

philippine studies

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

Wood and Stone, by Javellana

Review Author: Rodrigo D. Perez, III

Philippine Studies vol. 40, no. 3 (1992): 400–402

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

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

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

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

mobilization in key sectors of society as having possible negative implications for long-term democratization in the country.

Beyond the Philippine case, the book provides the opportunity to view the above tensions in terms of other countries in Europe and Latin America which are undergoing or have gone through similar experiences.

Taking a cue from Wurfel and some of the other essays in the book, perhaps there is a need to transcend an overly "political" understanding of democratic transition and consolidation (which informs the work of O'Donnell et. al and to a certain extent also this volume). Much can be learned from a closer and more systematic investigation of the socioeconomic bases and character of democracy. Such an approach can enrich our understanding of the meaning and challenge of democratization across varying national and historical contexts.

*Benjamin T. Tolosa, Jr.
Development Studies Program
Ateneo de Manila University*

Wood and Stone: For God's Greater Glory. Jesuit Art and Architecture in the Philippines. By Rene B. Javellana, S.J. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991. xiii, 264 pages.

"Somehow in the popular mind, Jesuits and the arts do not mix," writes Fr. Javellana in the preface. "Very little has been written about their contribution to Philippine art and architecture."

With this book, the author abundantly makes up for that lack and devotes painstaking scholarship to the little that remains of the Jesuit legacy of art and architecture in the Philippines, and also to what has lamentably disappeared.

The Jesuits arrived in the Philippines in 1581 and worked in Manila, Rizal (or to be precise, the area now called Rizal), Cavite, Marinduque, Iloilo, Cebu, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Bohol, Samar, Leyte, and parts of Mindanao, until 1768 when they were expelled by Charles III of Spain. Returning in 1859, they resumed working in Manila and established missions throughout Mindanao.

Although the Jesuits built numerous churches in Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao, not all of them were of stone. One gathers from the text that most of them were not of stone. Of forty-three that were of stone, only fifteen have survived. These include Maragondon, Kawit, Silang and Indang in Cavite; Boac and Santa Cruz in Marinduque; Lauang, Capul and Wright (Paranas) in Northern Samar; Guiuan and Sulat in Eastern Samar; and Baclayon and Loboc in Bohol. Among the fortress-churches, Boac, Capul, Guiuan and Sulat still have parts of their fortifications. Only seven churches

have well-preserved *retablos*—Silang, Kawit, Maragondon, Boac, Sta. Cruz, Guiuan, and Baclayon. Fr. Javellana describes not only the churches that have survived, but also some notable churches that no longer exist, namely: the Antipolo church, built in 1630–1633, and destroyed in World War II; the Santa Ana church in Intramuros, built in 1590–1596, and the two San Ignacio churches in Intramuros, the first built in 1626–1632, probably on the site of the Santa Ana church, and destroyed in 1852, and the second, built on another site, completed in 1889, and destroyed in World War II. The second was designed by Felix Roxas, who is considered the first Filipino architect. Its interior was adorned with sumptuous wood carvings by Isabelo Tampingco.

Before getting down to describing the churches, the author gives a detailed background of the Jesuits' architectural enterprise in the Philippines. The first chapter, entitled "The Legacy," gives an account of the development of Philippine towns in accordance with Spanish ordinances, particularly the 1573 decrees of Philip II, and the establishment of the town church.

The association of the Jesuits with Baroque architecture and art is explained at length, and author concludes, "A causal connection between the influence of the Society of Jesus and the development of the baroque cannot be established." "Nevertheless," he adds, "it would be no exaggeration to claim that the Jesuits perceived the appropriateness of this new style for their reforming and evangelizing mission and its fit with their artistic ideal."

A history of *Il Gesu*, the Jesuit church in Rome, is a fitting highlight of this chapter, since this church—Renaissance in its architectural design but Baroque in its interior ornaments—became a model for churches throughout the world, including a few in the Philippines.

The second chapter, "Missionary Builders," pays tribute to the Jesuit priests and brothers who designed and constructed churches in the Philippines between 1581 and 1768, and recounts the history of the Santa Ana church and the first San Ignacio.

The churches of Antipolo (destroyed in 1945), Taytay (destroyed in 1898), Silang, Loboc, Guiuan, Kawit, Boac, and Santa Cruz, are described in detail in the third chapter, "Mission Churches." Altars, extinct, namely, those of San Ignacio and Antipolo, and extant, those of Silang, Boac, Santa Cruz, Loboc, and Baclayon, are the subject of the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter, "The Return," recounts the restoration of the Jesuits in the Philippines, and the design, construction and decoration of the second San Ignacio church.

A description of the nineteenth century mission churches in Mindanao, brief notes on the Jesuit brothers and artisans who built them, and a summing up of the Jesuits' architectural accomplishments in the Philippines from the sixth and last chapter, "The Frontier."

But that is not all there is in this richly informative book. Aside from numerous black-and-white photographs of churches and delightful colored

pictures of altars, the book includes a 60-page "Catalogue" containing brief but comprehensive histories of all the Jesuit missions in the country from an architectural viewpoint. One is impressed by the extent of scholarly research and field work undertaken in the production of this volume. Among its virtues is the loving attention given to church builders, designers, and artisans, who are usually unsung.

The scholarly text and the copious illustrations serve to clarify notions of Baroque in the Philippines, or, if you wish, Filipino Baroque. A distinction must be made between Baroque as an architectural style and as a decorative style. Filipino Baroque is largely surface decoration and rarely architectural composition. Baroque space and structure, which is characterized by the dramatic interplay of recession and projection or by the sensuous undulation of walls, is not a usual component of Filipino Baroque design. The rectangular spaces and generally flat walls of Filipino churches are simplified adaptations of the Early Christian basilican plan and the Romanesque cruciform plan. The Baroque space in the cluster of curved walls in the sanctuary and transept of the Tayabas church in Quezon Province is unique in this country. The nave of the Majayjay church in Laguna modestly suggests Baroque space with its massive pilasters pierced by niches and its grandly curved choir loft. The facade of the San Luis church in Pampanga, with its three towers, protruding lateral sections, and receding central section, is a rare instance of Baroque structure.

A number of church facades may be called Baroque, although these may range from the richly Baroque in structure and ornament, such as the facade of Morong church, to the simplified Baroque, consisting of a Baroque outline, notably in the pediment, or Baroque motifs, such as volutes and broken pediments.

Filipino Baroque is at its most ornate and most colorful in the *retablos*. The retablo is architectural in form—two to three tiers; columns and entablatures defining structure, and niches as openings corresponding to windows. In the illustrations in *Wood and Stone*, one sees the contrast between the simple facades of the Jesuit churches, and the exuberant ornament of their retablos. The architectural form and decorative system of the retablo is not reflected in the facade. And fortunately the design of the facade did not dictate the design of the retablo.

While the Baroque style was associated with the Jesuits, it was employed, if not promoted, in the Philippines by the Augustinians, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans—and with great success, as can be noted in a good number of elaborate church facades and fancifully adorned retablos. It must be said, however, that some retablos are more Rococo than Baroque.

Wood and Stone has enriched the fund of information on Filipino churches of the Spanish colonial period. *Aficionados* of architecture who have not been to Marinduque, Bohol, and Samar, or who have never visited the churches

in nearby Cavite, will be glad to discover what to them have been unknown treasures. One hopes that a major result of this book will be not only on the increase of knowledge and appreciation of the old churches, but a more diligent and enlightened effort to preserve them, and if financially and technically possible, to restore what has been ruined or lost.

Rodrigo D. Perez, III
San Beda College

Five Years In A Forgotten Land: A Burmese Notebook. Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1991. ix, 122 pages.

Philip Lopate wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* (November 18, 1984) that "the informal or familiar essay is a wonderfully tolerant form, able to accommodate rumination, memoir, anecdote, diatribe, scholarship, fantasy and moral philosophy. It might have an elegant form or an amoebic shapelessness, held together by little more than the author's voice." Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo's collection of "travel notes" in this collection is a good example of the versatility of the essay form and the writer's voice, honed to perfection by intellectual insight, literary imagination and skill. She is a welcome addition to the pantheon of Philippine writers in English in a genre that is not too respected in literary circles, although it is certainly popular in the Philippines in its journalistic form—the newspaper column.

Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo has been writing for Philippine newspapers and magazines since the age of fifteen. In the mid-1970s she took leave from her teaching job at the University of the Philippines to join her husband, Antonio Hidalgo, who had accepted a job with the United Nations. Since then she has worked as a writer, editor and teacher in Thailand, Lebanon, Korea, Burma and New York. She previously published a collection of short stories—*Ballad of A Lost Season* (Manila, 1987). But her three collections of autobiographical-travel essays (*Sojourns*, Manila, 1984; *Korean Sketchbook*, Seoul, 1987; and this latest volume) have established her as a master of insight and language and a Philippine essayist of note. At present she is teaching Creative Writing and Literature at the University of the Philippines and working on her Ph.D.

Informal, familiar essays, like these in *Five Years In A Forgotten Land* tend to seize on the parade of everyday life, odd characters, small public rituals, vanities, fashions, bits of history and culture, folk tales and art works, love and disappointment, the pleasures of going shopping or eating out, being alone, reading, going to the movies, walking the streets, taking weekend vacation trips, exploring temples. All that is here in Pantoja-Hidalgo's col-