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Mass Culture and Cultural Policy: The Philippine Experience

DOREEN G. FERNANDEZ

THE QUESTION OF CULTURE

In the Philippines, colonized by Spain for 375 years (1521-1896), by the United States for 48 (1898-1946) and heavily within its influence through economic dependence and the media, the question of culture is complex. It is not only heavily Westernized, but also multilayered.

First of all, there are the cultures of the numerous (at least seventy-nine) highland and lowland ethnolinguistic groups. These ethnic cultures, similar in some ways, very different in others, were the basic cultures before Western contact, separate but related, many elements of which survive to this day. Thus the culture of the Igorots of the Mountain Province, the Ilocanos of Northern Luzon, the Tagalogs of Central and Southern Luzon, the Ilongos of Negros and Panay, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the lakeside Maranaws of Lanao, the water-dwelling Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi, etc. are distinct in lifeways, art, and custom.

The fuschia and purple *malong* of the Maranaws, the gong music of the Igorots, the Mangyan poems written on bamboo, the planting and harvest rituals of the Tagalogs, the extemporaneous ballads of the Ilongos, the architecture of Badjao houses, etc. are artifacts of these cultures.

From these ethnic cultures in interaction with the colonizers and with each other, developed a folk culture, which has been defined in the Philippine context as "the traditional culture that a distinct community of people evolved (sometimes in isolation from others) in its

struggle with nature and in the process of accommodation and resistance experienced by each community in its multifarious relationships with outsiders."¹

In the Philippines, therefore, folk culture includes: the basic culture before Western contact, the individual expressions and the sum of our ethnic cultures, basically Malay, for lack of a better word, the cultural matrix shared with most of Southeast Asia; the cultural influences of trade relations with Chinese, Arab, and Indian traders; the culture developed through 375 years of Spanish colonization, both in accommodation (imitation, adaptation) or resistance (transformation, reaction); and the culture developed from 48 years of American colonization and subsequent and continuing neocolonialism. It is a complicated mix of the indigenous and the indigenized in continuing interaction, perhaps the most complex in Asia.

The Philippine fiesta may provide a capsule example. The feast of San Isidro Labrador is celebrated in Luzon on 15 May. Its being the feast of a Catholic saint places it within the Spanish tradition. Yet, mid-May being the time of harvest, it is very probably a feast dating to pre-Hispanic harvest festivals, which in the syncretic way of history, came to be attached to the feast of this Spanish saint, who is now the patron saint of farmers in the Philippines. The towns of Lucban and Sariaya in Quezon celebrate it by decorating houses with bright rice wafers called *kiping* fashioned into fringes, flowers, fruits, whirls, whorls, rosettes, cathedral windows. The town of Pulilan celebrates it with a procession of carabaos made to kneel before the church. Other towns have feasts of the rice-cakes featured in pre-Hispanic rites and rituals. Today street discos, political patronage, electronic media, craft fairs, arrangements for tourism, etc., have been added, making the fiesta reflect the synthesis of ethnic and foreign culture that is folk and Filipino.

Deserving of serious consideration is popular culture, that which is mass-produced, tailored to the mass audience, and propagated by the mass media. Contrary to its name, it is not usually created by the *populus*, the people, the majority, the mass, but by "patrons," or if you will, "sponsors," for the consumption of the masses. "It is thus 'packaged' entertainment or art intended for the profit of rulers, be they colonial administrators or native bureaucrats and businessmen."²

Film, radio, television, and print are largely available to and patronized by the majority, and thus potent carriers of culture. Filipino movies echo not only the ethos of such folk theater forms as the *zarzuela*

1. Bienvenido Lumbera, "Popular Culture as Politics," *Reevaluation* (Quezon City: Index Press, 1984), p.182.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

(domestic musical comedies) and the *komedya* (swashbuckling verse romances) of the Spanish colonial era, but also that of the Hollywood movies that were its principal models. They thus illustrate the cultural melding and transformation that come from the interaction of global culture, native (folk) culture, communication technology, and the forces of history.

The Philippine press, which had Spanish beginnings (the first newspaper was printed in 1637 by Tomas Pinpin), tutors and a long apprenticeship in American-style journalism (American editors and publishers, Filipino journalists trained in the US on Fulbright and other scholarships), and a tradition of "underground" papers (under Spain, the US, Japan, and the Marcos dictatorship), is Asia's most rambunctiously free press ("a Wild West press," a Singapore journalist has called it). Its culture (from which come both its problems and its virtues) synthesizes the personalism of Philippine culture, the patronage patterns and structures learned both from the Spanish colonial government and American big business, Western liberal democratic ideas of press freedom and responsibility, and the crusading courage of underdog revolutionary papers that cannot take freedom for granted.

Are all these then—ethnic, folk, and popular cultures—the national culture? Not in homogeneous blending, or even in harmony, but all of them "serve as the variegated foundation for 'national culture' . . . the dynamic aggregate of ideas, traditions and institutions embodying the values and aspirations of the people as these have been concretized by their struggle against colonial rule . . . neocolonial control"³ and all other, including internal, control.

The variegation is due to the fact that it is not a homogeneous mass culture. Ethnic and folk elements are strongest at the mass base of society, but move upwards in capillary action through the work of artists and scholars. They are now seen in modern architecture, dance, drama, music, and design. Westernization has its greatest impact on the educated elite, although it steadily filters downward through the electronic media. The national culture is all of this, in dynamic synergy, a rich source for Philippine design.

THE PROCESS OF WESTERNIZATION

In this context, Westernization is an especially influential, deeply imbedded, and highly visible element. The approximately four hundred years of Spanish colonization brought into Philippine culture not only

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–83.

religion, law, town-planning (church, municipal building, elite homes around the town plaza), exterior and interior architecture, food, music, dance, drama, words incorporated into the native languages, social customs, systems of patronage and ritual kinship, etc., but also a certain Latin bravura in the national character.

The approximately forty years of American colonization may have had an even stronger impact, since the influence came through powerful instruments. First, the educational system, still largely in place, which brought attitudes, values, mindsets, heroes, concepts, aspirations. Second, the (American) English language, today still the language of education and government, still carrying its load of Western ideas, attitudes, culture. Third, the political structure and its internal and external relationships, which shaped the structure and character of government, and the legal and philosophical bases of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and the law of the land. Fourthly and very strongly, popular culture, for the technology has a long reach and a tight grasp. The Hollywood mythology and all its gods and goddesses provide images and models, comics promote the superheroes and fantasies that do not solve Third World problems, and popular music supplies sentiments (sometimes cheap, sometimes fake) and anchors memories (sometimes borrowed). As Noel Coward said in *Private Lives* (1929), "Strange how potent cheap music is."

Although Westernization of this type, especially that achieved through popular culture, may be said to be global (American pop music is heard on the airplanes in France, in TV specials in Italy, in the streets of Hong Kong, in Japanese homes, etc.), in the Philippines it is deeper and more thorough, because when the receiving culture is colonial or neocolonial, special factors of receptivity are present.⁴

First of all, there is the giant inferiority complex called the colonial mentality, which predisposes the colonial, and the generations following, to consider the conqueror's culture superior to his own, even though his consciousness of this may be only subliminal. Centuries of colonization make the Filipino inclined to choose, to believe in, to regard highly, the colonizer's culture and artifacts over the "native" culture, even when he proclaims the latter's virtues in the name of nationalism. He dreams of emigrating to the US. He prefers corned beef bought in PX stores around the bases to the same product from locally franchised plants and he dresses, sings, dances American.

4. Cf. Doreen G. Fernandez, "Philippine-American Cultural Interaction," *The Cultural Research Bulletin*, II: 1, February 1981; Third World Papers, University of the Philippines, February 1981; *Crossroads*, 1983.

Secondly, there is the surrounding receptivity of the colonial/neo-colonial society. Before most Filipinos become aware of Filipino literature, song, dance, history (thanks to the scholars and artists), education, language and the media have already made them alert to American life and culture and its desirability. They sing of White Christmases and of Manhattan. Their stereotypes reverberate with the American Top 40. In their minds sparkle images of Dynasty, Miami Vice and L.A. Law. They embrace the American dream.

Thirdly, there is the fact that the onslaught of American entertainment forms continues in the Philippine films, TV programs, music, *komiks* and popular literature that are their heirs and created in their image. There are Filipino Western and kung fu-karate films. Pinoy rock has Filipino lyrics but the rhythms of Western rock. Women's magazines purvey "Stateside" lifestyles, fashions, horoscopes, mores.

And fourthly, the structures of mass communication all came to the Filipino from the United States. Almost all were of initial American ownership. Their methods, and their bags of American goodies were copied and assimilated by Filipinos wanting to be "modern," "with it," and updated.

Westernization through education, the language, and political structures has been set long enough to be examined, criticized, reconsidered, even slowly changed. The influence through popular culture, however, is unobtrusive, painless, insidious, being active, ongoing, multimedia, multisensory, and pleasurable. Westernization thus continues its impact on young and old, creating a favorable climate for negotiations, be they about trade or marketing, bases or treaties.

It was for these reasons that the call for a "cultural revolution" and a "mass culture" (versus feudal, elite culture) in the late sixties and early seventies attracted so many intellectuals and activist youths, and impelled scholars and artists to examine their roots and the question of culture. That era of nationalism erupted into the activism of the seventies the protest actions during martial law, and eventually the EDSA event and the change of government in 1986.

GOVERNMENT AND CULTURAL POLICY

In previous governments, matters of art and culture were usually left to the First Lady, implying that this was "woman's work," not weighty enough to bother the President with. In the Marcos government Imelda Marcos maintained a high profile as Patroness of the Arts. Her concept of culture became obvious in such activities as: running the Cultural Center of the Philippines through whim and memorandum, without a governing policy or direction; favoring

Western culture and performers by ordering their inclusion in programs (e.g. Van Cliburn, Sarah Caldwell, the Bolshoi Ballet, Margot Fonteyn), attending their presentations, and showering them with special attention (e.g. showers of roses and tinfoil "stars," lavish receptions, gifts, which she did not give to local performers; indulging in a frenzy of art-buying (and taking) in the Philippines and abroad (where she was known to have bought fakes) that set a trend for the "martial law *nouveau riche*" who bought for investment; patronizing and funding the training of Filipino artists abroad, and expecting them to be at her beck and call to perform for her parties and guests; and in general using her patronage of art and culture as glitter and whitewash, for personal gratification and aggrandizement in the eyes of media and foreign friends, to dazzle the people as part of her "bread and circuses" largesse, and to perpetuate the Marcos regime.⁵

Obviously she had no thought for the ethnic and folk cultures that needed preservation, documentation and development and also research, interpretation, and dissemination. Or for the national culture in synthesis and formation. Government cultural agencies struggled along with little funding, because the priorities of the Marcos government were defense and tourism (the protection and funding of the regime), not even education, and certainly not the definition and development of the national culture.

In 1986 the Marcos government was replaced, and the Aquino government installed after the dramatic snap election and the EDSA revolution. Believing in the new government's sincerity and will to change, and "eager to participate in the urgent task of economic, political and moral rehabilitation," an alliance of artists and workers in culture (from literature and print media, music, dance, theater, visual arts, radio, television, film, criticism, education and forty-six organizations) was forged:

Knowing only too well how the deposed dictatorship used the arts, the media and other cultural forms to stifle dissent and perpetuate itself in power, and realizing how imperative it is to dismantle the dictator's culture of authoritarianism immediately and simultaneously with the revitalization of the economy and the government, we came together to discuss the concrete measures we could take as artists in order to help the government rebuild our society, specifically in the matter of moral and spiritual regeneration.

5. Cf. Doreen G. Fernandez, *The Paths of Policy: Art and Culture in the Aquino Government* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1988). The material in this paper on cultural policy in the Aquino government has been previously cited in this booklet.

The Alliance of Artists for the Creation of a Ministry of Culture proposed on 19 March 1986 the establishment of a Ministry or a Commission on Culture separate from the Ministry of Education and Sports, which had "understandably concentrated most of its time and resources on the problems of the educational system, to the neglect of culture and the arts." The proposed Ministry would aim: 1) "to ensure freedom of expression, and 2) to develop a true Filipino people's culture, which shall be nonpartisan, multicultural, pluralistic, liberative, and democratic."⁶

The proposal was submitted to the President, and studied by the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization, which responded that there were no funds to create a new Ministry, and proposed instead that the plans be placed under the aegis of a Presidential Commission coordinated by the Secretary of Education, Culture and Sports. The proposal became the basis for the structure of the Presidential Commission for Culture and Arts (PCCA) as well as for the reorganization of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The proposal found backing in Article XIV (Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports) of the 1986 Constitution, formulated and ratified within the first year of the Aquino government, which contains the following provisions on Culture and Arts:

Sec. 14. The State shall foster the preservation, enrichment and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression.

Sec. 15. Arts and letters shall enjoy the patronage of the State. The State shall conserve, promote and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage and resources, as well as artistic creations.

Sec. 16. All the country's artistic and historic wealth constitutes the cultural treasure of the nation and shall be under the protection of the State which may regulate its disposition.

Sec. 17. The State shall recognize, respect and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions. It shall consider these rights in the formulation of national plans and policies.

Sec. 18. (1) The State shall ensure equal access to cultural opportunities through the educational system, public or private cultural entities, scholarships, grants and other incentives, and community cultural centers, and other public venues.

(2) The State shall encourage and support researches and studies on the arts and culture.

6. Letter, Alliance of Artists for the Creation of a Ministry of Culture (AACMC) to President Corazon C. Aquino, 19 March 1986.

These provisions were soon given flesh and bone by Executive Order No. 118, signed by President Aquino on 30 January 1987, creating the Presidential Commission on Culture and Arts (PCCA). In a background paper on the PCCA, Victor Ordoñez, Deputy Minister of Culture, cited "The Neglect of the Past":

Unfortunately, the record of the government in the past to promote and preserve arts and culture has been far from satisfactory:

There was no national policy on culture to provide the government with an integrating vision or a long range plan for the development, dissemination and preservation of Philippine arts and culture.

Because of this, culture was largely neglected in the organizational structures of government. Concern for culture was theoretically lodged in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, which was so preoccupied with the massive demands of the public school bureaucracy that little attention was given to cultural dissemination and promotion.

The result was a *fragmentation* of cultural activities, with duplication and unhealthy competition within the same field of arts and with cultural endeavours becoming private enclaves of certain influential people.

The pattern of cultural and artistic activity was thus *distorted by personal whim*, with these influential people shaping a centrist, monolithic, often colonial and foreign-dominated cultural program.

Where cultural and artistic attempts did not fit their patterns, or where they were viewed as threatening or even disagreeing with the past administration, such attempts were *censored, stifled or squelched*.

In the instances where the previous government tried to promote culture, it was always *manipulated and abused* for selfish purposes, for pomp and pageantry at huge public expense, or for overt political propagandizing.⁷

The paper expresses the hope of scholars, artists and cultural workers that their efforts for Philippine culture would no longer go unheard, and notes that the government was being pressured to respond dramatically and decisively to problems of the cultural sector and individual subsectors. In the designing of the PCCA there was an effort to "respect continuity of cultural efforts, and to honor existing institutional and personal relationships and hierarchies in the artistic community (except where these have been blatantly abused)." The venture also took into account the government's resource limitations vis-a-vis the "appropriate role of government for promoting culture in a free and private-sector-led society."

7. Underscoring in the original.

The PCCA, a presidential inter-agency group, was mandated "to formulate and maintain the national policy, support and dissemination frameworks for culture and the arts," with the following objectives:

1. Foster a sense of national identity and pride through the conservation and promotion of our cultural patrimony and our national heritage;
2. Develop and guarantee a climate of freedom and support for the multicultural and pluralistic growth of all forms of art;
3. Encourage and assist where possible various forms of artistic and cultural expression, in cooperation with the private sector;
4. Work with government and nongovernment agencies in the national and international dissemination of culture and the arts.

Soon after the structure was created, a policy workshop was held at the National Arts Center on Mt. Makiling (July 1987)

...to formulate national policies on the preservation and dissemination of traditional art and culture, which will provide perspectives and form the bases for future planning (the creation and cross-disciplinary collaboration, the education of the general public, the dissemination of information) . . .⁸

The fruit of the conference was the Makiling I Paper on government cultural policy, with the following principal recommendations:

1. **DECENTRALIZATION.** Local governments should be given the authority and resources to plan and decide on the management of cultural resources and treasures (e.g. city or provincial monuments, cultural programs). National cultural agencies like the National Museum, the National Library, the National Historical Institute and the National Archives should be regionalized, and companion systems for the development of culture set up (e.g. craft centers, the designation of National Living Treasures, programs to present and develop culture in non-Museum settings).
2. **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON CULTURAL RIGHTS.** Extensive programs on formal and informal cultural education should be established, starting with the teaching of cultural rights, and including the retrieval of cultural information, the teaching

8. "Tentative Plan for: Policy Workshop for the Preservation of Traditional Art and Culture," PCCA, July 1987, typescript, page 1. Cf. "The Makiling Seminar," PCCA, August 1987, typescript.

- of traditional arts and crafts, the inclusion of cultural information in textbooks, and the correction of erroneous information—all to engender awareness of cultural heritage such that the people may be “motivated to act as vigilantes for their cultural heritage.” Legislation should be enacted and controls installed for the protection of cultural properties, which are being sold, exported, stolen, plundered.
3. CULTURAL RESEARCH. Prescinding from the belief that “All research efforts, tourism programs, and other intrusions into the lives of cultural communities should nurture the culture and not damage, violate or exploit it,” it was declared that the ultimate beneficiaries of scholarly research should be the people and the communities that are the subjects of research. Thus research should be guided and supervised, and its fruits made accessible, disseminated and fed back to the communities, who shall be protected from exploitation. Foreign researchers would be required: “to apply for the proper visa; to register their research . . . ; to affiliate with local institutions; to secure relevant clearances; to train local students or researchers; and to report or deposit the results of their research . . . ” Cultural research must be supported and funded, and initiated at regional levels.
 4. TOURISM FOR THE PEOPLE. “Tourism should justify itself on grounds other than economic, by functioning as an instrument for popular education. The primary audience for cultural programs prepared for tourism purposes is therefore the people, and only secondarily the foreign tourist.” Tourism programs should therefore be submitted in genuine consultation to the people and communities concerned, so that self-determination may govern the final decisions.
 5. CULTURE AS HIGH GOVERNMENT PRIORITY. This would be expressed in coordination between the PCCA and relevant government agencies for: the packaging and propagation of cultural information through the educational system and popular media; the supervision of media specialists and practitioners; the creation of a media environment in which serious and genuine discussion of culture can take place; the mediation between experts and the users of cultural information; and finally immediate action on the language provisions in the Constitution.

These policy recommendations proceeded from the constitutional provisions on culture, and would then need implementation through relevant government agencies, through nongovernmental organizations, and through legislation. The paper further recommended that a PCCA

Consultative Council be formed to make research and information available to legislators, and that a "Congress-Watch" desk be established, a listening post alert to implications for culture in proposed legislation.

The Makiling I Paper on policy principles and recommendations became the basis for a paper on a Philosophy of Culture, drafted by representatives of the three subcommissions. This includes, aside from sections on Culture as Human Right and Preservation of the Filipino Heritage, sections on Culture *by* the People:

The State believes in the encouragement and promotion of a national culture that is freely evolved by the people themselves by providing an atmosphere or climate of freedom, protection and responsibility. Towards this end, the State shall . . . formulate a national cultural policy and evolve cultural programs that shall be . . . Pluralistic . . . Democratic . . . Nonpartisan . . . Liberative . . .

and Culture *for* the people:

The State assumes as a primary responsibility the preservation and creation of artistic and cultural products for the people, and the promotion and dissemination of the same to the greatest number of people throughout the country.

The paper ends with a statement on a vision of culture:

In conserving, preserving, protecting and promoting the collective memory and consciousness of its peoples, the State envisions the full-flowering of Filipino creativity and the fulfillment of a Filipino culture which shall be:

1. *Independent*, in the sense that it shall be free of those political and economic structures which inhibit cultural sovereignty and shall assert a national identity which draws from our strengths as a people;
2. *Equitable*, in the sense that it shall effectively distribute cultural opportunities, correcting the imbalance that has long prejudiced the poor who have the least opportunities for cultural development and educational growth;
3. *Dynamic*, in the sense that its continuing development is consistent or at pace with scientific, technological, social, economic and political changes in both national and international levels;
4. *Progressive*, in the sense that it shall develop the vast potential of every Filipino as a responsible change agent of his society who, in unity with other citizens, can achieve goals hitherto deemed impossible;
5. *Humanistic*, in the sense that it shall ensure the freedom and creativity of the human spirit in a world increasingly dominated by machines.⁹

9. N. Tiongson, S. Quiazon, F. de Leon, Jr., with the assistance of Joven Velasco, "Philosophy of Culture," CCP, typescript, 20 October 1987.

Among the projects proposed or in progress are:

1. To establish a collection of civil registry records by surveying, listing and duplicating those not deposited at the National Archives, but extant in Southern Tagalog cities and towns for the period from the Spanish era to 1919.
2. To conduct taped interviews about historic events and thus establish oral histories of Southern Tagalog (Cavite, Laguna, Bulacan, Batangas, Rizal) towns, to enrich village community records.
3. To locate, identify, and evaluate audio-visual materials (photos, oil paintings, tapes, film documentaries, etc.) relating to historical events, persons, folk art and lore, and organizations in Bulacan, Pampanga, and Nueva Ecija.

In addition, the National Historical Institute is preparing a consolidated list of library collections; the Committee on Libraries is conducting an inventory of library resources; the Committee on Monuments and Sites is collating laws affecting the preservation of immovable historical and cultural objects, with the purpose of drafting a National Historic Act; and the National Museum is fighting for its building (part of which was given over to the use of Congress) and for more funds.

The Committee for Language and Translation is organizing a workshop for technical writing in Filipino; and preparing a pamphlet on Philippine languages, a listing of writers and literary works in regional languages, and a listing of translated works, with the ultimate aim of publishing a register of translated works and a directory of qualified translators in the major Philippine languages.

The Sub-commission has also implemented such programs for cultural education as: a tourism program for teachers and students called Pasyal-Aral (tour and learn); the evaluation of cultural data in textbooks used in the school system; the research and planning, jointly with the Departments of Tourism and Education and other government agencies, for Philippine Fiesta '89, a project promoting Philippine festivals, particularly those reflecting traditional culture.

The Sub-commission on the Arts is based in the Cultural Center of the Philippines, long the fulcrum of the "Imelda cult," and now greatly transformed. The CCP sees itself as "mandated by Philippine laws to preserve, promote and enhance the Filipino people's cultural heritage . . . to help evolve and develop a Filipino national culture that upholds the cultural identity of the various ethnic groups and sectors constituting the Filipino people, while emphasizing the many similarities and commonalities that collectively serve as a basis of national identity."

Five basic orientations were defined: Filipinization, Democratization, Decentralization, Development of Artistic Excellence,¹⁰ and Promotion of International Cultural Relations. These have resulted in a wide range of performances, foreign and local; new drama, art, dance, and music, as well as traditional forms revived; a new Museum for the Humanities; a Coordinating Center for Literature that holds literary dialogues to discuss aspects of writing, and has published a journal called *Ani* (harvest) offering new, old, regional and children's literature; and an Outreach Program that has brought CCP performances to the provinces, and provincial performing groups to Manila. Regional art councils have been established in cities and capital towns. These are encouraged and supported in the formulation of local plans, the identification of cultural needs, and the design of programs to nurture indigenous culture.

The Cultural Center of the Philippines is thus a coordinating/training center for the performing arts, visual and literary arts, broadcast media, and film. As the center for the Sub-Commission, it is also the national planning center for the Arts.

THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

In the Philippine experience, therefore, a history of colonization and neocolonialism brought in heavy Westernization, and produced a multilayered and variegated culture. On a base of ethnic cultures was built a folk culture melded by such interactions as colonial domination, trade relations, resistance, adaptation, assimilation, and indigenization. Westernization came from both Spanish and American sources, and was further mediated and intensified by communication technology and the resultant popular culture. Although the elements of Western culture were adapted rather than adopted, and were eventually indigenized, the Western impact is vividly present and deeply felt.

In the sixties, the period of heightened nationalism, the culture was seen with new eyes. Activists called for a cultural revolution that would turn towards a national, mass culture and away from a feudal, elite one. Scholars examined the evidence, the documents, the artifacts, in order to define the culture that had evolved through historical and social change. Their attitudes and findings were the impulses to action for the artists in alliance who later proposed changes as well as cultural policy to President Aquino.

10. This is explained as: "Helping elevate artistic standards in urban and rural areas through research, studies, training programs, experimentation, and models of excellence, and pluralism of aesthetics in the performances by CCP resident companies."

In the Marcos government, Imelda Marcos' patronage of art and culture emphasized the Western "high" culture (ballet, opera, etc.), and although lip service was paid to the native culture through folk art festivals and parades (e.g. the spectacle called *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* [the history of the race]), no official government attention was paid to the national culture, its definition, preservation, or development.

The swift change that installed the Aquino government provided the unusual circumstances in which cultural policies were suggested by the people, heard and considered by government, and finally adapted and expressed in an Executive Order, a Presidential Commission, a policy workshop, and the attendant structures. All this happened within the first year of the Aquino government, in spite of the public perception that the President had little interest in or time for art and culture, considering the urgent problems in the economy, the military, and the long-corrupt and inefficient government bureaucracy.

The Aquino government gave culture attention equal to that given other sectors, and in till then unheard-of democratic consultation, people were actually instrumental in the formulation of policy. The creation of the PCCA indicates that the President appreciated the importance of culture and the validity of the suggestions, and extended official attention and support.

On 11 June 1987, when the President conferred the National Artist Award on Atang de la Rama for her achievement in Philippine music and theater, she made her personal statement on culture:

I regret that I am not seen often enough attending cultural events . . .

It is not that the new government does not concern itself with art and culture. It does, not only by natural inclination, but more dependably, by the injunction of a Constitution which, in five sections, defines the State's responsibility to preserve, enrich, and encourage the dynamic evolution of Filipino culture. . . .

Culture and the arts certainly have a place in our new climate of social and political freedom. I would even say that many barriers limiting their growth and evolution have been removed. For one, the stigma of political patronage and control has been lifted. Culture, especially when subsidized by the State, is no longer regarded as a propaganda tool. The rich tapestry of our ethnic heritage is no longer used to cover the multitude of sins committed by a gross and tribal tyranny. Also, the atmosphere of favoritism, elitism, and exclusiveness has been largely dispelled . . .

Patronage should not impose its taste, however liberal it may be. What should be supported is not a particular kind or style of art, or any special theme, but the talents that make art happen in all its rich diversity.

. . . A democratic republic guarantees, but cannot impose any special instruction on the freedom to create. If we go by historical record, the best

is achieved in a climate of political freedom . . . if . . . slavery has produced art, it cannot have been worth it — at least from the viewpoint of the slave, which is the only viewpoint that counts, because it is the human viewpoint. And if art has a moral purpose, then it should never be achieved at the cost of freedom.

And that is how mass culture and government policy have met and married in the Aquino government. The culture shaped by history has been recognized and understood. Government policy is trying to do its duty by it. The marriage is not smooth, however, because it has to deal with such bad old habits as bureaucratic inertia, ignorance, and individuals jockeying for power and influence.

In the complex context of Philippine culture, however, government policies and practices are now in place, based on democratic consultation with artists and scholars. It is a situation made possible by the EDSA revolution, the suddenness of change, the newness of government, the reaction to the previous regime, and the openness of the President. The implementation of policy is in the hands of time and the people.