



The Contribution of Dr. Florentino H. Hornedo to the Ethno-Cultural History of the Ivatans

Jose Victor D. Jimenez*
History Department, De La Salle University
*jose.victor.jimenez@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: Drawing inspiration from his Ivatan roots, the late Prof. Dr. Florentino Hornedo, a cultural historian, strongly advocated the preservation of the Ivatan cultural heritage, which he deemed indispensable in understanding and appreciating the Filipino culture. In pursuit of his advocacy, the professor, who was the foremost Ivatan scholar, pursued studies on the different aspects of the Ivatan culture. However, there exists no study that looks into his pioneering efforts in cultural studies on the Ivatans. This paper thus seeks to assess his contribution to the ethno-cultural history of the Ivatans. Appropriating the concept of “Today’s Native is Yesterday’s Visitor,” which was coined by Fr. Frank Lynch, S.J. and to which Dr. Hornedo subscribed, the writer asserts that what the Filipinos are today are explained by how they borrowed and assimilated the foreign cultural elements, and adapted them to local setting. The writer employs the historical method, that is the descriptive-narrative and analytical method. Describing the social organization of the Ivatans at the Spanish contact based on a report written by the Dominican missionaries in 1786, Dr. Hornedo established that the Ivatans accepted Christianity as it presented an “option” to attain peace in the face of the hostilities in their communities. Tracing the evolution of the “traditional Ivatan house,” the savant wrote that the Ivatan made use of borrowed technology from the Spaniards to build houses that would endure the harsh environmental conditions. Concerning ethno-medical practices and beliefs, the guru noted that the Ivatans adopted those beliefs and practices of other cultures and learned how to utilize substitutes for traditional medicines. In his study of Ivatan religious beliefs and practices, Dr. Hornedo made it clear that the Ivatans had been acculturated to Catholic teachings, but he hastened to add that the pre-Spanish beliefs in death and after death and even in the *añitu* still persist.

Keywords: Dr. Florentino Hornedo, Ivatan, acculturation, cultural heritage, cultural studies

1. INTRODUCTION

The culture of the Ivatans, who constitute an ethnolinguistic group that inhabits the small Batanes Islands situated on the northernmost part of the Philippines, was shaped by the harsh environmental conditions (Hornedo, 1997a) and contacts with the West and local cultures. (Hornedo, 2000)

Educated at Saint Louis University and the UST Graduate School, Prof. Dr. Florentino H. Hornedo blazed a trail for cultural studies on the Ivatans. Taking pride in his Ivatan cultural roots, the venerable professor was a staunch advocate of the preservation of the Ivatan culture and heritage, which he proudly considered an important component of the country’s rich cultural heritage.

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Employing the interdisciplinary approach, he undertook field work and published his studies on both the material and non-material culture of the Ivatans. He is acknowledged as the foremost Ivatan authority.

In recognition of his “contributions to the development of the discipline of cultural studies in the Philippines,” the Gawad CCP Para sa Sining (Cultural Research) was awarded to Dr. Hornedo in 2012. He was commended for “choosing ‘to take a prodigious path to inquire and theorize about the breadth, depth, and complexities of the Filipino mind and identity’ (“Cultural Center of the Philippines,” 2015).

For sure, his achievements in the field of cultural studies cannot be overemphasized. Lamentably, no study has been done to assess such contribution. It is in this context that this study is being undertaken.

The purpose of this study is to assess the contribution of Dr. Hornedo to the ethno-cultural history of the Ivatans, taking into account his studies on their social organization, the evolution of their traditional houses, their ethno-medical and beliefs and practices and their pre-Spanish beliefs in death and after death, and the *añitu*.

The writer deems it imperative to include a section on the “processualist perspective” of Dr. Hornedo.

This paper is grounded on the concept of “Today’s Native is Yesterday’s Visitor,” which was advanced by the anthropologist, Dr. Frank Lynch, S.J. Fr. Lynch made a distinction between “resistance against that is alien and bad, and resistance against something that is alien, but good or neutral.” He contended that “foreign introductions can be extremely profitable, and the Philippines, like many other island worlds, has [sic] gained greatly from the contributions of neighbors near and far.” He argued that “foreign cultural introductions,” if they are “worthwhile” and “well suited to their host country,” they “will not be foreign very long.” To illustrate his point, he cited the introduction of foreign plants in the Philippines. The “dependence” of the country “has not been one of passive receptivity.” He pointed out these foreign plants “have likewise adapted themselves to local conditions and produced an abundance of new forms native” to the country. Fr. Lynch allayed the “fear” of “any loss of identity,” saying that “as long as we screen out obvious cultural weeds,” there was nothing to “fear”

because of “receptivity to other cultures.” Speaking of “cultural growth,” he maintained that it was “nourished by selectivity to external influences.” Reiterating his point, he wrote that “as in the plant world, so in the cultural: today’s foreign element, readily received, is the likely progenitor of a new cultural form, distinctly Filipino.” Referring to the “foreign elements of yesterday” such as “the mestizo dress, Christianity, Islam, and even the jeep,” these became the “native elements of today.” In short, the growth of the Filipino culture was made possible by “development and addition from within and successful innovations from without” (Lynch, 2004, pp. 410-412).

In the context of the study, the writer endeavors to explain how the Ivatans appropriated and assimilated foreign cultural elements.

2. METHODOLOGY

The writer employs the historical method, that is, the “descriptive-narrative and analytical method,” (Lemon, 2003, pp. 294-301), which entails an examination of the primary and secondary sources, analysis and synthesis of the data extracted from these sources into a cogent historical narrative. After describing the traditional Ivatan beliefs and practices and the cultural elements introduced by the foreigners, the writer analyzes how the Ivatans assimilated these elements into their culture and reworked them to suit their particular needs, and how the traditional practices persist.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Recreating the Cultural History of the Philippines: The “Processualist Perspective” of Dr. Hornedo

Dr. Hornedo had always advocated the use of a theory in the writing of history, whose object of study is already gone. He remarked that “how life was lived” entails a “cultural process” which becomes meaningful if it is contemporized. In recreating the cultural history of the Philippines, he adopted a “processualist perspective.” By this he meant that Filipino culture can only be

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understood if it is situated in its historical context. (Hila, 2016)

Dr. Hornedo had espoused Fr. Lynch's dictum "Today's Native is Yesterday's Visitor," which undergirded his cultural studies. In explaining this concept, he spoke of the "nativization process," or the "process which transformed the visitor into a native." He did not see any "need" to "invent wheel all over again, and a nation can choose to adopt rather reinvent things." Adverting to the case of the Filipinos, he commented that they recognized "certain values in foreign ways," and as such, they deemed it appropriate to resort to cultural borrowing "for their own convenience." Identifying the "responsibilities of today's native," he noted that the "process of borrowing has been both selective and creative." He went on to say that "the nativization process is both a contextualizing of imported material and an upgrading-updating of traditional material, and that it is possible to turn the immigrant and the indigenous into a hybrid." To buttress his claims, he called attention to the "culinary and the other related arts." Specifically, he was referring to the "carrots, potatoes, strawberries (in the Cordilleras, even apples (in Bauko, Mountain Province) and grapes (in Cebu and the Ilocos-Pangasinan regions)," which have been cultivated to "improve the diet of the native and free him from traditionally scarce foodstuffs" (Hornedo, 1997b, pp. 86, 88-89, 94).

In another essay entitled "The Visitor and the Native in the Jeepney and the Tricycle," Dr. Hornedo dealt with American Willys jeep and the Japanese Honda motorcycle as "yesterday's visitors" that had been "nativized." The Filipinos had appropriated them and utilized them for transportation and convenience. In the process, the jeepney and the the tricycle had been "Filipinized." But Dr. Hornedo made it clear that the "Filipino addition" to these modes of transportation was not simply an "appendage," but an "identity, a habitation and name." The transformation, he added, was a "growth, an adaptation to environment." By way of conclusion, he defined "Filipinizing" as the "process of exorcising the alienness of the borrowed technology by bringing into it the familiar and social marks and features of Filipinicity" (Hornedo, 1997b, pp. 112-114).

3.2 Acculturation and the "Nativization" of the Visitor": The Ivatan Case

Social Organization

Dr. Hornedo described the Ivatan social organization at the Spanish contact, particularly during the latter part of the 18th century, perusing the report written by Fr. Balthazar Calderon, O.P., and Fr. Bartolome Artiguez, O.P. in 1786, three years and a half after they had established themselves in Batanes.

The report took note of the hierarchy structure in the barangay and the administration of justice.

Apropos of the hierarchy structure, the leaders had clearly defined powers. The *mamos* exercised "absolute powers" over the barangay, dispensing justice, and protecting and assisting the whole barangay. The *mamos* could not change the different districts of the barangays and the authority and rights of the *mapalones*. Subject to the authority of the *mamos*, the *mapalones* likewise administered justice and ensured the protection of the people in their respective districts. The *mapalones* had jurisdiction over their subjects since the barangay had been further divided into small units, which were governed by four chieftains who had their "respective rights, privileges, and preeminences." The *mamos*, the *mapalones* and their "subalterns" administered justice within the range of their respective authority. "Powerful barangays" were called "barangays of refuge" because they could lend assistance to anyone who sought protection in them (Hornedo, 2000, pp. 47,49).

With respect to the administration of justice, the Dominican missionaries reported that the Ivatans imposed harsh punishment on cases pertaining to the "disruption of peace" in the barangay. For those who committed homicide, they were made to suffer capital punishment "without any chance of remission." Robbery and adultery were punishable by fines. The Ivatans observed "very little or no formality at all." For those meted the death sentence, the "culprit" was not "informed until they get him for execution." In the event that the crime was not subject to death penalty and the parties involved belonged to the same barangay, the *mamos* took charge of administering justice. On the other hand, if the lawbreaker resided in

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another barangay, the offended could “capture him (if they can)”, and “they keep him captive in their own house.” Upon notification of their leaders of the capture, the offended and their chieftains met to decide on the fine to be imposed on the lawbreaker. He was apprised of the fine and death penalty, “without hearing or paying attention to any matters regarding the case.” In the face of “conflicts and hostilities,” if it involved a person, the problem was acted upon “within the day” because the “loser ends up dead.” In the event that he lived, he had to be punished by the “winning party.” The same was applicable to squabbles among families. (Hornedo, 2000, pp. 49, 51, 53-54)

The relationship among the leaders was adversarial, regularly engaging in incessant conflict. If the conflict involved a barangay against another, “killings on both sides” did not cease because it was customary for them to “kill everyone caught off guard or unarmed wherever they meet them” (Hornedo, 2000, p. 54).

In the face of such aggression, Dr. Hornedo commented that Christianity offered the Ivatans an “alternative way of life” which, “if not always easy and acceptable to some of them,” it presented them a possibility to attain “a different kind of peace.” Dr. Hornedo maintained that the religion was “to a significant degree an option rather than a complete imposition” (Hornedo, 2000, p. 45).

Ivatan houses

Writing on the evolution of the Ivatan houses, Dr. Hornedo had aptly remarked that it was the “story of adaptation, assimilation, and creative use of locally available materials.” Citing the account of William Dampier, Dr. Hornedo wrote that before the advent of Spanish colonization of the Philippines, the Ivatans built “but small low houses.” By 1794, it was reported that fango (mud) and stones were used in building the walls of the houses. Eventually, the Ivatans built the “traditional houses” made of lime-and-stone with thick cogon roof. These houses could withstand strong typhoon. Tracing the beginnings of such architecture, Dr. Hornedo stated that it made its “first appearance” in 1795 “in the form of Spanish public buildings,” which technique was appropriated and changed to “suit private needs.”

The Ivatans continued to construct their “traditional houses,” notwithstanding the introduction of the galvanized iron in the 1890s and concrete in the early part of the American occupation (Hornedo, 2000, pp. 57, 58, 61, 62, 66, 70).

Ethno-medical beliefs and practices

Dr. Hornedo conducted field work in the island municipality of Sabtang and in other municipalities on the Batan Island namely, Basco, Mahatao, Ivana and Uyugan to study the traditional medicine of the Ivatans. The field work commenced in 1975, the last one of which was done from March 28 to April 6, 1988.

Investigating the “etiology” of the sicknesses, Dr. Hornedo found out that the causes emanated from the “(1) the spirit world, (2) psychological forces, and (3) physical nature and its laws.” Those factors that derived from the “spirit world” included the “direct intervention of spirits” and those that “come as punishment for the violation of taboos.” Regarding the “psychological forces,” the Ivatans believed that these were “attributable” to “human malevolence” and “personal or alien forces.” On the subject of “physical nature and its laws,” these were the natural forces based on the Ivatan’s concept of nature (Hornedo, 2000: 175-197).

Dr. Hornedo delved into the methods of diagnosis. The first method involved “observation and palpitation,” which were done through the “eyes and fingers,” looking at the “general appearance” of the patient and “pressing through the overlay of tissue” by the “trained fingers of the folk orthopedist.” In the second method, the patient was summoned to a conference with the medic, who “may ask questions to be answered point by point by the patient”; or start a conversation with the patient to determine the cause of the sickness, resulting in “mutual understanding” between the medic and the patient. The third method had to do with group diagnosis, which set off a “freewheeling exchange of ideas and information” among the patient, the members of his family and the medic before a prescription was given. In relation to the fourth method, the patients undertook self-diagnosis if they suffered from “recurrent attacks of a particular ailment.” The fifth method concerned magical diagnosis,

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whrereby the patients turned to “ritual, incantation, and such objects as tawas and knots for divination” (Hornedo, 2000: 197-203).

Dr. Hornedo looked into the “procedures and techniques of medication.” These consisted of “(1) massage, (2) the use of organic and non-organic substances, (3) psychological remedies, (4) rituals and prayers/spells, (5) use of substances which believed to repel evil, (6) returning the evil spell to its origin, and (7) supplication for Divine Mercy” (Hornedo, 2000, pp. 203-213).

Dr. Hornedo learned that the Ivatans managed to acquire ethno-medical “beliefs and ideas” from other cultures when they travelled to Luzon, particularly to Manila. He found out that the Ivatans learned how to use “non-traditional Ivatan medical materials such as the tiger balm or tigre, the mentholatum and the eyedrops from the drugstores in Manila. He observed that the Ivatans have readily agreed to take “modern scientific medication.” He ascertained that the “folk medics” underwent seminars and training on “scientific hygiene and disinfection” (Hornedo, 2000: 215-218).

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Relying on the observations of the Spanish chroniclers at the Spanish contact (referred to as the “aboriginal sources”) and the data culled from his field work (denoted as “recent data”). Dr. Hornedo rendered an account of the Ivatan religious beliefs and practices, particularly those pertaining to death and after death and the *añitu*. The account revolved around the cult, code and creed, the first two being “practices,” and the third one, “beliefs.”

Analyzing the data, Dr. Hornedo established that the Ivatans were acculturated to Catholic teachings relating to death and after death, but there were certain aspects of Ivatan religion that persist despite professing the Catholic religion. Nonetheless, while there were differences between the “aboriginal belief system and the acculturated Catholic Christian worldview in the matter of ritual,” Dr. Hornedo took note of the continuing belief of the Ivatans in the aboriginal *añitu*. Clarifying the idea of the “division of the souls in the other life” in the “aboriginal” sense, Dr. Hornedo pointed out that the souls of the upper class—“*principalia*”—are admitted to heaven and “become stars,” and those of the common people—

plebeyo, are refused entry in heaven, “but remain in the atmosphere as wandering *añitu*, causing harm or doing good depending on their whims.” Contrasting this with the “recent Christianized view,” Dr. Hornedo stated that the souls are categorized “between those in peace and those suffering from either damnation or purgation,” the “distinction” being placed on the “moral state at the time of death” whether the person is a “sinner” or a “saint.” Another important point raised by Dr. Hornedo has to do with the functions of food and drink. In the context of the aboriginal religion, food and drink were offered to sympathizers and at the same time, they were considered as “sacrifice to the souls.” On the other hand, looking at the “recent practice,” the offering of food and drink is a “hospitable act,” and is no longer considered as an act of “sacrifice.” Although no sacrificial offering to a dead person has been performed, the Ivatans offer food and drink “sacrifices to the *añitu*, hoping to obtain “protection and favor.” Dr. Hornedo affirmed that the concept of the diablo was borrowed from the Spanish colonizers, but it had its precursor in the aboriginal period as the Ivatans drove away the wicked *añitu* by “frightening it with bolos and sharpened sticks placed near the head of the sick person.” In recent times, “holy images” and “sacramentals such as Holy Water or blessed palms” are used to expel the bad spirits. Some Ivatans still make use of “odoriferous substances” like garlic to drive out the wicked spirits—an affirmation of the “cultural mix” (Hornedo, 2000, pp. 249-251).

4. Conclusion

The late Dr. Florentino Hornedo, the foremost Ivatan authority, had made significant contribution to the ethno-cultural history of the Ivatans of the Batanes Isles. Guided by his conviction that the study of Ivatan culture could facilitate the understanding and appreciation of the country’s diverse cultural heritage, the guru dedicated his time to the lofty ideal of promoting and preserving the culture of the Ivatans, his cultural roots. In adopting a “processualist perspective,” he saw the importance of situating the study of Filipino culture in its proper historical context. Appropriating the dictum “Today’s Native

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is Yesterday's Visitor," of Dr. Frank Lynch, S.J., that underpinned his ethnographic studies, the renowned cultural historian endeavored to study how the Ivatans borrowed and assimilated the foreign cultural elements, and modified them to suit their particular needs and local conditions. These processes were evident in such aspects of their culture as social organization, houses and ethno-medical and religious beliefs and practices.

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