, Labaw Dongon and Bantugan* (Quezon City: New Day Pub., 1986), 74.

create the most sophisticated textual, auditory, videographically literal epic records imaginable. In the second, a host of individuals and groups, almost exclusively Filipinos who lived in the Philippines, sought to take the “epic,” however they understood it, and remake it as something new, be it a novel, movie, or painting or something else. A few of these “remixers,” as I will call them, paid deference to the notion that they should be faithful to an original recording, even as they radically altered them, but more often they disregarded the notion of fidelity all together; compared with the preservationists like Revel, they took a diametrically opposed tack. And in so doing, they transformed the epic into a truly national cultural form.

The Marcos era (1961-1986) was at its most hopeful moments a boon for cultural nationalists because it meant a more regular, permanent, and executive level of support for things such as folkloric literature production.⁴⁰¹ But the period that followed, 1986 to the present, would prove even more conducive for their aims because of a number of political, cultural, and world historical developments.

The most significant, particularly because it pertains to Philippine governmental promotion of oral traditions specifically, was the creation of what is now the National Commission on Culture and Arts (NCCA). In 1987 the Corazon Aquino administration signed Executive Order 118, which created the Presidential Commission on Culture and Arts (PCCA), which later became the NCCA, the name by which it is known today.⁴⁰² The PCCA and later NCCA were the first permanent executive-level departments to patronize folklore specifically. Section 3, subsection (a) of Executive Order 118 mandated that the commission:

⁴⁰¹ Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut, “Reciprocity and/as Vengeance: Art and Cultural Patronage in the Philippines during the Marcos Years,” book talk on behalf of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, May 24, 2012.

⁴⁰² *The LawPhil Project: Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank*, “Executive Order No. 118,” 1987 http://www.lawphil.net/executive/execord/eo1990/eo_118_1990.html [accessed 29 August 2012]; and *Chan Robles Virtual Law Library*, “Republic Act No. 7356,” 3 April 1992 http://www.chanrobles.com/republicactno7356.htm#_UD2QvkSE7EU [accessed 29 August 2012], which reformed and made the original act more permanent. This history is summarized on the NCCA’s website: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, “History” <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca/about-ncca/about-ncca-history-mandate.php> [accessed 29 August 2012].

“Foster a sense of national identity and pride through the conservation and promotion of our cultural patrimony and our national heritage,” which has meant in practice promoting not only folklore but also related folk art forms such as dance.⁴⁰³ Beginning with Marcos in the mid-1970s and especially after the establishment of the PCCA and NCCA, a symbiotic relationship between folklorists and the national government was born and from that moment forward, the fates of both became increasingly intertwined. Scholars began to represent the nation as having drawn its essence from the heretofore marginal areas from which folklore was collected—however awkwardly or strangely—and folklore, for its part, became gradually transformed from the disregarded utterances of “cultural minorities” into the primordial, authentic, and genuine expressions of the Filipino people.

A related development was the general growth of folkloric knowledge and the appreciation of its function and significance among Filipinos. The studies pioneered by Manuel, Jocano, and others began to gradually make their way into the popular consciousness through the educational system during the Marcos era and thereafter. With some precedents as far back as the American colonial era, but with increasing frequency after the 1950s, Filipino students in high school and university would be made to read, analyze, and complete assignments on epics and oral traditions in general through courses on Filipino literature or culture.⁴⁰⁴ When Ma. Delia Coronel set out to record the *Darangen* in the mid-1980s, she described the genesis of her project in the following terms: “As a student of Philippine Literature, *I have always been looking for our country’s epics, beautiful jewels of*

⁴⁰³ *The LawPhil Project: Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank*, “Executive Order No. 118.”

⁴⁰⁴ Among the most widely circulated are Jose Villa Panganiban, Consuelo T. Panganiban, Genoveva E. Matute, Corazon E. Kabigting, eds., *Panitkan ng Pilipinas*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Quezon City: Bede’s Publishing House, 1992)—this is a thoroughly updated version, translated into Filipino, of what was in its first iteration, José Villa Panganiban and Consuelo T. Panganiban, eds., *The Literature of the Filipinos* [Manila: Alip and Sons, 1950]; see also Jose A. Arrogante, Nunilon G. Ayuyao, and Vilma M. Lacanlale, eds., *Panitikan Filipino: Antolohiya*, rev. ed. (Mandaluyong: National Book Store, 2007[2004]); and Bienvenido Lumbea and Cynthia Nograles Lumbea, eds. *Philippine Literature: A History and Anthology* (Manila: National Book Store, 1982), and subsequent new editions (1997, 2005). For an American-era literature textbook that covered the *Pasyon* among other oral traditions, see Teófilo del Castillo y Tuazon, *A Brief History of Philippine Literature* (Manila: Progressive Schoolbooks, 1937).

our race. One jewel I missed: the noble epic of the Maranaos, the *Darangen*, or song.”⁴⁰⁵

Like most Filipinos who had had even incomplete schooling by that time, she took for granted that there were things called epics and that they were works of national cultural significance. Manuel’s struggles to establish their legitimacy as literary objects and to transform the venture of collecting into a meaningful undertaking slowly faded into memory. To be sure, mass instruction about epic literature did not translate into the sort of popularization of folklore that he had for instance hoped for. But it did have one significant effect: on a broad level Filipinos began to think of the epic as a venerable genre of folklore that exemplified their artistic sophistication, culture, and history. Filipinos did not necessarily take to reading epics outside of a classroom with any greater frequency. However they now had a particular idea of what epics were, which was not true during the early post-independence era or before.

A third development was the slow rise in the availability of books until very recently. For most of the twentieth century, it was simply difficult to get one’s hands on them. The overarching reason for this was the cost of their manufacture. As historian of the book Patricia May B. Jurilla notes, “there were no locally made presses, and the types, paper, and ink that were produced [in the Philippines] were of inferior quality.”⁴⁰⁶ Many of the inputs had to be imported, thereby adding to their costs. Then there was the problem of distribution. At the outset of independence, the Philippines was a place with very few bookstores and both public and private libraries. And of the few of each that existed, most were concentrated in the capitol, so that there was vast literary divide between center and periphery. This has slowly begun to change since the 1990s, when books became cheaper and a few book retailers such as National Book Store, Bookmark, Powerbooks, and smaller ones, began to proliferate as

⁴⁰⁵ Ma. Delia Coronel, *Darangen in Original Maranao Verse, with English Translation*, vol. 1 (Cebu City: Jose Clavano Inc., 1986), 5. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰⁶ Patricia May B. Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century: A History of the Book in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2008), 66.

never before, mostly as part of what many derisively refer to as the “mall-ification” of the country.⁴⁰⁷ While the greater availability of books does not assure that people would be more interested in reading them—a point I will address in greater length below—it did mean that theoretically epic literature would both be easier to produce and acquire. Filipinos are now buying books as never before and a small portion of what they purchase pertains to epics.

Lastly is a critical yet very recent development whose significance is clear in many ways now but might be especially so in the years to come: the rise of the Internet and related new media like smart phones. The Internet has vastly increased the potential for the dissemination of recorded epics, including textually recorded ones but particularly those that are video recorded, towards which end devices like smart phones can serve as portable, easy-to-use recorders. When UNESCO bestowed recognition on the Ifugao *Hudhud* and Maranao *Darangen* as “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,” in 2001 and 2005 respectively—it is from UNESCO that the designation of Philippine epics as “intangible heritage” ultimately comes—they not only video-recorded performed chants of each one, they also put them online (on You Tube, a link to which they embedded on their website) for all to see.⁴⁰⁸ In this chapter I will discuss how one particular entity, Nicole Revel’s foundation of the online *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archive*, exemplifies this convergence of epic collection and technology. But there are myriad other effects and side effects of the Internet Age we can only partially detect in the present, as I suggest in the conclusion. Whatever the future holds, one thing is clear: epic recording will never be the arduous task it was in the 1960s. The image of Manuel lugging around a half-working tape

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 41. There has been surprisingly little literature on this phenomenon despite that that malls, particularly those owned by the SM Corporation which at present has more than 40 retail properties across the company and plans to build more *in perpetua*, are more and more coming to dominate Filipino economic and cultural life. The only monograph I have been able to find is Roland B. Tolentino, *Kulturang Mall* (Manila: Anvil, 2004).

⁴⁰⁸ “Hudhud chants of the Ifugao,” *Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO*, last modified 2008, http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html [accessed 1 August 2013]; and “Darangen epic of the Maranao people of Lake Lanao,” *Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO*, last modified 2008, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00159> [accessed 1 August 2013].

recorder that operated on batteries that easily rusted and corroded up and down the hills of the Mindanao highlands—which he in fact had to borrow from the ethnomusicologist Jose Maceda—to record Manuvu’ epics, will increasingly be a thing of Philippine folklore’s past.⁴⁰⁹

These factors more than any others shaped the history of Philippine epics from the 1980s to the present, a period broadly characterized by two very different approaches to the subject. In this chapter I will examine the history of the individuals who sought to bring the recording of epics to its most technologically advanced, meticulously captured form, and those who, contrastively, took recorded “originals” and recreated them as radically different products. My principal aim will be to show that the recorders like Revel, with their strict adherence to documenting the “text” of epics, made them into obscure products no one wanted to read, whereas remixers like Enriquez, who were playfully re-creative with epic materials, transforming them into plays, novels, and movies, etc., actually created things that Filipinos were genuinely interested in and engaged with. Paradoxically, those that were willing to change the epics actually helped to preserve and make them meaningful, even if the thing they actually preserved looked scarcely like an actual recorded epic.

This chapter will consist of six parts. First, I will show how the culture of recording reached its apex in the 1990s. Centering my analysis on the labors of Nicole Revel, I will examine how epic scholars not only continued to record epics in the highly methodologically rigorous way that Manuel and his generation had for decades, but that they also took the next step in seeking to archive them, giving greater permanence to epics than ever before. With the assistance of the digital technologies of the twenty-first century, they sought to “safeguard” what they (following UNESCO) termed “intangible heritage”—against the inexorable global forces that they perceived to threaten it. The best means of doing so was to

⁴⁰⁹ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Harvests of Songs: Constituting the Manuvu’ Tuwaang Epic Cycle* (Quezon City: College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines, 1999), 15.

create a permanent archive, accessible online—the *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archive*, which was launched in 2011. I will discuss the history and significance of this archive, underscoring a number of things about it, most significantly, that it functions more to perpetuate the practice of collecting epics than anything else. Following this, I will chart the history of those who took the exact opposite tack. Turning the notion of fidelity to the textual recording on its head, by employing “artistic license” as Enriquez put it, they sought instead to be *playful* with the epics by remaking them into novels, movies, and more.⁴¹⁰ In an effort to map out the longer history of the reworking of Philippine epics, I will in the second section provide a brief summary of the many types of works during the post-independence period that remixers sought to transform epics into. With this broader history of remixing sketched out, I will look in detail at three major attempts that I regard as suggestive of the future of epic reinterpretations in the following three sections: Mig Alvarez Enriquez’s *Three Philippine Epic Plays* (1983), Virgilio Almario’s *Huling Hudhud* (2009), and the epic-based soap opera *Amaya* (2011-2012), which billed itself as the first ever “epicserye.” With these three possible routes for contemporary and future epic reproduction sketched out, I will then conclude by describing the interdependence of the preservationists and remixers and note a few of possibilities for epics we can glimpse now.

A final note on periodization: although my discussion of the history of remaking epics will reach back into the middle of the twentieth century and one of the texts I will discuss in detail was created in 1983, Alvarez’s theatricalization, this chapter will mostly treat a very recent set of events in the history of Philippine epics, which begin in the 1990s if not a decade or so later.

“Safeguarding Intangible Heritage”: Perpetuating the Culture of Collecting

⁴¹⁰ Hendrik M. J. Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Literature* (Leiden: KITLV, 2004).

The recent history of campaigns to record and archive epics has been inextricably bound up with the efforts of one scholar—the anthropologist, epic recorder, and preservationist Nicole Revel. She is of course not alone in carrying the torch of epic collecting and analysis into the twenty-first century. A number of individuals connected to universities (e.g. F. Landa Jocano), religious institutions (e.g. Clement Wein of the Society of the Divine Word), and quasi-religious though nominally secular humanitarian organizations (e.g. Hazel Wigglesworth of the Summer Institute for Linguistics), many of whom have been engaged in the study and collection of epics since as far back as the 1960s, continue their scholarly labors today. But although their work is significant, it has not been as central to the recent efforts to give permanence to recorded epic literature, personified in Revel. Before examining the creation of the *Philippine Epics and Ballads Archive* in 2011 (hereafter PEBA), the culminating event of her and her associates' labor, it would be useful to provide a brief biographical sketch of her scholarly activities in the preceding decades.

Revel entered the study of Philippine anthropology in 1970 when she began fieldwork in Palawan. Her first major publication based on this ethnographic work was linguistic in nature: *Le Palawan (Philippines): phonologie, catégories, morphologie* (1979). It was positively reviewed as a pioneering study of an Austronesian language about which little was known.⁴¹¹ Her broad study of the language served as a stepping off point for the collection and study of epics soon after. Her first publication on epics was *Kudaman: Une épopée Palawan chantée par Usuj* (1983). *Kudaman* begins with a broad anthropological discussion of the epics within Palawan society (roughly one-sixth of the book) before moving to its main subject: transcriptions of seven of the sixty plus epics she recorded from 1970 to 1972, with accompanying translations into French, and copious notes that variously explain

⁴¹¹ Alice Cartier, review of Nicole Revel, *Le Palawan (Philippines): phonologie, catégories, morphologie*, *Cahiers de linguistique – Asie orientale* vol. 10 no. 10 (1981): 139-141, http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/clao_0153-3320_1981_num_10_1_1101 accessed 1 July 2013].

particular terms or aspects of Palawan culture and history. It received wider acclaim than her first book, but the fact that it was written primarily in French (a scholarly language even less known than Spanish in the Philippines), and about Palawan (which never figured prominently in the national consciousness and is today thought of mostly as a vacation destination) ensured that virtually no one in the country would ever hear of it, and that fewer still would actually read it.⁴¹² Probably because of this, the book was translated into Filipino in 1991.⁴¹³ Much the same could be said about her subsequent epic-related publication, unfortunately, the magisterial *Fleurs de paroles: histoire naturelle Palawan* (1990), a three volume study based upon her two thousand plus page doctoral thesis submitted to Paris Descartes University in 1985. In this triptych she made extensive use of epics and other cultural materials to produce what is one of the most exhaustive cartographies of any Philippine cultural community. She charted out in encyclopedic detail Palaweño history, material culture, social institutions, religious worldview, and more. Its expansiveness reminds one of what Francis Lambrecht attempted to do with Ifugao epics, particularly in works like his *The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bugan at Gonhadan* (1967), but with one major difference.⁴¹⁴ Whereas Lambrecht sought to cull together all of the information he could about Ifugao society to contextualize a single epic recording, Revel sought to use various oral traditions recordings (not all of them properly epics), to tease out everything she could about Palaweño society. She was thus equally concerned with collection *and* analysis of epics. In addition to these and numerous other related publications on epics, oral literature, and Philippine culture, she is probably best known for her two edited volumes on epics, *The Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines* (2005) and *Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia* (2013), both of which arose from conferences held at the Ateneo de Manila

⁴¹² Nicole Revel, *Kudaman: une épopée palawan chantée par Usuj* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1983).

⁴¹³ Nicole Revel, *Kudaman: Isang Epikong Palawan na Inawit ni Usuy*, trans. Edgar B. Maranan and Nicole Revel-Macdonald (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1991).

⁴¹⁴ Francis Lambrecht, *The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bugan at Gonhadan* (Baguio: St. Louis Univ., 1967).

University. It is in these two latter works that she most clearly expresses her aims and hopes for the archiving and preservation of Philippine epics.

Through her work recording and archiving epics, Revel has distinguished herself as one of the first and most passionate advocates in the Philippines for what has been termed “safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.” This movement grew out of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) larger campaign to identify and preserve what it designated as the “world heritage,” a term drawn originally from the 1972 *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural, Natural Heritage*, also known as the World Heritage Convention (WHC). It was premised on the need to bring international visibility to objects of “universal value” in particular locales and in so doing create a canon of the “shared heritage” of all peoples across the globe irrespective of national origin. As UNESCO began to do this, however, it became clear that works they added to the WHC list were “not only Eurocentric in composition, but also dominated by monumentally grand and aesthetic sites and places.”⁴¹⁵ This was something that drew resistance and protests from member nations of the developing world, for at least two reasons. First, many of them lacked the sort of monumental legacy that would qualify them for admission—the Philippines offers one such example. Second, their “heritage” was in many cases embodied in living practitioners and because of this, they stood no chance of ever achieving recognition. On the basis of these objections, UNESCO convened a series of meetings over the course of the 1990s to create a more representative definition of heritage, one that included things of an “intangible” nature. The organization came to and ratified a new definition at the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003. Now, phenomena that fall into the categories of “cultural spaces,” “traditional knowledge,” “oral traditions,” “performing arts,” “traditional music,” and “rituals and

⁴¹⁵ Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, Introduction to *Intangible Heritage*, ed. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1. On the problem of Eurocentrism in UNESCO’s early definition of heritage, see, e.g. Laurajane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

festivals” can equally become awarded as “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.”⁴¹⁶ Contemporary interest in heritage is thus a relatively recent phenomenon.

This is why, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes,

While it looks old, heritage is actually something new. Heritage is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past. Heritage thus defined depends on display to give dying economies and dead sites a second life as exhibitions of themselves. A place such as Salem, Massachusetts, may be even more profitable as an exhibition of a mercantile center than it was as a mercantile center.⁴¹⁷

Although Revel’s earlier works like *Le Palawan* and *Kudaman* were not conceived in any major way as part of this discourse, her later works, particularly those she penned during the 1990s and after, make clear that that through her work on Philippines she sought to bestow recognition on this “intangible heritage” for a global audience.

Revel’s opening words in the Preface to *The Literature of Voice* serve as a sort of manifesto for her goal of archiving epics. In a way that echoes, and perhaps even directly references Manuel’s claims decades earlier—he in 1975 for instance wrote, “What is needed today is that these flowers of literature be picked and collected steadily and quickly lest they disappear forever”—she describes the destructive forces of cultural change.⁴¹⁸ “At the turn of the twenty-first century,” she writes, “we are the witnesses of a history that once again, is accelerating. The forces of harmony are confronting the forces of chaos in a crisis of the world, of all possible worlds.” She spells out how these “forces of chaos” exact their toll: “There are traditional societies still existing today, where the singer of tales, a sage-poet-musician, narrates this tension by singing the story of the deeds and the ordeals of a hero and

⁴¹⁶ These categories can be found on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage website: UNESCO, “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?” *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2012, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002> [accessed 7 October 2013]. For this section I have also relied on: Rodney Harrison, *Understanding the Politics of Heritage* (New York: Manchester University Press in association with the Open University, 2010); Derek Gillman, *The Idea of Cultural Heritage*, rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010); and Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman, eds., *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2009). For a trenchant critique of staged culture, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998).

⁴¹⁷ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 7.

⁴¹⁸ E. Arsenio Manuel, *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding: The Second Song of the Manuvu’ Ethnoepic Tuwaang* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1975), x.

a heroine. Simultaneously the history of a tradition, a nucleus of social, political, religious and poetic views, a moral code, and an aesthetic are expressed.” Thus the epic chanter becomes not only the sole communicator and preserver of a community’s identity, but also an observer and narrator of a world in flux. Her labor has been and remains uniquely valuable. “The singing of epics, the most stark and moving form of the performing arts, was the focus of our attention and our endeavor in the last ten years of the twentieth century up to today for we consider it as urgent and imperative that contemporary societies, the worlds of technology and script, turn toward those societies with oral traditions and listen to their literature of voice. Hearing, attention, memory, and creativity are the faculties of the mind at work.” The “literature of voice” forming the greatest cultural product of the traditional world, the question becomes how best to be able to “listen” to it. Revel contends,

Modern techniques, used to positive ends, can contribute to the preservation and memory of this intangible cultural heritage. The collaboration of men and culture and science have enabled us to record, transcribe the narratives in vernacular languages, and translate them into various vehicular languages, in order to allow future generations to enjoy their teachings and vivid beauty.⁴¹⁹

Paradoxically, the same broad-scale changes that endanger epics also produce the technologies that enable their survival. It was imperative that scholars work assiduously and expeditiously to record all they could in the present. One could call this Manuel 2.0: the venture of preserving epics for future generations, newly revitalized for the globalized twenty-first century world. The operation was in many ways similar but the function of collection and its ultimate goals changed. Revel and those associated with her were not attempting to monumentalize Filipino culture for a Filipino audience, as Manuel had attempted to do. Rather they wanted to “safeguard” an “intangible cultural heritage” against the changes modernity brought about for an international, cosmopolitan, global audience.

⁴¹⁹ Revel, *Literature of Voice*, xvii-xviii; cf. her earlier statement: idem, “Epopées Orales, Littérature Orale et Ecritures dans l’Archipel à l’Epoque du Contact et de Nos Jours,” in Ma. Dolores Elizade, Josep M. Fradera, and Luis Alonso, eds., *Imperios y Naciones en el Pacífico Volumen II: Colonialismo e Identidad Nacional en Filipinas y Micronesia* (Madrid: CISC, 2001), 251-252.

Towards that end she not only collected, published, and analyzed epics, but also worked diligently to archive them in libraries and other repositories in the Philippines and France. It was the most technologically advanced form of “salvage anthropology” possible.⁴²⁰

What would culminate ultimately in the online PEBA had as its genesis a more conventional type of repository. In the Introduction to *Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia*, Revel explains, “It had been my vision as early as 1987 to build a multimedia archive of epics and ballads, and I was able to make this happen in the Philippines. Beginning in 1991, audio-tapes, video-tapes, photos and were manuscripts collected and housed, bit by bit, at the Rizal Library Annex, thanks to the invitation and agreement of the President of Ateneo de Manila University, Father Bienvenido Nebres S.J.”⁴²¹ In the ensuing years and with financial support from UNESCO, the Centre de Recherche sur l’Oralite at L’Institute National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS; where she is a research director), the Ateneo de Manila University, French Embassy in the Philippines and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, among smaller institutions, she accumulated “epics, ballads, and several rituals that have been recorded, transcribed, translated, and analyzed by scholars and knowledgeable persons from fifteen cultural communities in the Islands of Luzon, Panay, Palawan, Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagos” and deposited them at the Pardo de Tavera collection of the Rizal Library at the Ateneo de Manila University and at the Archives de la Parole at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.⁴²²

Up through the first decade of the twenty-first century, this archive was a conventional one. It consisted of a stock of mostly textual and some photographic and auditory materials in a university library—at the wealthiest, most prestigious, and most

⁴²⁰ Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993[1989]), chap. 3.

⁴²¹ Nicole Revel, ed., *Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), ix-x.

⁴²² Ibid.

cosmopolitan Philippine university. Revel described it as a “tridimensional archive—aural, audiovisual, and computerized.” “In the years to come,” she explained in 2005, “various CD Roms or DVD Roms could bring together this tridimensional archive, connecting the sung narrative to the written transcripts, and translations, coupled with a brief hypertext of the respective cultures.”⁴²³

But in the Age of the Internet, why limit oneself to technology that was merely portable when one could make use what was ubiquitous? In 2009, Revel “was asked by the Ateneo de Manila President to conceive of and design a website for this expanding collection,” because, she explains, “The vision of Father Nebres was a legacy for education in the Philippines, and for the advancement in the safeguarding of endangered languages in cyberspace.” Two years later, on January 21, 2011, as part of the Songs of Memory conference, the website was launched. It is essentially a digital archive of all epic materials housed at the Ateneo.⁴²⁴ Now anyone with internet access who wishes to study Philippine epics can do so by logging onto the www.epics.ateneo.edu. In the archipelago, that amounts to about a third of the country.⁴²⁵

The online PEBA is an exemplary Philippine epics archive. Containing all types of possible archival media, it is by far the most systematic assembly of textualized, auditory, and video recordings of them anywhere. It contains for instance transcripts of the Ifugao *Hudhud*, audio recordings of the chants, photos, and even some video footage. Its regional coverage is as representative as it could be given that epics tended to be recorded in certain

⁴²³ Nicole Revel, ed., *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2005), xviii.

⁴²⁴ Fittingly someone videotaped the event of the website’s christening and uploaded it to YouTube. See rocketkapre, “Launch: Ateneo’s Online Philippine Epics and Ballads Archive (Part 1),” http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=oS-QhCyAimA, 24 January 2011; and idem, “Launch: Ateneo’s Online Philippine Epics and Ballads Archive (Part 2),” http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Ir1XoxKVLKw, 24 January 2011 [accessed 3 July 2013].

⁴²⁵ Nielsen, *The Digital Media Habits and Attitudes of Southeast Asian Consumers*, online report (10 November 2011), available from <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2011/south-east-asian-digital-consumer-habits.html> [accessed 3 July 2013].

areas more than others. Because it contains *Pasyon* traditions and insouciantly treats them as bona fide epics, it overcomes the dichotomy between “Christianized” and “non-Christian” literatures that American colonialism produced (see Chapter Four). If one wanted to study epic documents at the Ateneo de Manila prior to 2011, one would have had to travel to the capitol, obtain entry into the university (which restricts access), probably seek some sort of affiliation, and finally obtain access to the library annex where everything was stored.

Digitizing the archive and making it available online, in exchange for which access one only had to input basic personal information such as name, institutional affiliation, email, etc.—all easily and falsifiable without consequence, incidentally—removed all of these and other impediments to researching epic documents. Speaking of the archive prior to its digitization, Revel expressed the hope that, “This archive likewise permits us to analyze, interpret, and understand more deeply the ancient memory and the consciousness of various cultural communities of the Philippines. It might be a source of inspiration to several artistic expressions.”⁴²⁶ Because she gathered a great deal of epic literature that had been published in various literary, photographic, auditory, or video forms in one place, she enabled Filipinos and others across the globe to consume epics as never before.

The end result is in some ways an ideal product—for the scholar and student. After all, only scholars would really comprehend, value, and profit from its contents—not to mention be concerned with them the first place. But even for such individuals the peculiar nature of the recorded Philippine epic would work to limit or defy their ability to make full use of the archive, for at least a few reasons.

On the most basic level, no epic scholar could speak every language that Philippine epics are chanted in, so Manuvu’ scholars would necessarily have to focus their efforts on the works collected in the Mindanao highlands just as those fluent in Ifugao would do the same

⁴²⁶ Revel, *Literature of Voice*, xviii.

with the documents produced in Northern Luzon, and so forth. And fluency in the parlance of common people itself was usually not enough to equip one to understand the language of an epic text itself, let alone grasp its metaphoric nuances.⁴²⁷ So only those with a deep knowledge of what we might ironically call “literary” Maranao, Kiniray-a, etc., would have access to the epic transcripts or audio recordings. The numerousness and differences among epic languages thus assures that no one would be able to delve deeply into any sort of cross-regional comparison of texts in the original languages. Researchers would instead have to rely on one another’s works in translation—usually into English and not literary Filipino—thereby adding another level of estrangement from the original performance *on top of* the alterations brought about by its reduction to written, audio, photographic, or video-recorded media.

The multiple media into which epics have been recorded in the PEBA raises the question of how well equipped scholars are to interpret them. The fact of epics’ domestication into secure documentary forms offers no assurance we can “read” their signs in print or other media. There is much that video-recording technology for instance affords us in the way of what phenomena we can capture. But what is significant about the gestural performativity of epic recitation is not yet well understood by the anthropologists and folklorists who record Philippine epics. A movement of the hand might signal a grammatical pause, the embodiment of an action in the story, or nothing at all. From the works of epic scholarship done so far we have only the slightest indications of what such signs mean.⁴²⁸ Here is another place where the focus on textual recording has historically precluded scholars

⁴²⁷ This was a feature pointed out first by Alzina, as we know. See Yepes, *Una Etnografia de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII*, 12.

⁴²⁸ Manuel for instance noted this in passing while discussing his method of translation in *Agyu* but said not so much as a word about its significance thereafter: “Of practical value was a mimetic approach to translation. The line was read and the singer prodded to dramatize it whenever this was possible. There was much use of pantomime. This technique has certain weaknesses which go back to interpretation. This method helped in making the work of translation easier in many places” (Manuel, *Agyu*, 44).

from comprehending what very well may be a critically significant element in narrative production.

The PEBA requires one to approach the epics in a peculiar isolation. That epics alone are collected and stored, and not smaller traditions from chanting communities (e.g. proverbs, riddles, myths in prose, etc.) actually functions to make their study *more difficult and perplexing* because they are completely removed from the oral repertoire from which they emanated. One cannot for instance successively study riddles, children's songs, myths in prose, and in that way build up a working knowledge of the figures of oral speech used within a community because no such traditions can be found in the PEBA. The site does contain a small and presumably growing bibliography of a narrow portion of the scholarly literature on epics. But it is far too little to be of help, and, crucially, it contains little that addresses the perennially vexing problem of how to understand in a basic sense them in the first place. Thus the seasoned anthropologist will have some knowledge of the broader oral culture of say the Kinaray-a of the Western Visayas, and hence be able to identify some of the figures of speech that appear in their epics, appreciate and interpret them as such. But the undergraduate from a Manila suburb who enters into the archive with an anthropological and folkloric education that consists of general overviews in a classroom setting will be armed with little to nothing to contextualize these highly complex oral traditions. In the end, then, one can really only go there to study the epics with which one is already familiar. Disrupting the intertextuality of oral traditions within communities, the PEBA puts traditions it segregates as "epics" into conversation with each other despite that they never spoke before.

Despite these and other difficulties the PEBA is in the final analysis an important resource for that small population of anthropologists and folklorists who are passionate about seriously and closely studying Philippine epics. It was created by perhaps their most important living practitioner expressly for their use. And therein lies its great irony. Despite

that its function is to immortalize and valorize what are held to be the greatest products of traditional cultures, it is really not made for the Talaandigs, Kalingas, or others. It is instead made for the use of the international, cosmopolitan community whose incessant capitalistic expansion throughout the globe fosters the very changes that Revel and others feel the need to “safeguard” against. The epic snapshots in their various media contained in the PEBA do little to effectively resist or overturn this larger state of affairs. In short, what the archive ultimately does is ensure the preservation of *the practice of epic recording and interpretation*.

This is why the PEBA is of little use for the multicultural nation it purports to represent. Communities across the Philippines historically listened to, viewed, and recited epics in many instances because doing so was enjoyable or ritually necessary; their function was in most cases for entertainment or the enactment of a particular religious rite. But the process of recording them, removing them from their immediate locales, and remaking them in printed form has been achieved at the expense of their quintessential qualities of comprehensibility. As a result, Filipinos have had little interest in them since the beginning of the post-independence period. For all it doubtless accomplishes, the PEBA has not remedied this perennial problem of being able to spark the interest of contemporary Filipinos. The forms and media in which the epics were preserved has suited them well for scholarly study but simultaneously worked to make them repellant for leisurely mass consumption. After all, there is no reason to think that a Filipino public whose main form of entertainment consists not of silently reading but of watching television shows from soap operas to action movies to variety shows where stars sing and dance, audience members play games for prizes and the like, would take any pleasure whatsoever in solitarily reading a repetitive text (assuming it was in a language and register they could in the first place), listening to a monotonous chant in an incomprehensible regional tongue, or watching a video clip of a

chanter perform a recitation. For most Filipinos, the meticulously textualized, copiously annotated, multiple media epic record is something they simply have no interest in. The PEBA may very well be a repository of their culture, history, and heritage—the question of how is a vexing one—but that does not mean they will ever visit the website. The vast majority does not even know it exists.

The process of recording the lengthy oral traditions we call epics that began most notably with Beyer and Fansler in the early decades of the twentieth century, became a more formal, professionalized practice during the time of the indefatigable E. Arsenio Manuel and his colleagues from the late 1950s onwards, reached its apex in the early twenty first century through the archiving labors of Nicole Revel. Whereas Manuel expended his blood, sweat, and tears principally in scholarly and public fora advocating that the epic be collected and transformed into the cultural monument Filipinos never had, Revel, besides assembling an illustrious career as a linguistic anthropologist, worked diligently to secure funding from several prestigious international institutions to give permanence to the enterprise of collecting and studying epics as never before. She took the next logical step in the work of collection and in so doing provided with a more stable, renewed mandate for our century. Despite this, her work has not translated into greater popularization of the epic genre among Filipinos. In the later twentieth and early twenty-first century the epic did gradually grow to become something that did attract people's attention. But such took place when scholars, artists, and others sought to represent epics *less* faithfully and not more.

Early Remixers

It has only been in recent years that Filipinos began to pay anything more than passing attention to epics. From the 1950s onward, they never read Manuel or anyone else's textualized epics—in anthologized, abbreviated, and translated (Filipino or English) form—

outside of a classroom setting. While the exacting nature of reading recorded epics played a part in this, it was mostly a result of the fact that Filipinos have historically not been book readers. As book historian Jurilla explains only half-jokingly,

There is a long-held notion in the Philippines that the only people who read local literary books are the same people who write them. This cannot be said to be entirely true (surely the families and friends of authors read their works, too). What can be claimed without doubt, however, is that the readership of Filipino literary books is not at all very wide. It is limited to a small circle that usually includes authors themselves indeed but also scholars, critics, and students. *There is no general public or mass audience to speak of in the matter of the readership of Philippine literature*, as indicated not only by the small print-run sizes of the books but also their low and slow sales.⁴²⁹

Thus Manuel and his colleagues' dreams of making the epic into a widely read, culturally relevant part of Filipinos' consciousness ran up against the reality of a mass public of disinterested readers.

But that did not mean that Filipinos were disinterested in epics per se. Once the difficult texts that epic recorders created could be remade into more readily consumable media, simpler literary forms such as short stories or magazine articles, or especially as plays, movies, and television shows, Filipinos began to enjoy reading, listening to, and watching things called "epics." In these reiterations of recorded epics, adherence to the originals was never of central or at times even passing importance. Rather, it was the connotative aspects of the Philippine epics—their primordial quality, their strange yet familiar otherworldliness, their melodrama, their pomp and spectacle—that remixers sought to recreate. Thus in nearly all cases, extremely little of the original recordings made its way into the reworking.

For the remainder of the chapter I will do two things. In this section I will provide a cursory overview of the several attempts at remaking epics into other textual media, from the 1950s to the present day. Following that, I will examine in greater detail three specific

⁴²⁹ Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century*, 70; see esp. chaps. 1, 2. Emphasis mine.

attempts at epic reiteration, Mig Alvarez Enriquez's theatricalization *Three Philippine Epic Plays* (1981), Rio Alma's coffee table epic poem *Huling Hudhud* (2009), and the so-called "epicserye" *Amaya*. It was ultimately through these three final types of epic media—theatre, coffee table book, and television show—and their analogues, I suggest, that the epic became, at long last, a popular genre. I contend further that these and similar epic permutations give some indication of how the genre will endure in the future.

The reworking of epics began early on in the post-independence period, when folklore enthusiasts began to write short magazine articles about them in the 1950s.⁴³⁰ In "The Darangan Epic: A Tale of the Proud Maranaws" (1954) Armando J. Malay basically reiterated much of what Frank Laubach had wrote about the celebrated Maranaw epic over two decades earlier.⁴³¹ In "Hinilawod: Epic of Panay," written for the *Sunday Times Magazine* in 1957, F. Landa Jocano gave a cursory overview of the setting, plot, main characters, and wider cultural significance of the epic he recorded and would, much later, publish.⁴³² Slight, uncomplicated, and enjoyable to read, these and other short pieces functioned in a small way to generate interest in the nascent study of Filipino folklore and add viability to the notion of the epic as a distinct literary genre for mostly middle and upper class readers.

Around the same time the poet, novelist, and critic Ricaredo Demetillo labored to recreate an epic poem based upon oral epic materials. Through his reinterpretation of the

⁴³⁰ For a selection of articles on folklore written for a mass audience, see e.g., F. Landa Jocano, "Hinilawod: Epic of Panay," *Sunday Times Magazine* vol. 12 no. 43 (June 9, 1957): 16-19; Armando J. Malay, "Heroes of Old Bicol," (Jan. 1 1955); idem, "Indarapatra and Sulayman," *Sunday Mirror Magazine* (Dec. 25, 1954); idem, "The Darangan Epic: A Tale of the Proud Maranaws," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Dec. 4 1954): 12-13; idem, "The Epic of Lam-ang: Ilocandia's Superman" *Sunday Mirror Magazine* (Nov. 13 1954): 36; Jose A. Quirino, "The Dung-aw: Homage to the Dead," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Oct. 9 1954): 26-27; idem, "Say it with a Song," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Feb. 26 1955): 30; and Jose F. Rodriguez, "Parang-Sabil, Epic of Moroland: for Allah Almighty," *Saturday Mirror Magazine* (Dec. 11 1954): 28-30.

⁴³¹ Malay, "The Darangan Epic: A Tale of the Proud Maranaws."

⁴³² F. Landa Jocano, *Hinilawod: Adventures of Humadapnon* (Quezon City: Punlad Research House Inc., 2000).

Panayan folk text *Maragtas*,⁴³³ *Barter in Panay* (1961), he sought to do for the Philippines what Virgil, Milton, Goethe and others had done for their nations. As with the vast majority of published books in the postcolonial Philippines, it never achieved great renown or fame. But the book did achieve some recognition from epic scholars in addition to helping to burnish Demetillo's reputation as a serious poet and Filipino litterateur.⁴³⁴ And it was popular enough to warrant a reprint in 1984, an achievement that distinguishes it from most other works of epic reinterpretation from the period.

The remaking of oral epics as grandiose mythic poetry reached its apex during the high tide of the Marcos dictatorship. The most ignominious example of this was the officially commissioned *Si Malakas at Si Maganda* (1980), Imelda Marcos's officially sponsored attempt at self-fashioning through the medium of an actual written epic text. It was only one of many such mythic representations sponsored by the Conjugal Dictatorship.⁴³⁵ Edited by Remedios Ramos, its epical contents were penned by none other than E. Arsenio Manuel and his colleague in oral traditions studies Florentino Hornedo.⁴³⁶ Manuel described his contribution as being "based mainly on Philippine oral traditions from the north to the south of the country in the form of myths, legends, folktales, and epic songs."⁴³⁷ The book was withdrawn from circulation on account of its near-pornographic depictions of the First Lady,

⁴³³ For background on the *Maragtas*, see William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: New Day, 1984), chap. 4; and *Maragtas Symposium: A Symposium on the Maragtas Held on the 27th of January 1968 at the Epifanio de los Santos Auditorium (National Library Building)* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1970).

⁴³⁴ Manuel, "Survey of Philippine Epics," 4, 4n3; L.M. Grow, "'Hufana in Excelsis': Dredging for Poetic Nuggets," *Philippine Studies* vol. 50 no. 2 (2002): 269-270.

⁴³⁵ Cf. Vicente L. Rafael, "Patronage, Pornography, and Youth: Ideology and Spectatorship during the Early Marcos Years," in his *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), 122-161, 248-249n1; see also Alejandrino G. Hufana, *Imelda: A Tonal Epic* (Manila: Konsensus, 1975). It should come as no surprise that the man who mythologized the Marcoses also sought to do the same for the Nazis. See idem, *Sieg Heil: An Epic on the Third Reich* (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975).

⁴³⁶ Remedios F. Ramos, ed., *Si Malakas at si Maganda* (Manila: Jorge Y. Ramos, 1980). For background on the project, see Alfred W. McCoy, *Closer Than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy* (Pasig: Anvil, 1999), 172-173. See also Rafael, "Patronage, Pornography, and Youth: Ideology and Spectatorship during the Early Marcos Years."

⁴³⁷ E. Arsenio Manuel, "A Checklist of the Writings of E. Arsenio Manuel 1933-1983: As Listed and Annotated by Himself," *Philippine Humanities Review/Rebyu ng Arte at Literatura* vol. 1 nos. 3-4 (July-Dec., 1984): 243.

so its impact on Philippine society was negligible.⁴³⁸ It stands today as a historical footnote, known really only to scholars as one of so many pieces of Marcos propaganda—and as a regrettable instance of otherwise distinguished, nationalistic scholars casting their lot with a brutal dictator.

Less ideologically motivated and simpler in many ways were the retellings of epics in short story form. Many of these drew broadly from lengthy folklore traditions all throughout the Philippines, including but not limited to epics, such as Ma. Delia Coronel's *Stories and Legends from Filipino Folklore* (1967) and E. Arsenio Manuel and Gilda Cordero-Fernando's *Treasury of Stories* (1995).⁴³⁹ Others, such as Howard P. McKaughan's *Stories from the Darangen* (1995) sought to renarrate stories from specific traditions.⁴⁴⁰ Some of these books seem only to have been circulated in regions near the locales where epics were recorded, such as Atti T. Cayongcat's *The Darangen: A Conglomeration of the Philippine Epic Tales* (1984).⁴⁴¹ These works essentially reiterated the stories represented in epics in a simplified, readable format. The compilers of such books sought to be faithful to the recorded oral epic transcripts they used as their source material in the sense that they sought to accurately represent the characters, major events, and plots. They did not seek to use them as a source material upon which they would craft a distinctive narrative, as for instance Demetillo and the Marcos mythmakers had. Remaking the originally repetitious, lengthy, metaphorically rich, verse-based narratives into undemanding short stories meant that they changed a great deal. In these renditions, the epics approximated fairy tales, which had the

⁴³⁸ Soon after its publication, the book “was promptly and quietly removed from circulation because some of its illustrations showed Imelda as a goddess clothed only in the flesh, naked as a *bomba* starlet.” Pearlie Rose S. Baluyut, *Institutions and Icons of Patronage: Arts and Culture in the Philippines During the Marcos Years, 1965-1986* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012), 7.

⁴³⁹ Ma. Delia Coronel, ed., *Stories and Legends from Filipino Folklore* (Manila: Univ. of Santo Tomas, 1967); and E. Arsenio Manuel with Gilda Cordero-Fernando, *Treasury of Stories* (Pasig: Anvil Pub., 1995).

⁴⁴⁰ Howard P. McKaughan, *Stories from the Darangen* (Manila: De La Salle Univ. Press, 1995).

⁴⁴¹ Atti T. Cayongcat, *The Darangen: A Conglomeration of the Philippine Epic Tales* (Iligan City: Scorpio Printing Co., Inc., 1984). In this case an American era precursor exists. See Frank Laubach, ed., *Fascinating Glimpses of Lanao: Folklore, Customs, Wise Sayings, Sacred Places*, 4th ed. (Dansalan: Maranaw Folk School Press, 1940).

practical effect of not only making them more accessible to a mass audience but also gave them access to what was in the Philippines one of the only significant markets for books: children's literature.⁴⁴²

Epic heroes have also found their way into *komiks*—Filipino comic books. The first generation of the epic *komiks* seems to have been published in the 1970s. One can only conjecture how they remade epic texts because they are exceedingly difficult to find today. No major archiving institution (The Philippine Library, archives at the Ateneo de Manila, University of the Philippines, private libraries like the Ayala Museum and the Lopez Memorial Museum, etc.) possesses any of them, so far as I was able to determine. We only know of *komiks* like *Prinsipe Bantugan* (1974), *Lam-ang* (1974), and *Indarapatra at Sulayman* (1981) through citations in the secondary literature and online websites.⁴⁴³ My suspicion is that whatever the adaptation strategies of their particular authors, illustrators, and colorists—each of which reimagined the narrative and represented it in his own way—may have been, replicating the form of the original recordings was not of any major concern.

Somewhat surprisingly, there have not been many novelizations of epic subjects. Of course, novels, short stories, and other literary genres have been written which make use of folklore in a general way—the works of Carlos Bulosan for instance come to mind.⁴⁴⁴ But almost no published literature has made use of any epic narratives specifically. There is,

⁴⁴² Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century*, 51, 53; Crisanto Rivera, *Panitikang Pambata: Kasaysayan at Halimbawa* (Quezon City: Rex Printing Co., 1982).

⁴⁴³ For reproductions of the covers of these three *komiks*, see “Prince Bantugan,” *Komiklopedia: The Philippine Komiks Encyclopedia*, 14 May 2009, <http://komiklopedia.wordpress.com/2007/10/13/national-epic-illustrated/bantugan/> [accessed 8 July 2013]; “Lam Ang,” *Komiklopedia: The Philippine Komiks Encyclopedia*, 6 April 2008, <http://komiklopedia.wordpress.com/2007/10/13/legend-of-the-philippines-series/lamang-2/> [accessed 8 July 2013]; “Epikong bantugan tagalog version,” Janet blog, 28 April 2013, <http://chamgorabom.blog.com/2013/04/28/epikong-bantugan-tagalog-version/> [accessed 8 July 2013]. For the history of *komiks*, see: John A. Lent, comp., *The First One Hundred Years of Philippine Komiks and Cartoons* (Tagaytay City: Yonzon Associates, 2009); Cynthia Roxas and Joaquin Arevalo, Jr., eds., *A History of Komis of the Philippines and Other Countries* (Quezon City: Islas Filipinas Pub. Co., 1985); and Patricia May B. Jurilla, “A Serious Business: Philippine Comic Book Publishing from the Late 1940s to the mid-1980s,” in *ibid.*, chap. 5.

⁴⁴⁴ See Bulosan's *The Laughter of My Father* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1944). On the linkage between his folkloric imagination and its role in his alleged plagiarism, see Augusto Fauni Espiritu, *Five Faces of Exile: The Nation and Filipino American Intellectuals* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2005), 57-69.

however, one exception. At present the engineer-turned-novelist Abdon M. Balde Jr. is in the process of writing a trilogy of novels based upon the epic *Handiong*. The first of these, *Awit ni Kadunung* (2008), has already appeared. When asked by a reporter what his “dream project” was, he said this was it.⁴⁴⁵ In the guise of a mystery, suspense novel, it seeks to provide a more “complete” story of the epic attributed to Castaño in the late nineteenth century, which Balde maintains is incomplete.⁴⁴⁶ How he “completes” *Handiong*—and how successful his work will become—can only be fully examined once volumes two and three appear.

From these examples we can see that once the epic genre became unbound by its scholarly, rigidly textualized form, Filipinos began to take some interest in it. The readership of these literary reinterpretations is impossible to gauge however because of the lack of statistics and record keeping on the part of both publishers and public institutions. Although we can surmise that at least one of them was successful in that popular demand exceeded its original printing (*Barter in Panay*), none seems to have been more than a minor sensation at absolute best. I will next look into three more recent cases in which the epic genre, once reinterpreted, became a more widely read, viewed, and heard phenomenon. I suggest that it is to such examples we should look for indications of the fate of the epics in the twenty-first century.

⁴⁴⁵ In an interview for the morning show *Good Morning Boss!*, journalist Carla Lizardo asked, “Ano po yung masasabing dream project nyo? If you could write any book, what would it be about?” Balde replied, “Siguro ang dream story actually, partly naisulat ko na, which is, yung nga *Awit ni Kadunung*, is about three heroes of Albay noong ancient times. Yon yung nasa Ibalon. Ito first part pa lang. Kaya lang, inabot na ko almost 700 pages na nakapalitong libro. So, ginawa ko kaseng tri-ology, so abutin siguro mga mahigit sa 2,000 pages sa librong yon. So, first part napublish ko na [pointing to *Awit ni Kadunung*]. Yung second part eh, sinisulat ko, this is about Balitog. Yung sunod ay about Handiong. Yong pangatlo ay about Bantong. So pag ano nasulat ko yon, pwede suma kapal [words garbled] yon sa Lord of the Rings. Pero yon ang, pag lagay ko, pagka natapos ko yon, kontento na ako sa pagiging manunulat” [*Good Morning Boss!* “Personage: Interview of Award-Winning Novelist Abdon Balde Jr.” *People’s Television Network YouTube Channel*. 4 April 2013.

⁴⁴⁶ Abdon M. Balde Jr., *Awit ni Kadunung* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2008).

The Return of Epic Performance: Enriquez's *Three Philippine Epic Plays*

Of the many modern media that can be used to re-present an epic, arguably the most similar to the original form is theatre. Cinema and television can recreate the pageantry, auditory and visual effects in their own ways, but dramaturgical productions uniquely have the power to recreate those things as well as, crucially, the simultaneity of a performance. Presumably since at least the 1950s, if not perhaps during the American colonial period, small local venues like elementary schools to regional high schools and universities to more prestigious national institutions in the capitol like the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP; founded in 1969) have been staging plays based in small or large part on Philippine epics and their titular heroes. We know from Barbara Gaerlan's work on the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company (founded 1958) that nationalists like Francisca Reyes Aquino and her student Leonor Orosa Goquinco sought to reconstitute a distinctly Filipino form of dance that students would learn about in schools as early as the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁴⁷ The Internet and especially social media have facilitated the publicizing of epic-based theatricalizations in recent years.⁴⁴⁸ But short of scanning every newspaper in every small town and large city over the past half century (most of which are not archived), there is no way to assess with any great certainty how widespread the practice of transforming epic texts into plays has been. That does not mean that we know nothing about its prevalence, however. One useful indication of the practice can be seen in Mig Alvarez Enriquez publication *Three*

⁴⁴⁷ Barbara S. Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan: Orientalism, Nationalism, and Modernity in Filipino American Dance," *Journal of Asian American Studies* vol. 2 no. 3 (1999): 251-287, see esp., 257-266.

⁴⁴⁸ See, e.g. Elizabeth Lolarga, "Filipino epic 'Labaw Donggon' comes to life," *Yahoo! News Philippines*, 25 February 2013, <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/blogs/the-inbox/filipino-epic-labaw-donggon-comes-life-111820526.html?.tsrc=yahoo> [accessed 8 July 2013]; Rosalinda L. Orosa, "The HudHud, Ullalim chants, ritual dances and ballet / Flamenco dance programs," *PhilStar.com*, <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/578194/hudhud-ullalim-chants-ritual-dances-and-ballet-flamenco-dance-programs> [accessed 8 July 2013]; Walter Ang, "Theater of the young, the here and now" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, online, 8 March 2010, <http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/artsandbooks/artsandbooks/view/20100308-257313/Theater-of-the-young-the-here-and-now> [accessed 8 July 2013]; and Jocelyn Dimaculangan, "Philippine Ballet Theater performs Maranao epic 'The Darangen ni Bantugen,'" *Philippine Entertainment Portal*, 28 April 2008, <http://www.pep.ph/guide/guide/1882/Philippine-Ballet-Theater-performs-Maranao-epic-The-Darangen-ni-Bantugen> [accessed 8 July 2013].

Philippine Epic Plays (1983), an epic text that uncharacteristically was successful enough to have merited a second printing in 1986. As a moderately successful work, we might view the manner in which it made epic texts into plays as symptomatic of the changes epic dramaturges all throughout the Philippines made throughout the post-independence period.

As its title suggests, the book made three epics—*Biag ni Lam-ang*, *Hinilawod*, and *Bantugan* (an alternate title for *Darangen*)—into theatre scripts. Enriquez does not say why he chose these three epics in particular. One suspects it is because each one can be seen as representing one of the three broad regions the Philippines is typically divided into: *Biag ni Lam-ang* for Luzon, *Hinilawod* for the Visayas, and *Bantugan* for Mindanao. Whether these epics, each of which was recorded in only one, local language within those regions can in any way be said to be truly “representative”—probably not—is another matter. Taken as a triad, though, they can be said to technically represent the tripartite Philippine geo-body.

Enriquez crafted the work, he wrote, “In the hope of instilling in us a realization of our oneness of soul as Filipinos while setting up humanity for the enjoyment of man,” towards which end he, “worked these epic stories into plays that speak their speech and entertain as well.”⁴⁴⁹ In addition to being entertaining—the single most important requirement for works of theatre—he maintained that plays based on epics should also have a didactic function. In this case, they would, as he put it, articulate the Filipinos’ “oneness of soul,” their fundamental unity that effaced all cultural, ethnic, linguistic, class, and religious differences. Advancing no theory of how it was they would come to see what had somehow become obscured—presumably by centuries of colonial rule—he was instead content to assume that simply through viewing epic plays Filipino audiences would be edified and accordingly be made of aware of their true selves. This was exactly the sort of transformative power that the post-independence collectors hoped that their recorded epics would have (see

⁴⁴⁹ Enriquez, *Three Philippine Epic Plays*, iv.

above, Chapter Five). In *Three Philippine Epic Plays* we can see how such notions about the significance and function of epics became internalized, even taken for granted, for the generations of students they instructed.

The most basic operation Enriquez had to undertake was to change the text of a chanted narrative into a play script: assemble the plot, divide the story into acts and scenes, create discrete characters, and formulate stage directions. Before he could perform that multifaceted task however, he had to make a number of more fundamental decisions about what he wanted to represent. The first involved selecting which epic text(s) to remake. The often happenstance conditions that allowed for the recording of the first Philippine epics offered no assurance that the resulting episodes, cycles, etc., would be intrinsically compelling material for modern Filipino theatre-going audiences. He had to choose which stories in *Lam-ang*, *Hinilawod*, and *Bantugan* he wanted to depict and which recorded version(s) of each to draw those from. Fortunately for Enriquez, at the time of his writing, only a few recorded epic versions of those epics existed. The extant versions of *Lam-ang* actually all told essentially the same story, perhaps because they were all reprints of de los Reyes's original. The only published version of *Hinilawod* then was Jocano's *The Epic of Labaw Donggon*. And Coronel would not publish the first installment her multivolume *Darangen* for at least three more years (1986-1993), so he had to rely on Laubach's recordings from half a century earlier.⁴⁵⁰ In other words, Enriquez had his work cut out for him. Those who would seek to replicate his labor today however would face tougher choices because of the subsequent proliferation of collected epic works.

Second, Enriquez had to decide *how* to depict the stories, how to take *Lam-ang*, for instance, and transform it into a coherent, compelling story that would be enjoyable for

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 2, 74, 130. For information on the recorded epic versions, cf. Manuel, "Survey of Philippine Epics," 10-12, 26-27, 37.

theatre-going audiences. He describes how he sifted through the epic materials to figure out what he should represent.

The notable thing about the epic is its theme. Leopoldo Yabes, whose translation of a version into English I have used as basis of this stage adaptation, denies the account epic proportion for want of a theme. However, studying the story analytically, I spied the idea that could be the theme hidden under the spectacle and fantasy of Lam-ang's adventures, and it is that: for all his physical prowess and magic endowments Lam-ang dove straight into the jaws of Berkakan! This is a mandatory incident in all versions of the story, and as such, sum-totals of the tale's indictment—the vulnerability of man! This I see as its theme, buried, as it were, under the debris of literary misinterpretations.⁴⁵¹

In reinterpreting the epic, Enriquez felt compelled to give prominence to the incidents in the story he viewed as quintessential, those that displayed Lam-ang's "physical prowess and magic endowments." He accordingly left out, minimized, or all together changed the incidents that did not contribute to such a portrayal. To take one example, he completely changed the scene where Lam-ang negotiates marriage with maiden Kannoyan's parents. Instead of a conversation between the protagonist and her father and mother, Enriquez made it into a one-on-one conversation between prospective bride and groom—despite that Kannoyan did not take part in the meeting but viewed it from afar in Enriquez's source.⁴⁵² This improvised dialogue becomes an occasion for Lam-ang to engage in manly posturing vis-à-vis his bride to be, in which he declares things like, "My body is as strong as the molave/My figure—the best in all Nalbuan/And Igorot territory."⁴⁵³ Kannoyan asserts herself too, notably by dumping a flower vase full of water on Lam-ang's head, so the narrative does not depict Lam-ang's masculinity solely. Doubtless such changes do make that particular scene, and indeed the epic as a whole, more amusing to watch for a modern audience. But

⁴⁵¹ Enriquez, *Three Philippine Epic Plays*, 2. Yabes published two versions of *Lam-ang*. Enriquez does not state which one he consulted. Cf. Leopoldo Y. Yabes, *The Ilocano Epic: A Critical Study of the "Life of Lam-ang", Ancient Ilocano Popular Poem, with a Translation of the Poem into English Prose* (Manila: Carmelo & Bauermann, 1935); and idem, "The Ilocano Epic: A Critical Study of the 'Life of Lam-ang,'" *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* vol. 23 (1958): 283-337.

⁴⁵² Cf. Yabes, "The Ilocano Epic," 315-321.

⁴⁵³ Enriquez, *Three Philippine Epic Plays*, 41.

they are the product of Enriquez's imagination and have really nothing to do with the original recording.

Next followed a set of technical questions related to theatrical production such as how to design the set; how to fashion the costumes, jewelry, and makeup; what instruments to use and style of music to play; how to instruct the actors to deliver their lines, move around, gesticulate, and so on. Apart from interspersing the script with basic stage instructions, Enriquez did not provide any guidance in these matters despite that he was the first dramaturge to create epic scripts. Probably he assumed that these were all matters the producers of the plays themselves could best decide. By creating the script that could serve as the backbone of the performance, he accomplished the most important step towards that end. Just the same, he was almost certainly incapable of doing anything more; not because he was any more ill-suited to such a task than any other highly educated, culturally aware Filipino. Rather, the intrinsic cultural diversity of the epic chanting groups makes such generalizations about their material culture difficult to make. Their lifeways, languages, music, dress, and more varied so widely that it would have been difficult for even the most wide-ranging of Philippine anthropologists to have had even a cursory knowledge of how more than one group dressed, adorned their bodies, played instruments, etc. Indeed very little of such information made its way into the introductory ethnographic sections of the recorded epic texts themselves, the principle textual sources for epic remixers.⁴⁵⁴ Short of conducting fieldwork in each of the three communities whose epics he sought to recreate, there was no other way Enriquez or anyone else could come across that type of information. It was inevitable, then, that these things had to be improvised at the local level of production.

⁴⁵⁴ See e.g., Manuel, *Maiden of the Buhong Sky*, 12-15; idem, *Agyu*, 30-38; idem, *Tuwaang*, 25-34; Lambrecht, *Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bagan at Gonhadan*, Part II; and Jocano, *Epic of Labaw Donggon*, 6-23. Coronel's multivolume recording of the *Darangen* uniquely contains a number of beautiful illustrations that give some hint of what the costumes and set design of a staged *Bantugan* might look like. See e.g. Coronel, *Darangen*, frontispiece, 18, 29, 36, 49, 62, 75, 79, 85, 90, 106, and 182.

Finally there was the question of what language to perform an epic in. Enriquez wrote his text in English, the lingua franca of epic scholarship and also of post-independence theatre to an extent. But for nationalistically-minded dramatuges—and who among performers of epic plays would not fit into this category?—the possibility existed of translating the play into Filipino for its performance. This of course would have to be done by those that arranged the play themselves. And Filipino is not the only choice. Although I have not come across any instances of this, it would not be the least bit surprising for Ilokanos to for instance perform *Biag ni Lam-ang* in the language it was originally performed in over a century ago, which incidentally serves as a lingua franca of Northern Luzon beyond Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte. All one would have to do is to translate Enriquez’s script. The resultant script in this hypothetical scenario would be an illustratively strange one: a translation (into Ilokano), of a literary refashioning (by Yabes), of a translation (into English), of a recording in nineteenth century Ilokano.

Translation is only one sort of refashioning of Enriquez’s script that can be undertaken. A producer who staged one of his theatre epics could just as easily embellish, leave out, add in or otherwise modify these already reinterpreted versions of epics. In this way, Enriquez has begun a precedent that might prove critical for the future history of epics: he has remade them into scripts that can be loosely interpreted, and hence made newly relevant again for a modern audience. In this sense, he has (probably unwittingly) replicated the mode of performance that characterized epic chanting as it was traditionally performed. Historically, chanters worked from a mostly mental script, sometimes with written notes that served more as an aid to memory rather than as a document to be closely followed, and improvised the performance according to their desires in the moment or for the ritual occasion.⁴⁵⁵ It is for this very reason that, as Revel puts it, “Each performance is an

⁴⁵⁵ Sweeney, *A Full Hearing*, 8-9.

original.”⁴⁵⁶ If we conceive of Enriquez’s work in the same way, as a starting point for an infinite variety of performances rather than as an immutable sacred text, then we might recognize him as the modernizer of the Philippine epic theatre—or he was, at least, the first one to publicize the possibility of making epics into theatre in through the technology of the book.

Having students perform *Hinilawod* in a local school setting in Cebu today, say, is of course not the same thing as it was performing it even half a century ago in nearby upland Panay. The linguistic medium is different (English, Filipino, or Cebuano instead of Kiniraya), as are the performers (teachers and students instead of trained chanters or their apprentices), the audience (educated, urban Filipinos instead of upland folk), the institutions that staged them (national schools instead of local kinship groups), the ritual occasion (educational assignment chosen according to calendric time rather than happenstance life event), and of course the meaning: for the school children it is a sort of civic engagement whereas for the Panayans it was mainly a form of entertainment, although the chant was also performed in part during religious occasions.⁴⁵⁷ Thus even though there do seem to be similarities in the way the epic can be performed in the contemporary Philippines with how they were in the past, to do so today effectively amounts to carrying out an invented tradition.⁴⁵⁸

Three Philippine Epic Plays demonstrates that to transform recorded epic literature into theatre scripts necessitates that innumerable alterations large and small be made, such that almost nothing or perhaps very little of the original text would reappear in unadulterated form in the actual performed play. Fidelity to the original is sacrificed for the potential of greater accessibility, intelligibility, relevance, and meaning for a national or even local

⁴⁵⁶ Nicole Revel, “*Kudaman*: An Oral Epic in the Palawan Highlands,” *Oral Tradition* vol. 11 no. 1 (Jan. 1996): 126.

⁴⁵⁷ F. Landa Jocano, *The Epic of Labaw Donggon* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1965), 19, 20.

⁴⁵⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983).

audience. Writing within a cultural establishment that fetishized the original recorded epic documents as texts of unimpeachable value and significance, Enriquez had to at least pay deference to the notion that we should do what we could remain faithful to the originals, as we see for instance in the epigraph above with which I began this chapter. Despite that he produced a work that was in every way contrary to such a notion. In reworking *Biag ni Lamang*, *Hinilawod*, and *Bantugan* he was clearly not faithful to the originals but was instead *playful* with them. This quality of the work, which characterized all successful epic reinterpretations such as Rio Alma's "modern epic" *Huling Hudhud* and the soap opera *Amaya*, to which I will turn next, would be crucial for the continuation of the epic genre as a truly popular cultural form in the twenty-first century.

The Epic as Coffee Table Book: Rio Alma's *Huling Hudhud*

Jurilla points out that one sort of mass-market publication, the coffee table book, actually had some success in the Philippines beginning in the 1970s—ironic in a country where the vast majority could not even afford coffee tables. These characteristically "hardcover, glossy, illustrated art books" found "a receptive audience and a place" in the homes of the well to do, mainly because they were the only ones who could afford them. They typically cost around ₱350, which was more than an average worker's month's wages in the 1970s. Such books, Jurilla notes, "were bought not to be read but to be given as gifts or to be displayed." As a result of their initial popularity, coffee table books began in time to attract serious scholars who occasionally used the medium to publish their studies of Filipino history and culture. The value of such studies can be seen by the fact that some were in turn reprinted as textbooks.⁴⁵⁹ Over time, as the publishing industry and local readership grew, a more affordable type of coffee table book began to be published. In large part this was

⁴⁵⁹ Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century*, 49-50, 203-204n131.

because publishers made them with softcovers instead of hard and used a slightly lower grade of what was still high quality paper. The result is that today, coffee table books of the lower stratum are priced from ₱600 to ₱1000—something less than a week’s pay at the minimum wage and thus still not a sensible purchase for the poor and working class majority—but they are at least within the reach of the growing middle class.⁴⁶⁰ It is through this medium, the middle shelf but still high quality coffee table book, that one “modern epic” (*makabagong epiko*), Virgilio Almario’s (better known by his pen name Rio Alma) *Huling Hudhud ng Sanlibong Pagbabalik at Paglimot para sa Filipinas Kong Mahal* (Last Hudhud of a Thousand Returns and a Forgetting of My Beloved Philippines, 2009), made its appearance.

A man of Shakespearean ambitions, Almario cut his teeth as a poet and literary critic beginning in the early 1970s and has remained highly prolific ever since. One of the principle figures in the movement to modernize Filipino poetry, he published his first book of collected poems as *Perigrinasyon at Iba Pang Tula* (Peregrination and Other Poems) in 1970.⁴⁶¹ Soon after that he published his first collection of essays in literary criticism, *Ang Makata sa Panahon ng Makina* (The Poet in the Time of The Machine), in 1972, which is now regarded as a classic. He is probably better known for his survey of Filipino poetry that appeared a decade later, *Balagtasismo Versus Modernismo: Panulaang Tagalog sa Ika-20 Siglo* (Balagtasism versus Modernism: Tagalog Poetry in the 20th Century, 1984).⁴⁶² As a

⁴⁶⁰ For information on the current minimum wage by region, see: “Summary of Current Regional Daily Minimum Wage Rates,” Department of Labor and Employment, Wages and Productivity Commission, June 5 2013, http://www.nwpc.dole.gov.ph/pages/statistics/stat_current_regional.html [accessed 7 July 2013].

⁴⁶¹ Virgilio Almario, *Perigrinasyon at Iba Pang Tula* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1970); other representative works include *Alamat at Historya* (Quezon City: Peskador, 1986); *Katon para sa Limang Pandama* (Quezon City: Peskador, 1987); [Rio Alma], *Sentimental: Mga Tula ng Pag-ibig, Lungkot, at Paglimot* (Quezon City: Anvil Publishing, 2004), among many others.

⁴⁶² Virgilio Almario, *Ang Makata sa Panahon ng Makina* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1972); idem, *Balagtasismo Versus Modernismo: Panulaang Tagalog sa Ika-20 Siglo* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1984); some of his subsequent works of criticism include: Virgilio Almario and Romulo A. Sandoval, eds., *Taludtod at Talinghaga: Mga Sangkap ng Katutubong Pagtula* (Manila: Aklat Balagtasyana, 1985); Virgilio Almario, *Panitikan ng Robolusyon(g) 1896: Isang Paglingon at Katipunan ng mga Akda nina Bonifacio at Jacinto* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1993); *Kung Sino ang Kumatha kina Bagongbanta, Ossorio, Herrera, Aquino de Belen, Balagtas, atbp: Mga Imbestigasyon sa Panitikan ng Kolonyalismo* (Quezon City: Anvil Publishing, 1992); and idem, Mutyang Dilim: *Ang Bagong Pormalismong Filipino sa Pagbasa ng Tula* (Marikina City: Talingdao Pub., House, 2001).

poet who wrote exclusively in Filipino, one of his abiding passions was the national language, towards the furtherance of which he produced a number of linguistic studies. This interest culminated in his participation in the *UP Diksiyunariong Filipino* in 2001 (UP Dictionary of the Filipino Language; rev. ed. 2010).⁴⁶³ Beginning in the early 1980s, he also began to pen children's literature, often about folkloric subjects.⁴⁶⁴ Finally, he has also become a translator of major works into Filipino, the best known of which are his translations of Rizal's *Noli* and *Fili*.⁴⁶⁵ For these considerable accomplishments as a litterateur and cultural activist he has received a number of accolades, the highest of which was selection as a National Artist for Literature in 2003.⁴⁶⁶ This formidable career of over forty years of writing poetry, criticism, linguistic studies, lexicography, children's literature, folklore, translations work, and of course the deep study of Filipino history and culture that it occasioned, uniquely enabled him to be able to remake the epic as a modern literary genre.

Like Demetillo's *Barter in Panay, Huling Hudhud* takes as its model not the recorded Filipino epic but the classical literary one. The narrative centers on the figure of Aliguyon, the male hero of the Ifugao *Hudhud* epics, and his journey across the Philippines, hence the book's title. The *Hudhud* is arguably the best-known series of Philippine epic recordings, so Almarino probably chose it (rather than, say, *Hinilawod* or *Darangen*) because the name has

⁴⁶³ *UP Diksiyunariong Filipino* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 2001); his works on Filipino include: *Tradisyong at Wikang Filipino* (Quezon City: Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, Univ. of the Philippines, 1997); and *Filipino ng mga Filipino: Mga Asterisko sa Istandard ng Ispeling, Estilo sa Pagsulat, at Paraan ng Pagpapayaman sa Wikang Pambansa* (Quezon City: Anvil Publishing, 1993).

⁴⁶⁴ Representative works include: Virgilio S. Almarino and Alberto E. Gamos, *The Trial of the Animals: A Folktale from the Philippines* (London: Methuen Children's Books, 1983); idem, *The Love of Lam-ang* (Quezon City: Children's Community Center, 1983); Virgilio Almarino, Ferdinand R. Doctolero, and Emelina S. Almarino, *Sundalong Patpat* (Quezon City: Adarna House, 1997); Virgilio Almarino, Mitzi Villavecer, and Gilbert Torres, *Ang Hukuman ni Sinukman* (Quezon City: Adarna House, 2005); Virgilio S. Almarino, Ibarra Cruz Crisostomo, and Leonardo Giron, *Manik Buangsi* (Quezon City: Adarna House, 2005); Virgilio Almarino and Corazon Dandan-Albano, *Si Pilandok at ang mga Buwaya* (Quezon City: Adarna House, 2008); Virgilio Almarino and Corazon Dandan-Albano, *Rosa Albina* (Quezon City: Adarna House, 2011).

⁴⁶⁵ Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, trans. Virgilio S. Almarino (Quezon City: Adarna House, 1998); and Jose Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, trans. Virgilio S. Almarino (Quezon City: Adarna House, 1999).

⁴⁶⁶ National Commission for Culture and the Arts, "The National Artists of the Philippines: Virgilio S. Almarino (also known as Rio Alma)," 2011, http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca/org-awards/literature/virgilio_almario.php [accessed 7 July 2013].

almost become synonymous with the genre itself.⁴⁶⁷ But this is no conventional retelling of an Aliguyon story. Instead of the Ifugao hero who battles the warrior Pumbakhayon, or woos the legendarily beautiful Bagan in the Luzon highlands, Aliguyon becomes in Almario's telling a traverser of the Philippine geo-body, who through a series of fourteen "encounters" (*engkuwentro*, from the Spanish "encuentro"), which function as chapters, meets with historic Filipino figures and places, real and imagined, and ruminates on the significance of such encounters.

The format of the chapters can be seen in the Introduction, which he calls an "Imbitasyon sa Manlalakbay" (Invitation to Travel—the word "imbitasyon" a derivation from either its English or Spanish cognate). Its first page is a very colorful photograph of sea life and rocks in shallow waters. Opposite that is a series of epigraphs by Juan de Oliver (author of the *Doctrina Cristiana*, 1590, the first printed book in the Philippines), the late nineteenth century nationalists Graciano Lopez, Apolinario Mabini, and Emilio Jacinto, and the Marcos era journalist-turned-historian Renato Constantino, political activist and author of an influential two-volume history on the Philippines.⁴⁶⁸ Each one expresses some of the quintessential things those familiar with such personages would associate with their name: Oliver speaks of Catholic theology, Mabini of the need not only for independence from colonial rule but also enlightened governance thereafter, and Constantino of a vision of history that is not a mere recitation of the past but one that points the way to a better future. Almario translates the first four of these epigraphs into Filipino from their original Spanish. For Oliver's, he does so with recourse to older Spanish transliteration conventions—using c's and y's instead of the contemporary k's and i's. He leaves Constantino's quote in its original

⁴⁶⁷ The *Hudhud* is for instance the only Filipino epic to have been selected as one of the "101 Filipino Icons," a book project that Almario served as a contributor for. See *101 Filipino Icons* (Quezon City: Adarna House, 2007), 22-23.

⁴⁶⁸ See Renato Constantino and Letizia Constantino, *A History of the Philippines: From Spanish Colonization to the Second World War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975); and idem, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Pub. Services, 1975).

English unchanged, probably because for most educated Filipinos it functions as a second language. This is how every chapter, or “Encounter,” opens: with one or many photos whose relationship to the people and places in that chapter is either concrete or abstract, and with a series of epigraphs from the major figures in Philippine history to suggest its themes.

The “Imbitasyon sa Manlalakbay” itself consists of a lengthy poem of irregularly structured stanzas and a series of photos mostly of roads, road signs, vehicles, destinations, and travelers. The layout of each page we see here is what recurs throughout the book. Photographs are one side of the wide pages and the text is on the other, such that each one contains multiple photos alongside stanzas or paragraphs of text. These photographs form a narrative on their own, one that complements their textual counterpart, but that can also be meaningfully viewed without them. This Introduction is unique among chapters in that it contains an encounter with only one place or person—the protagonist himself, because it is a narration of Aliguyon’s mental preparation for the journey. Each of the others contains three to five events that, taken together, constitute the “encounter.” These encounters are designed to function like episodes or cycles in oral epics—they convey parts of a single story that, once strung together with others, can form a larger set of distinct but related narratives in the adventure(s) of an epic protagonist.⁴⁶⁹

In the course of his journey, Almarion’s Aliguyon meets with a number of figures from Filipino history and literary imagination like Francisco Baltazar, his epic hero counterparts like Handiong, contemporary fictional characters such as the Wonder Woman-esque comic heroine Darna, and even individuals who have entered into the Filipino consciousness only

⁴⁶⁹ True to form, Manuel sought to develop an even more precise terminology that he could apply to Philippine epics. He wrote,

It is sometimes necessary to invent a terminology for the purposes of classification, analysis, or convenience... A microepic is complete in itself: it has a beginning, a series of incidents that form the basic story, and has an ending. [It] can be enjoyed in one evening of listening... The mesoepic takes a longer time to sing or chant and is much longer than the microepic for the reason perhaps that the incidents are more complicated... The whole Tuwaang epic cycle might appropriately be called a macroepic. There are enough songs now on tapes for anyone to be able to definitely state that the Tuwaang epic cycle is a macroepic even if no one would ever know whether he had made a complete collection (Manuel, *Agyu*, 87-88).

recently such as Julia Campbell, the Peace Corps volunteer who was tragically murdered in 2007.⁴⁷⁰ His travels take him to actual places like the historic Malolos (where the 1899 Constitution was drawn up), to an ordinary cockpit in Batanes today, to epic imaginary places like Nelendangan, the setting of the *Ulahingen* epic. The Introduction is further unique in that the poem is the only literary convention it employs. All of the other chapters narrate at least one of their encounters in prose, even though most of the text is in verse. In this sense, Almario mimics the natural heterogeneity of orally recited forms from chanting communities. After all, not all recorded epics have been in poetic form. Juan R. Francisco's *Maharadia Lawana* is for instance a prose narrative.⁴⁷¹ And as Coronel discovered, "not all the episodes of the *Darangen* are in verse form."⁴⁷²

Thus in seeking to modernize the genre—which we might see as the culminating act of his work to modernize the Filipino poetry—Almario transformed the epic from the most complex of oral forms into possibly the most complex of written ones. In particular ways he sought to recreate aspects of the original form through the written medium. Orally recited epics for instance represented several events throughout a single performance, made use of a specialized vocabulary for the occasion, and created a visual spectacle that accompanied the recitation. *Huling Hudhud* replicated each of these features but in a radically different way. The events were not battles, betel-chewing sessions, or sea voyages but instead imaginative meetings with Handiong, Rizal, Balagtas, and others. The specialized vocabulary was that of the highest register literary Filipino—which few outside of a classroom setting actually read

⁴⁷⁰ Rio Alma, *Huling Hudhud ng Sanlibong Pagbabalik at Paglimot para sa Filipinas Kong Mahal* (Quezon City: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2009), 94. For news of her murder, see "Filipino charged for murder of Peace Corps volunteer," Reuters, 30 Apr. 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/04/30/us-philippines-murder-idUSMAN15284320070430> [accessed 24 July 2013]; "Julia remembered as hard-charging journalist," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 Apr. 2007, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20070420-61477/Julia_remembered_as_hard-charging_journalist [accessed 24 July 2013]. See also the blog she maintained, <http://juliainthephilippines.blogspot.com/> [accessed 24 July 2013]; and the Julia Campbell Agroforest Memorial Eco-Park, named in her memory: juliacampbellpark.wordpress.com/about/ [accessed 24 July 2013].

⁴⁷¹ Juan R. Francisco, *Maharadia Lawana* (Quezon City: Philippine Folklore Society, 1969).

⁴⁷² Coronel, *Darangen in Original Maranao Verse*, 13.

in, and even then typically with the aid of a dictionary. This suggests that he conceived of the university as the place where the book would be read. And the visuals were the lavish page layouts, calligraphic fonts, and the innumerable photographs. The manner of “hearing” was different too. Much in the same way one could variously engage and disengage the portions of an oral recitation that one found most compelling, one could read only the parts of Almario’s epic that one was interested in, whenever one pleased; the overall story is connected enough to function as a larger story arc, yet at the same time the encounters could stand on their own as particular episodes. Another difference is in the community for whom Almario created the epic. Ifugaos, Maranaos, Manuvu’ and others chanted epics in their local languages and for the enjoyment of their own local communities. Here Almario collects a protagonist, characters, and settings, real and fictive, from the debris of history and re-presents them as unique but nonetheless common Filipino subjects for a national audience. His doing so forms his most profound and searching attempt to chart the genealogy of the nation.⁴⁷³ Lastly, whereas the epic chanters worked from a mental script derived from their hearings and recollections of previous oral recitations, Almario derived his epic exclusively from a sprawling variety *printed* materials: recorded epics, history books, ethnographies, newspapers, online sources, and more. Like Flaubert’s *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, this creative work is “not the product of dreams and rapture, but a monument to meticulous erudition.” It is the first epic to have been self-consciously written with reference solely to other recorded epics.⁴⁷⁴ (Other contenders such as Demetillio’s *Barter in Panay* or the epics contained in *Si Malakas at Si Maganda* were slighter, simpler remakes of particular epics that hewed much more closely to their sources materials rather than attempting to create truly novel products). It is through such innovations—not necessarily all new—that Almario

⁴⁷³ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in his *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 76-100; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Verso 2006).

⁴⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, “Fantasia of the Library,” in idem, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), 89.

dutifully modernized the epic. For the few Filipinos who would actually read the book, then, it promises a rewarding, yet challenging, experience.

One wonders whether the description of *Huling Hudhud* as a coffee table book would sit well with the talented, prolific, and nationally recognized author. Then again, this type of book in particular, with its many photographs that punctuate the textual narrative and lavish page layouts that enshrine individual poems, is ideally suited for what Almario attempts to do. Given the fact that many coffee table books have been remade into more readable media before, like textbooks, there is a chance that the book's considerable merits will carry it to a more productive future. There will always remain the possibility that it might actually become the epic of the Filipino people.

The “Flourishing” of the Filipinos: Amaya as the First Epicserye

By a wide margin the most widely viewed or heard thing called an “epic” in recent Philippine history was the soap opera (*teleserye*) *Amaya*. *Amaya* sought to dramatize prehispanic Filipino culture and history through narrating the life of its eponymous protagonist, portrayed by Marian Rivera. Billing itself as the first ever *epicserye*, it ran for 165 episodes from 2011-2012 and received high ratings all throughout, a lengthy run for a Filipino soap opera, which unlike its American counterpart tends to be broadcasted for a limited span of time rather than attempting to be on air indefinitely.⁴⁷⁵ In its time it was arguably the flagship show of the GMA Network, the second largest entertainment

⁴⁷⁵ “Amaya,” *IMDb*, 2012, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1849249/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 [accessed 30 July 2013]. For information on ratings, see Cristina Martinez-Belen, “‘Amaya’ wages ratings war Monday,” *Manila Bulletin*, 30 May 2011, <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/320465/amaya-wages-ratings-war-today> [accessed 4 February 2013]; “AGB Nielsen Mega Manila People Ratings (June 14-16): Amaya and Eat Bulaga! keep lead in weekday ratings,” *Philippine Entertainment Portal Inc.*, 17 June 2011, <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/agb-nielsen-mega-manila-people-ratings-june-14-060850979.html> [accessed 4 February 2013]; “GMA-7 widens lead in nationwide television ratings based on partial October 2011 data,” press statement from GMA-7, *Philippine Entertainment Portal*, 20 October 2011, <http://www.pep.ph/guide/tv/9166/gma-7-widens-lead-in-nationwide-television-ratings-based-on-partial-october-2011-data> [accessed 4 February 2013]; and “Amaya's finale posts 43.5 household audience share points in Mega Manila, based on AGB data,” press statement from GMA-7, *Philippine Entertainment Portal*, 16 January 2012, <http://www.pep.ph/guide/guide/9631/amaya39s-finale-posts-435-household--audience-share-points-in-mega-manila-based-on-agb-data> [accessed 4 February 2013].

conglomerate in the country behind ABS-CBN. Uniquely among soap operas it ran a consistently high production budget, not only because of its star-studded cast but also because of its lavish sets and costumes.⁴⁷⁶ Because of its success it was even subsequently aired in Malaysia and Cambodia.

Amaya is set in the central Visayas during the prehispanic era. The series narrates the life of its titular hero from her birth, early life as a *binukot* (secluded maiden), kidnapping, becoming indentured, passage from adolescence to adulthood, checkered romance with her lover Bagani, apprenticeship as a *babaylan* (shaman), prophesized killing of the despotic Rajah Mangubat, rustication to the highlands, tutelage of the Lumad peoples, battle and defeat of the similarly tyrannical successor to Mangubat Lamitan, ascension to leadership of the *puod* (kingdom), liberation of the indentured, peaceful and benevolent rule thereafter, until the moment of her and Bagani's death in each other's arms. It is revealed at the conclusion that the entire story had been narrated for the benefit of prosperity by Alunsina, a girl Amaya had liberated years before, who was now an adult and chief babaylan. In view of the arrival of the Spanish, whose inevitable colonization Alusina foresaw, she prophesized the rise of new Amayas and Baganis to restore rightful rule to the puod. As one can surmise from this exceedingly brief summary, it contains all of the ups and downs, plot twists, character development, and especially ill-treatment of its main character(s) by other characters and circumstances that make for a compelling Filipino soap opera—and that *also* make for a compelling epic.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Ruel J. Mendoza, “*Amaya* is GMA-7's ‘most expensive primetime series,’” *GMA News Online*, 18 February 2011, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/213365/showbiz/pep-amaya-is-gma-7-s-most-expensive-primetime-series> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁴⁷⁷ Jurilla suggests that the wildly successful Filipino romance novel genre traces its origins in part to the metrical romances of the early twentieth century and before (Jurilla, “Love in the Time of Turmoil: Filipino Romance Novels of the Late Twentieth Century,” in *idem, Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century*, 161). In that sense, one could draw a similar analogy between metrical romances and epics on the one hand and soap operas, which are in romance novels in televisable form.

A few days before its premier, GMA aired a making-of documentary about the show titled *Amaya: The Making of An Epic* (2011). It was hosted by Cesar Montano, star of the 1998 film about the national hero *José Rizal*—another high budget, lengthy, quintessentially nationalistic production.⁴⁷⁸ From the program’s many interviews of producers, directors, designers, and actors we can see that *Amaya*’s creators had in mind a show that was both entertaining *and* didactic. Program Director Cheryl Ching Sy believed the show would “teach the next generations about our past.” She felt broadcasting a program that did so was “their social responsibility.” Creative Director Jun Lana asserted, “It would be interesting because it’s going to be about our history.” For her part, Creative Consultant Annet M. Gozon Abrogar found it surprising that no historical soap operas had been aired in the Philippines before. She cites the example of Korea, whose “historical dramas,” as she calls them, positively depicted “their culture” and demonstrate “the pride they take in their own history.”⁴⁷⁹ Korea’s historical soap operas served to illustrate the potential success such shows could enjoy. It was only logical that the same could be done in the Philippines. Despite being a work of entertainment, then, the show was conceived principally as a labor of edification.

Amaya sought to fulfill its mission of enlightening Filipinos by dramatizing the prehispanic cultural history of the Visayas. What its writers essentially did was to take soap operatic characters, situations, story arcs and transpose them onto an opulently constructed backdrop of the fifteenth-sixteenth century Philippines. To be able to do this they of course had to undertake a great deal of research. Among the many things they read were some of the very sources I use here, such as F. Landa Jocano’s works on oral traditions, including his

⁴⁷⁸ *José Rizal*. DVD. Directed by Marilou Diaz-Abaya. Quezon City: GMA Films, 1998. Unsurprisingly, the film can be found online at any number of video sites.

⁴⁷⁹ *Amaya: The Making of an Epic*. DVD. Directed by Rember Gelera. Quezon City: GMA Films, 2011. It was originally aired on 28 May 2011, a couple of days before the show’s premier. This too can be easily found online.

epic recordings, and William Henry Scott's histories.⁴⁸⁰ Their focus on a binukot figure as the protagonist is said to have been inspired by the documentary *Ang Huling Prinsesa* (The Last Princess, 2004), in which documentarian Kara David tracked down and studied the life of a living binukot.⁴⁸¹ Their punctiliousness in recreating what they read is epitomized by the construction of the karakoa Rajah Mangubat travels in during the opening scene and that is shown in all of the promotional literature. Production Designer Rodel Cruz asserts he undertook "a great deal of research" by visiting a number of museums, reviewing old illustrations, and closely studying a number "textual references," in other words written descriptions, to be able to build it in the first place—a useful illustration of the lengths one had to go to today and the institutional arrangements one had to traverse to locate what was once an unself-conscious Filipino culture.⁴⁸² With the broad contours of the historical setting in mind they crafted the characters, fabricated events, and staged the dialogues that composed the show.

In some notable instances they wrote actual historical figures into the story, such as a character named after the prehispanic Panayan creation goddess Alusina—whom the writers seem to have learned about through Jocano's work, reprinted in Eugenio's *Philippine Folk Literature: An Anthology* (2007).⁴⁸³ But for the most part, what we see in *Amaya* is a result of the producers' creative imaginings, derived from their particular readings of multiple sources. There is, most notably, no such historical personage named Amaya or any potentate

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.; Patricia Calzo Vega, "The World of Amaya: Unleashing the Karakoa," *GMA News*, 1 June 2011, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/222283/scitech/the-world-of-amaya-unleashing-the-karakoa> [accessed 30 July 2013]; and Clara Buenconsejo, "More than just names: Name-meanings in Amaya," *Pinoy Drama Rewind*, 1 August 2011, <http://www.pinoydramarewind.com/2011/08/name-meanings-in-amaya/> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁴⁸¹ "Huling prinsesa (Last Princess)," *GMA News*, 19 July 2004, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/25104/publicaffairs/iwitness/huling-prinsesa-last-princess> [accessed 30 July 2013]. This video is available on YouTube: "I-WITNESS - Ang Huling Prinsesa - Dokumentaryo ni Kara David (2004)," video posted by yuzohiko31, YouTube.com, 12 June 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yQI2CJiuJI> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁴⁸² *Amaya: The Making of an Epic*.

⁴⁸³ This was first recorded in F. Landa Jocano, *Outline of Philippine Mythology* (Manila: CEU Research and Development Center, 1969), 28-30; and reprinted in Damiana Eugenio, ed., *Philippine Folk Literature: An Anthology* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 2007[1982]), 9-11.

we know of named Rajah Mangubat who ruled over the Visayas in the days of yore.

“Amaya,” its creators admitted, “was not [even] a Filipino name,” but an Austronesian one.⁴⁸⁴ It is in short, an *epicserye* that does not hew closely to any single source, recorded epic, history, or other.

Of special note for this epic-based soap opera is that oral traditions uttered by the characters were also fabrications. When asked why she did not stage any actual recorded chants, the show’s main writer Suzette Doctolero responded, “We did not use them because we respect the baybaylan, and we recognize that they might be powerful.”⁴⁸⁵ This is why *Amaya* did not recreate any epic performances: for fear of offending the Filipino cultural communities whose traditional history they sought to represent.

This skillful blending of historical fact and creative fiction made for a very compelling show. But it also generated a backlash in at least one instance: when a group of Panay Bukidnons, led by Federico Caballero, epic chanter and one of the 12 “Living Treasure” awardees (designated by the National Commission on culture and the Arts), protested the show’s portrayal of the figure of the binukot. As the Visayan edition of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported, “Caballero said it was inaccurate, at times offensive, to show supposed binukot and members of the community half-naked or wearing skimpy clothes. ‘Our people, most especially the binukot, are conservative. We wear clothes that hardly expose skin,’ he stressed.”⁴⁸⁶ To these criticisms the show’s creator and head writer Doctolero responded, providing further indications of their process, “‘Amaya’ is a work of historical fiction. We did research on pre-Hispanic times and found that there were binukot throughout the archipelago and in other Southeast Asian countries, as well as areas populated

⁴⁸⁴ Quoted in Roehl Niño Bautista, “Prime-time Amaya climbs the ivory tower,” *GMA News*, 26 August 2011, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/230695/showbiz/prime-time-amaya-climbs-the-ivory-tower> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ Nestor P. Burgos, Jr. “Culture scholars say ‘Amaya’ is inaccurate, misleading,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Visayan ed., 11 June 2011, <http://entertainment.inquirer.net/3120/culture-scholars-say-%E2%80%98amaya%E2%80%99-is-inaccurate-misleading> [accessed 29 July 2013].

by Austronesian peoples. There's a similar practice among Samoans." She added that it did not seek to depict the Panay-Bukidnon alone. "It's about the islands"—all of them—"before the Spaniards arrived."⁴⁸⁷ This demonstrates quite clearly how *Amaya* projected a contemporary Filipino national culture onto its prehispanic Visayan historical backdrop. There did not exist, after all, any larger polity in the sixteenth century that linked all of the seven thousand plus islands that constitute the modern Philippines.⁴⁸⁸ This also explains why the characters in the show, all ostensibly Visayans, expressed themselves through the medium of the Tagalog-derived national language. Nationalizing the past in this instance may not have satisfied the descendants of the ancient Visayans the show dramatized, but it made for a program that had greater resonance with the nation at large.

To create a historical drama was one thing, but why call it an "epicserye?" One scene in *Amaya: The Making of An Epic*, where the host preaches to a small group of children about the production, serves to elucidate the creators' rationale. It is set near an unidentified body of water, a pond or a lake (presumably somewhere near Subic Bay, where much of the show was filmed), and the children are sat at a picnic table under a tree, where they and the host take refuge from the ubiquitous heat. The scene mostly takes the form of a dialogue in which Montano, that Rizal without the overcoat, speaks enthusiastically about the *Amaya* project to the children, and one of them, a cute, chubby-cheeked little girl, speaks back to him. It is a useful, and probably inadvertent, analogy of the sort of pedagogy the producers sought to effect through the production of the show. He begins by describing the edenic grandeur of the Philippines, "Behold [*Saksi*] the Nature, the sea, the rivers, the forest, in the beautiful stories that have happened in our country, because the Pinoys are a very flourishing [*hitik na hitik*] people."⁴⁸⁹ *Hitik* is a difficult word to convey in English as its semantic range includes beauty, abundance, flourishing, luxuriance, opulence, adornment with flowers, or

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ See Scott, *Barangay*, for a portrait of the various political and social arrangements the Spanish encountered.

⁴⁸⁹ *Amaya: The Making of an Epic*.

numerousness of fruit (on a tree).⁴⁹⁰ But it grasps well the feeling Montano tries to express. He explains how all of this natural majesty is difficult to represent through television or cinema. Why is this so, he asks? “It would be really expensive, the costs would be high, to give life to this and broadcast [*ipakita*] it.” The little girl interrupts. “I would like to be able to watch that kind of show.” Montano dutifully responds: “It is coming now, the very-first [*pinaka-kauna-unahang*] *epicserye* on television: *Amaya*.” Satisfied though somewhat perplexed, the little girl asks in turn, “Epicserye,” she pauses, “. . . what does that mean, “epicserye?” He responds:

Big. Grandiose. Beyond compare [*malaki, magarbo, walang katulad*]. Epicserye is like that. It’s difficult to say really. In short, grand and majestic [this sentence he says in English and while gesticulating]. It’s true, eh! You will never really run out the explanations why this is the biggest project that was ever done on television.⁴⁹¹

In addition to being didactic, then, the creators conceived of the “epic-” in “epicserye” as monumental, denoting “heroic or grand in scale or character.”⁴⁹² The fact that the creators could use this word and expect that it would be resonant in this more general sense might be attributable to the uneven colonization of the English language in the Philippines, which continues even today. But it is hard to imagine that the shows creators would have employed it in the deliberate way they did had it not been for the efforts of the epic recorders like Manuel, Jocano, and their colleagues from the 1950s onwards.

Because of the Internet, we can gauge audience responses to the show in a way that was not possible for studies of Filipino entertainment in decades before. Blogs and social media like Twitter and Facebook demonstrate that not only did Filipinos watch the show for conventional reasons; they also responded enthusiastically, even proudly, to its nationalistically-inclined depictions of Filipino history and culture. When asked what he

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. *UP Diksyunaryong Filipino*, s.v. “hitik,” 460; and Leo James English, *Tagalog-English Dictionary* (Mandaluyong: Cacho Hermanos, 2007), 648.

⁴⁹¹ *Amaya: The Making of an Epic*.

⁴⁹² *Oxford English Dictionary*, online ed., s.v. “epic,” <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/epic?q=epic> [accessed 30 July 2013].

thought after seeing an early screening of the show, one university student for instance said, “I will recommend Amaya to young people like me because it will be filled with information related to the history of the Philippines.”⁴⁹³ In a Twitter post, one viewer wrote, “The conclusion of Amaya. This show really strengthens my patriotism.”⁴⁹⁴ Another wrote, “shwcasng [*sic*] the history of Pinoy's through out the countr [*sic*]! Amaya is wonderful [*magnnda; sic*] for children! 2 knw [*sic*] their culture and hist.”⁴⁹⁵ Prior to the airing of the final episode, one viewer angrily speculated what would happen: “What will the ending be of Amaya? The Spaniards will come and burn our history. THE END”—a clear indication he internalized the show’s nationalistic message.⁴⁹⁶ After revealing how she was “so excited how they will end this [*sic*]!” one woman exclaimed, “mami I miss Amaya :(I hope they will continue with this kind of genre.”⁴⁹⁷ Another viewer even performed a comparative epic literary analysis of the show. “I don’t like Marian. But watching Amaya is something like revisiting Biag ni Lam-ang, but in a feminist, and modernist approach. This’ cool.”⁴⁹⁸ Yet another wrote, “amaya is beautiful. Story+production+ull [*sic*] know filipino history. because teachers shud recommend this 2 their students.”⁴⁹⁹ Not everyone appreciated that the show tried to teach, however. One viewer complained interrogatively, “Dear Prof, why is watching Amaya our assignment? WHY?! :((.”⁵⁰⁰ But most that opined about its educative quality did

⁴⁹³ Cited in “Marian Rivera—Amaya A World Class Epicserye,” The Lunch Break Blogger’s Review, 28 May 2011, <http://www.thelunchbreakblogger.com/reviews/amaya-gma-7s-world-class-epicserye/> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁴⁹⁴ Ayvan Hebrado, Twitter post, January 13, 2012 (5:01 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/ayvanhebrado/status/157809511070048256>.

⁴⁹⁵ Roberto A. Lim III, Twitter post, May 30, 2011 (7:05 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/berrtology/status/75201219483811840>.

⁴⁹⁶ Chef Christopher Go, Twitter post, May 30 2011 (8:33 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/ChefChrisGo/status/75223386506264576>.

⁴⁹⁷ Aimee Sheer, Twitter post, January 13, 2012 (1:24 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/AimeeSheer/status/157754965492899840>.

⁴⁹⁸ Tamara Kafka, Twitter Post, June 30, 2011 (5:56 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/haikukeeper/status/86417827178889217>.

⁴⁹⁹ Deo Itao, Twitter post, June 20 2011 (6:09 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/deoitao/status/82797264623501312>.

⁵⁰⁰ Diyedi Indacave, Twitter post, June 1, 2011 (1:09 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/jadysalonga/status/75836380814639104>.

so approvingly. If the creators sought to use the show as a means of instilling Filipinos' pride and excitement about their history, then they seem to have succeeded in good measure.

But it seems that by and large Filipinos enjoyed the show simply because it was entertaining—it had memorable characters, spectacular visuals, captivating stories, and all of the teleserye melodrama families and neighbors would want to gather around the television for. Early on in the series, one Twitter user exclaimed, “Amaya is so beautiful! I want to watch the next episode.”⁵⁰¹ Another described how he could not “wait to see how Lamitan will get it in the end!”⁵⁰² Another had what she described as “Amaya fever!!! Im a fan!!”⁵⁰³ Towards the finale, another viewer hoped for a “happy ending for amaya and bagani’s lovelife! don't break bagani’s heart! :(.” Another wrote that, “Amaya wud probably the [*sic*] first pinoy tv series that il [*sic*] surely get a dvd copy..lolz....so exciting the ending. there's even a walk on water effect lol”—quite a compliment in a country where people download most of what they want to watch and listen to, or, when they do purchase movies, television shows, and music, they do so from unsanctioned (though mostly unobstructed) vendors.⁵⁰⁴ Expressing her support from abroad, one woman wrote in solidarity to her friends back home, “we are forever bagani & amaya here in san francisco.”⁵⁰⁵ Another wrote, “there are so many beautiful and tender moments to amaya :) hats off to Suzi Doctolero.”⁵⁰⁶ The show, said one viewer, “Makes you super tense.” He, “Never felt this [*sic*] so much excitement after

⁵⁰¹ forevereigne, Twitter post, June 7, 2011 (8:02 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/forevereigne/status/78114703133519872>.

⁵⁰² Darwin Dayan, Twitter post, June 13, 2012 (7:19 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/darwinsf/status/157844169451249665>.

⁵⁰³ Roxanne Barcelo, Twitter post, May 22, 2013 (11:21 p.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, https://twitter.com/roxanne_barcelo/status/337453299781484544.

⁵⁰⁴ TJ Brewed, Twitter post, January 12, 2012 (6:00 p.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/tjbrewed/status/157643155322306560>.

⁵⁰⁵ Ana Guillen Feleo, Twitter post, January 12, 2012 (8:20 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/anagfeleo/status/157497308941000704>. Feleo actually had a small part on the show, as a friend and confidant of Amaya.

⁵⁰⁶ DYOL TRIBE, Twitter post, November 28, 2011 (10:15 p.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/DYOLTRIBE/status/141399865388314624>.

marimar :)).⁵⁰⁷ Paying the best compliment possible to the show's producers, one described, "Feels like im watching an international film! It's really intense!"⁵⁰⁸ For *Amaya*'s viewers, which constituted the largest section of the Filipino television audience during most of its time, literally millions of Filipinos, the show seems not to have been something they just watched, but something they loved.

Not everyone responded positively the show. One viewer remarked, "Amaya makes you feel like [*sic*] watching a stage play everynight [*sic*]. All scenes are confined in one area how lazy the director [and a] waste the script."⁵⁰⁹ Another, apparently upset with the direction of the characters, wrote, "So many idiots in Amaya. Starting to seriously hate the show."⁵¹⁰ But criticisms such as these were minority voices, vastly outnumbered by the much more numerous expressions of praise in and beyond the Internet.

Although scholars have not yet assessed the longer term cultural impact of the show (which is only a few years old in any case), its legacy can partly be seen in the fact that a show in the same mold was produced not long after—*Indio*, another program set in the prehispanic past, which ran for 97 episodes from early to mid-2013. Like its predecessor, it was a highly rated, well-reviewed success, though not to the same extent.⁵¹¹ One wonders if *Indio* would have happened at all were it not for its predecessor, or whether if it would have been as successful as it did become.

⁵⁰⁷ Johnluz Angelo, Twitter post, November 24 2011 (4:09 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/JLKardashian/status/139676969183883264>. *Marimar* is of course the internationally popular Mexican soap opera. It did air in the Philippines, but more likely he is referring to the Filipino remake. See "MariMar," *IMDb*, 2007, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1050289/> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁵⁰⁸ Pat Ozaraga, Twitter post, May 30, 2011 (6:04 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, https://twitter.com/superstar_Pat/status/75185879492198401.

⁵⁰⁹ Etxetera, Twitter post, November 18, 2011 (6:03 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/etxetera/status/137531320585814016>.

⁵¹⁰ Zion Aquino, Twitter post, November 11 (10:25 a.m.), accessed 30 July 2013, <https://twitter.com/Listentozion/status/135060577331576832>.

⁵¹¹ "Indio," program homepage, *GMA Network*, 27 May 2013, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/gma/indio> [accessed 30 July 2013]; and "Indio," *IMDb*, 2013, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2946490/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2 [accessed 30 July 2013].

Amaya, then, was a highly successful historically- and culturally-oriented soap opera that justifiably lived up to its name of being an “epicserye.” Indeed, it could be said to have done a great service to the enterprise of epic literature because it was so consistently popular, critically acclaimed, and largely successful as a commercial product. But could it really be said to have been an “epic” in any serious sense? In the most literal sense the answer is no. The show did not base itself on any single recorded epic. Nor did it even take a single line of dialogue from one. If the show’s creators wanted to represent a prehispanic Visayan history, they could have for instance dramatized Jocano’s *The Epic of Labaw Donggon* or *Hinilawod*. Instead they had something grander—more *epic*—in mind. And as a consequence they sought to represent something more than the recorded epics source material could offer.

To take a different tack, a less conservative response to the question might point out that *Amaya* was in fact an epic production in many ways. Even if it did not ground its story in any recorded epic text, it did fulfill many of the goals the post-independence epic collectors: it served as a vehicle for instilling national pride, it educated Filipinos about their past, it glorified the Philippines’ non-Western heritage, and it became a uniquely beautiful and uniquely moving form of art. In this regard, the fact that it did not hew closely to any actual folklore works matters little. Indeed by freeing themselves from the constraints of faithfully reproducing any single cultural document—by being *playful* with their source material—they enabled themselves to make the term “epicserye” synonymous with a runaway it. *Amaya* was a cultural phenomenon.

Of Permanence and Proteanism

The preservationists like Nicole Revel and the remixers like Enriquez therefore had in mind very different teleologies for Philippine epics. But in many senses their work was complementary. Revel and the many epic recorders before her supplied the necessary labor

that enabled individuals like Enriquez to be able to reinterpret epics in the first place. They are the ones who not only undertook the actual work of putting to print the lengthy narratives and archiving them (something they can only do after an immense deal of ethnographic and linguistic study), they are also the ones who bestowed epics with their aura.⁵¹² When artists like Enriquez, Rio Alma, the creators of *Amaya*, among others, sought to remake epics, they relied on the idea of the epic that Beyer, Manuel, Revel, and many others labored to articulate, each in their own ways. For their part, the epic recorders benefited, particularly recently and into the future, from the popular interest remixers have kindled among contemporary Filipinos. It is a good guess that more people for instance read Jocano's magazine article on *Hinilawod* in 1957 (see above) than read Manuel's first recorded epic, *Maiden of the Buhong Sky*, which was published the following year. The remixers made the epic relevant, intriguing, and even exciting for actual people outside of the academy. Both sets of people had very different and in some respects even opposed goals for epics. Yet in the final analysis they needed and will continue to need one other to be able to continue infusing the epic genre with meaning and relevance as they look forward in the twenty-first century.

Just as the efforts to give greater permanence to epics reached their apex in the early twenty-first century, so too did the genre's ability to mutate ensure that things called epics would proliferate as never before. In this chapter I have sought to look at the forms epics have taken that I contend will be the most successful in the near future. Yet even in doing this I have necessarily overlooked many other recent re-presentations of the genre, a couple of which I can briefly mention here. Nonoy Estarte has created a number of paintings related to Manobo epics.⁵¹³ Michael A.R. Co, Mike Magpantay, Eugene Floyd Cruz and Michael

⁵¹² Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 221-222.

⁵¹³ See the images in Christine Godinez-Ortega, "Celebrating Indigenous Month and Museum Month of October in Yamug: Mindanao Folk Literature Expo," *Integrated Performing Arts Guild (IPAG)*, November 2010,

Layug have created a novel imagining of Lam-ang in science fiction komiks form, the three part *Lam-ang Experiment* (2012).⁵¹⁴ As of this writing, filmmaker Ana Agabin is making a film version of Lam-Ang.⁵¹⁵ These are only the most visible reiterations. If one were to type in the name of a Philippine epic on YouTube, one would undoubtedly find productions as small as class presentations that someone filmed on their smart phone to large-scale epic theatricalizations that were professionally video-recorded. Presumably somewhere in the virtual Philippines too one could find lines and perhaps even stanzas of recorded epics being transmitted via text message by Filipinos to one another, although we will never know if such because it will never leave any lasting traces. The range of the possible mutations in the future seems limitless.

The peculiar practice of recording Philippine epics is thus alive and well in our time and by every indication will continue to be for the foreseeable future. The comparatively more recent tendency of reinterpreting them is even more vibrant and seems poised to become the predominant generic iteration as time moves forward. The Philippine epic genre has never been more permanent, protean, or dynamic than it is now. The ghost of Manuel can rest assured.

<http://www.msuiit.edu.ph/ipag/studies/humanities/yamug.html> [accessed 2 August 2013]. He is by no means the first artist to do so; Coronel's *Darangen* for instance contains several illustrations (see above, note 51).

⁵¹⁴ creativemediaph," *The Lam-ang Experiment*, facebook page, last updated April 13, 2013,

<https://www.facebook.com/TheLamAngExperiment> [accessed 2 August 2013].

⁵¹⁵ Jerry Donato, "Lam-ang, the Pinoy Action Hero," philSTAR.com, 13 May 2012,

<http://www.philstar.com/entertainment/806185/lam-ang-pinoy-action-hero> [accessed 2 August 2013]; Bayani

San Diego Jr., "'Lam-Ang,' rebooted," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 23 February 2012,

<http://entertainment.inquirer.net/31261/%E2%80%98lam-ang%E2%80%99-rebooted> [accessed 2 August 2013].

CONCLUSION:
A HAPPILY UNCERTAIN FUTURE

As we have seen, the modes of writing about the orally recited traditions that in the twentieth century came to be called “epics” have varied markedly over the centuries, just as the traditions themselves that became transformed into the venerable genre have varied.

The archipelago the early Spanish colonizers encountered was one in which sung narratives of seemingly every sort existed. Their writings indicate to us that these songs were performed for a variety of occasions ranging from religious ceremonies to seafaring voyages to nightly entertainment, and more. Those among them who took the time to study these traditions nearly all agreed that they were among the best if not the most revealing sources of Indio culture and history. Towards the end of reproducing them, whether to provide a portrait of a spiritual universe that had to be overwritten, to indicate something of the cultural life of the King’s most distant subjects, or simply because they found the stories interesting in their own right, a few of them from Loarca onwards wrote about them at some length. Loarca’s own account in fact offers a useful indication of the sorts of information such studies yielded: the names of major protagonists, their powers, their activities in this world, and more—all of which does, true to these writers’ intentions, provide us some glimpse into prehispanic Philippine cultures, for which the study of oral traditions formed only one facet of the larger portrait they sought to create. Loarca and his successors’ engagement with Indio oral traditions in the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries allows us to see that Philippine oral traditions were meaningfully, intelligently, and at times sensitively studied from the earliest epoch for which we have adequate documentation.

The early Spanish study of lengthy oral traditions reached its apex in the work of Alzina’s *Historia*. In a more deliberate, sustained, and sympathetic way than any other scholar prior to the twentieth century, the Jesuit sought to study the epics in as exhaustive a manner as possible and re-present as much about them as he could, given the limitations of

the scholarly media he used for preservation, the fact that his audience mostly consisted of his fellow missionaries, and of course the sheer length and multitude of the narratives themselves. The result is a remarkably penetrating study into how seventeenth century Visayans made use of their innumerable oral traditions. He bequeathed to his readers the most complete typology of a Philippine repertoire produced by a single author, a plethora of summaries of now long forgotten stories, and, through his experience of studying and writing about them, an instructive essay into the difficulties that scholars of Southeast Asian oral traditions encountered when they attempted to access the subject. Alzina demonstrates that it was certainly possible before the Digital Age to extensively study epic traditions; to do so was however required that one devote nearly an entire lifetime to doing so.

In this sense, Alzina's engagement with Philippine oral traditions constitutes a polar opposite with those of his countrymen in the nineteenth century. It is certainly true that along with Isabelo de los Reyes's recording of *Biag ni Lam-ang*, Castaño (or Melendreras, or whoever else's) recording of *Handiong* ranks as a historic first in the history of transcribing Philippine epics. But this act of folklore documentation was less grandly conceived than has been perceived. It in fact seems to have been a result more of one missionary's personal affection for a place he spent a great deal of his life than anything that sought to contribute to a larger scientific or humanistic scholarly enterprise. This was true of the other two major works of oral traditions scholarship produced during the nineteenth century, Zuñiga's *Estadismo* and Villaverde's *Supersticiones*. Philippine oral traditions simply were not something many late colonial Spaniards found interest in. And even for those few that did have some fascination with them, they found no reason to seek to publish their studies, in large part because no audience existed for folklore studies in either the colony or metropole.

The Americans, by contrast, avidly took to the study of Philippine oral traditions. Their engagement marked nothing less than a revolution in its history. They brought disciplinary knowledge, institutional support, and systematic practices of recording folklore to bear in a way that had never been done in the prior four centuries of Spanish colonialism. Most importantly, they were the ones who inaugurated the practice of collecting the particular narratives we call “epics.” It was an undeniable reality that there were many sorts of oral performances that deserved such a designation at the turn of the twentieth century and well into it. But because of the peculiar orientation of American ethnology, which arose because of the colonizers’ need to supply a rationale for their unprovoked and unwanted invasion, only those narratives produced by “primitives” such as the Ifugaos, Bagobos/Manuvu’, Maranaos, and others received the appellation of “epic.” Because of this, the metrical romances that were enjoyed by the majority of the Filipinos, scripts of which have always been more numerous than all of the epics recorded even during the twentieth century,⁵¹⁶ have received relatively scant attention from scholars while, at the same time, the epic became promoted as the foremost literary-cultural genre.

Such took place of course because of Manuel and his colleagues in the post-independence period. With the practice of collecting epics pioneered by the Americans as their model, this generation of cultural nationalists that included Manuel, Jocano, Francisco (each of whom was educated and also taught at the University of the Philippines), as well as those that followed shortly after them like Maquiso and Coronel, promoted the collection and veneration of epics as the greatest works, monuments, that the Filipino people could produce. By collecting the oral traditions of the peoples in the peripheries—peoples to whom the majority of urban, Christian Filipinos had limited to no acquaintance with—they attempted to create a truly *national* product. Yet despite all of their efforts, the Philippine recorded epic

⁵¹⁶ See Eugenio, *Awit and Corrido*.

did not become a popular literary or even cultural genre from the 1950s to the 1980s. However, through their work, they did succeed in popularizing the *idea* of the epic as a thing that was ancient, esteemed, and quintessentially Filipino, principally through educating generations of primary, secondary, and university students that such was the case. This stabilized the epic genre as never before and paved the way for it to be further reworked after the 1970s.

The recent history of the Philippine epics has been characterized by two parallel, complementary developments: it has been the time when the collecting of epics has reached its technologically most advanced, international institutionally-supported apex, as well as being the time when the textualized epics of Manuel and his generation became remixed, remade into a diverse array of novel products. Because of the work of Nicole Revel, Philippine epics became rebranded as works of “international cultural heritage.” What was created previously to solidify a community of individuals within the archipelago was now repurposed to edify a global, international community. Better still was that because of the Internet, Revel made the epics available as never before, in multiple media forms, and accessible to anyone who had a computer. While in a sense this worked to raise the profile of groups like the Tala’andigs, Sama Dilaut, Taosug, and others both within the country and beyond in a small way, archiving epics in this fashion in fact meant little in tangible terms for the communities that produced them. On the other side, those who turned the idea of fidelity to what was once originally an oral chant on its head successfully made the epic into a genuinely popular genre in a way that had never taken place before. Whether in theatrical, soap operatic, cinematic, or other remixed form, they made them into things post-independence Filipinos—at long last—found interesting, compelling, and worth their attention. Both of these developments serve as signs of the Philippine epic’s continuing vitality as a cultural and literary object. They point the way to its bright future.

The variegated history of the textualized oral epic in the Philippines is, then, quite at odds with the way we perceive it today. It leads us to be able to challenge some of the prevailing ideas that have been held to define it. I will briefly relate a few of the most immediate.

Firstly, it is a surprisingly recently-minted literary form. It is not as old as its recorders like Laubach, who ventured to say that “portions of the [*Darangen*] may be a thousand years old,” or scholars like Espinas, who claimed that *Handiong* depicted events that took place “4,500” years in the past, say it has been.⁵¹⁷ If we date their origins back to the time of de los Reyes and Castaño, the epics are not even a century and a half old. Furthermore, although late Spanish era folklorists began to collect them in the nineteenth century, and Americans did so with greater frequency in the first half of the twentieth century, it was really not until the post-independence period that they became a popularly known form of literature. Far from being ancient, they are surprisingly new.

Second, although this thing called “the epic” is something that some significant number of Filipinos have come to venerate, the object they exalted was not one of Manuel’s textualized epics, say, but instead the idea of such a work. Clearly, Filipinos since the 1980s have had some idea of what an epic was and is. Yet as we saw with the popular responses to the *epicserye* “Amaya” in Chapter Six, their understanding seems not to have been the result of any great deal of reading of Manuel’s or anyone else’s textualized epics, in most cases. When they conceived of the epic, they thought in abstract terms, not about a particular text.

Third, they have so far not, or at least not completely, gained recognition as literature. Certainly they are included in literary anthologies that students read at all levels of schooling, and in that sense could be said to have equal standing to some extent with novels, short stories, and the like. But by and large when authors, litterateurs, and critics in the Philippines

⁵¹⁷ Laubach, “Odyssey of Lanao,” 361; and Espinas, *Ibálong*, 62.

think of literature, they hardly ever do so with folklore in its varieties in mind. The epic poems of Demetillo and Hufana have received some attention from the literary community, but these epics had their genesis in literate minds.⁵¹⁸ The scholars who review and criticize folklore, if we set aside the collectors themselves, have more often been cultural or heritage scholars, *not* literary critics.⁵¹⁹ No doubt this stems in some good part from the difficulty that exists in interpreting the epics in the first place. How would scholars trained in closely reading, say, Jose Garcia Villa's comma poems or Iñigo Ed. Regalado's romance novels even know where to begin with these monotonous, repetitive, translated, still strongly oral texts anyways? The epics' status as a sort of literature is something that is still evolving, of course. Perhaps over time they might indeed become full partners with the more conventional literary genres. But thus far, such has not taken place.

Fourth, despite Manuel and his generation's attempts to uphold them as such, the epics cannot truly be said to be representative of the Filipino nation in any meaningful sense. The two epics that epitomize this issue are the Ifugao *Hudhud* and Maranao *Darangen*, both now recognized by UNESCO as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.⁵²⁰ The Ifugao in mountainous northern Luzon could not be more different from their counterparts in the island's lowland areas: their religion, language, material culture, diet, among so many other things is at odds with those of the lowland, mostly urban and Christian majority. Indeed given the unsurprising fact that the Ifugaos are not a small, monolithic community, one would be at pains to say that the *Hudhud* even represents all of

⁵¹⁸ See, e.g. L.M. Grow, "'Hufana in Excelsis' Dredging for Poetic Nuggets," *Philippine Studies* vol. 50 no. 2 (2002): 269-278; and Gémino H. Abad, "One Hundred Years of Filipino Poetry: An Overview," *World Literature Today* vol. 74 no. 2 (Spring 2000): 327-330.

⁵¹⁹ See, e.g., Resil B. Mojares, "The Mythic Style in Two Philippine Folk Narratives," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* vol. 2 no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 201-210; and Demetrio, *Myths and Symbols: Philippines*, rev. ed; Menez, *Verbal Arts in Philippine Indigenous Communities: Poetics, Society, and History*; idem, *Explorations in Philippine Folklore*; and idem, *Folklore Communication among Filipinos in California*.

⁵²⁰ UNESCO, "Philippines—Information related to Cultural Heritage." <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?topic=mp&cp=PH> [accessed 15 May 2010].

them.⁵²¹ Essentially the same could be said about the Maranao community, centered in Marawi, when compared with their urban counterparts in Mindanao. The Maranaos are a fervently Muslim people, who do not eat pork, drink alcohol, solicit prostitutes (publicly, at least), among other things—all of which are part of nightly life or its underside in nearby Cagayan de Oro. Indeed the very notion that a supposedly fixed ritual such as an epic performance can adequately represent any society—a notion whose problematic nature is now clear—is a fabrication of classical anthropological thinking.⁵²² In other words, the epics can scarcely be said to represent the very communities that chant them, let alone the islands where they are sung, nor especially the nation as a whole. The Filipino epic is thus only Filipino in microscopic ways.

These challenges, however, mean little when seen against the forces, historic and contemporary, that have worked to make epic collection and appreciation possible. Whatever difficulties those who have studied or re-employed them have encountered, they have not so often been insurmountable that the very enterprise of making sense and significance of them has been mortally jeopardized. The Philippine epic today is in many ways more popular, vigorous, and thriving than it has ever been. Newer digital recording and dissemination technologies have combined with the increasing attention paid to epics in school curricula to make for a literary and cultural form whose continuing ability to evolve and revitalize itself in new worlds and environments seems assured. As I have shown in this dissertation, the Philippine epic has had a peculiar life as an oral form that has been reduced to different media over the course of successive centuries and deployed towards a number of ends. It has challenged all who have encountered it in various manifestations. Precisely because of

⁵²¹ To take one humorous instance, in Barton's *Philippine Pagans: The Autobiographies of the Three Ifugaos*, he relates the episodes of one of his Ifugao informant's ridiculing of other Ifugaos as a "camote-eating people" (121). One wonders what the "camote-eating people" would make of their rice eating counterparts' Ifugao chants.

⁵²² Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*.

mutative qualities, it seems as it will persist as long as the Filipinos themselves do. Its future is an uncertain, but happy one.

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