SPAFACON2021

Papers from the **SEAMEO SPAFA** International Conference on

SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND FINE ARTS

13 - 17 December 2021

Editor: Noel Hidalgo Tan

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Editor
Dr Noel Hidalgo Tan

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CONTENT

Title	Author	Page
Introduction		
A Historiography of Settlement Archaeology in Southeast Asia, with Emphasis on the Pre-industrial State Formations	Gyles Iannone	1
Ocean Imperatives: analysing shipping infrastructure for the study of maritime networks in Southeast Asia	Veronica Walker Vadillo	17
Forms of government and local community participation in the management of cultural World Heritage sites in Southeast Asia	Vithaya Arporn	24
Cultural interaction between Việt Nam and Southeast Asian nations in the 15th-16th centuries: An overview of pottery items from ancient shipwrecks on display at the Museum of History in Hồ Chí Minh City	Phạm Ngọc Uyên, Nguyễn Thị Tú Anh	29
Sequential Least-Cost Path Sailing Model for Early 17th Century South China Sea: Digitally Navigating the Selden Map of China	Wesa Perttola	40
The Prevailing Art and Tradition of Intentional Dental Modification in Prehistoric Southeast Asia	Maria Kathryn N. Purnell	56
The Still Unexplored Parts of Southeast Asian Archaeology: Colonial Archaeology Singapore	Sxuann Sim	74
Khao San Dam: The Archaeological Evidence of Burnt Rice Festival in Southern Thailand	Pakpadee Yukongdi	83
Before Bagan: Using Archaeological Data Sets to Assess the Traditional Historical Narrative	Scott Macrae, Gyles Iannone, Kong Cheong, Pyiet Phyo Kyaw	96
The Rock Art in Kinta Valley, West Malaysia: A synthesis	Chaw Yeh Saw Hsiao Mei Goh	114
New Archaeological Discoveries: Gates and Turrets of 16th Burmese Royal Capital of Haṁsāvatī	Thaw Zin Latt	131
A preliminary survey of Chinese ceramics in Champa archaeological sites	Do Truong Giang	148
A Study on the Structure and Significance of the North Sanctuary at Western Prasat Top	SATO Yuni, TAMURA Tomomi, SUGIYAMA Hiroshi, LAM Sopheak, SOK Keo Sovannara, LOEUNG Ravattey, ROS Visoth	166
The funeral cave of Laang Spean	Valéry Zeitoun, Heng Sophady, Hubert Forestier	173

INTRODUCTION

This volume contains the extended abstracts from the papers presented at the SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference on Southeast Asian Archaeology and Fine Arts, which was held online from 13 to 17 December 2021. Also known as the SPAFACON2021, this conference was organised online due to the pandemic. Despite the disruption brought about by Covid-19 to our in-person events, training programmes and field research, it is heartening to see that archaeology and cultural heritage has continued under new modes of communication and collaboration.

This fourth iteration of the SPAFACON is also scheduled a year earlier than our usual triennial cycle to commemorate the 50th anniversary of SEAMEO initiating a centre dedicated towards archaeology and the fine arts. Over the past year, SPAFA has also been highlighting this legacy of international cooperation and capacity-building by sharing our photographic archives on our social media.

I am delighted by the high level of enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity brought by the participants to the conference. During our call for papers we received close to 90 submissions, but owing to the pressures of time and the online format, we were only able to accept 34 papers for the conference. The variety of papers present here, although a small set compared with our usual proceedings, reflects the breadth of the centre's ambit – covering not just archaeology, but also performing arts, visual arts, museum studies, and other aspects of Southeast Asian cultural heritage.

I would like to thank all the participants, without whom this conference would not be possible in its present form, in particular, our Governing Board members who represent every country in Southeast Asia, and to the Ministry of Culture, Thailand and the Ministry of Education, Thailand for their long-standing support of SEAMEO SPAFA and its activities.

Mrs Somlak Charoenpot
Centre Director
SEAMEO SPAFA

Tangibility-Intangibility on UNESCO World Heritage Baroque Philippine Churches: the Spirit of Place and Its Collective Memory

Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja, PhD
Independent Scholar/Helsinki, Finland
leeheesook@hotmail.com

Abstract

The churches (Manila, Santa Maria, Paoay, Miagao) built in the Spanish period of the Philippines (16-18C) exemplify the reinterpretations of the European Baroque style by Chinese and Philippine artisans. Symbolising the fusion of the West with local materials and motifs, they have formed an innovative building tradition. Characteristics of these churches are monumental and massive to protect against intruders or natural harm. The iconographic-decorative Miagao facade underlines the regional understanding of Christianity and Saint Patron among contemporary Catholics. This paper discusses the tangibility-intangibility of Baroque Philippine churches through the spirit of place and collective memories among churchgoers-inhabitants-visitors, reinterpreting sacred buildings.

Keywords

Baroque Churches of the Philippines; Cultural Heritage; the Spirit of Place; Collective Memories; Ornamentation

Introduction

Baroque Churches of the Philippines

The four churches (Manila, Santa Maria, Paoay, Miagao) were inscribed to UNESCO World Heritage with Criteria (ii) and (iv) in 1993 as a name of "Baroque Churches of the Philippines."

> Criterion (ii): The group of churches established a style of building and design that was adapted to the physical conditions in the Philippines, which had an important influence on later church architecture in the region.
> Criterion (iv): The Baroque Churches of the Philippines represent the fusion of European church design and construction using local materials and decorative motifs to form a new church-building tradition. (https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/677/)

Of the inscription's "Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)," the Baroque Churches of the Philippines consists of four Roman Catholic churches erected between the 16th and the 18th centuries during the Spanish colonisation. All scattered over its archipelago (two at the northern island of Luzon; one at Intramuros, Manila; one in the Visayas island of Iloilo), the group invented a style of building and design in response to the physical conditions in the regions and had an impact on later church architecture. They represent the Baroque style through the Philippine interpretation and blend European church design construction with local materials and motifs to form a new sacred building tradition.

Their common yet specific attributes are squatness, monumentality and massiveness in appearance, proposing a fortress character in reaction to pirates, marauders, and the country's geologic circumstances. With the material, either stone or brick consolidated with lime, the four churches exhibit features, for instance, retablos (altars) of high Baroque style, ceiling paintings, the pyramidal finials of wall facades, wall buttress, the folk pediment of the localised Christ and patron saint with plant motifs. The fused style also appears in the construction of bell towers attached to the churches or without, reflecting site planning principles of "the Laws of the Indies" enacted by Philip II in 1563 for all new settlements within Spanish colonial territories.

Fig. 1   A triangular facade of the Church of San Agustin in Paoay, Ilocos Norte, contrasts to the squared bell tower. Source: Andrew Martin 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paoay_Church,_ Paoay,_Ilocos_Norte,_Philippines_-_panoramio_(1).jpg

Church of San Agustin in Paoay, Ilocos Norte (Figure 1), received recognition for its 24 coral-block buttresses and ornate stone finials. Although its construction began in 1604 and was finished in 1710, its coral stone bell tower distancing from the church was ready in the second half of the 18th century. The bell tower was intended to stand next to the main building to prevent its collapse on the church during earthquakes. Separate bell towers are a characteristic of Philippine-Hispanic architecture to protect structures from calamities, identified as "Earthquake Baroque." The Paoay Church exemplifies it.

Fig. 2   Church Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion in Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur. Source: Harrybalais 2012,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sta._Maria_Church,_Ilocos_Sur.jpg

The erection of Church Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion in Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur (Figure 2), in 1765 demonstrates a monumental brick facade and reinforced walls against earthquakes. Its appearance evokes a hill town in the Mediterranean and is the only example in the Philippines. The church's features contain an 85-step stairway that leads to a carving of the Virgin Mary atop a tree and an additional bell tower (1810). The supremacy and simplicity of its geometric forms in the site lend an outstanding example of Peripheral Baroque architecture.

Fig. 3   San Agustin Church in Manila in Intramuros, Manila. Source: patrickroque01 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Agustin_Church_(Intramuros,_Manila;_07-22-2020).jpg

San Agustin Church in Manila in Intramuros, Manila (Figure 3), served Christianising the northern parts of the archipelago. Its characteristics are the stone barrel vault, dome and arched vestibule, the Baroque altar, choir stalls and ceiling paintings. Erected between 1587 and 1606, it is the longest-standing and oldest church in the Philippines. Earlier, the Church of the Immaculate Conception of San Agustin was built on the site of the Augustinian Order in 1571, soon after the Spanish conquest of Manila. In 1587 the wood-palm fronds building was replaced by a stone church and monastery, becoming the Order's motherhouse in the country. One building within a monastery complex survived its destruction in 1945.

Fig. 4   Fortress styled Miagao Church. Source: Alienscream 2011, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Miagao_Church.jpg

Miagao became an independent parish in 1731 on the erection of a simple church and monastery. Muslim pirate destructions (1741, 54) forced a new building (1787-97) on the highest site to withstand further incursions. However, damages took place by fire during the revolution against Spain (1898) and the Second World War. Of the two bell towers added in 1854, demolition of the northern in the 1880 earthquake took place. Accordingly, the threat of natural disasters favoured the durability and functionality of the church building instead of its aesthetic consideration. Church of Santo Tomas de Villanueva in Miagao, Iloilo (Figure 4), witnesses the country's history during the Spanish period and foreign forces and preserves the "fortress Baroque" style. Its material is local sandstone.

As this paper deals with the spirit of place and collective memories among Catholic monks-local believers-outside visitors on encountering the sacred building, the Miagao church's facade can witness its indigenous and European ideas and forms based on the author's specialisation on syncretic ornamentation.

Case Study: Architectural Ornamentation on Church Facades of Santo Tomas de Villanueva in Miagao, Iloilo

The glimpse of a fortress structure and towers endows Miagao its supremacy, but the facade ornamentation generates the church distinct, recollecting an altar. A niche above the front portal houses Santo Tomas de Villanueva (Figure 5), an Augustinian monastic scholar who became the Archbishop of Valencia, Spain. His asceticism, preaches and charity for less privileged people brought him a reputation. In a bishop's regalia with his right hand, he clutches a bag of coins and child supplicants in front of him. The two other niches flanking the main door accommodate St. Henry of Bavaria and Pope Pius VI.

Fig. 5   Syncretic facade ornamentation with Baroque and local ideas-forms. Source: Retdar 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Miagao_Church_Facade_Closeup.JPG

From the niche, a band of dentils and rosettes supporting a blind balustrade runs horizontally. The facade epitomises the local transfiguration of western decorative elements such as the coconut tree, fruit-laden papaya trees, and the figure of St. Christopher, who ferried people across the river. He carries the Christ Child on his back, grasping onto a coconut palm for support instead of traditional staff. The artisans depicted St. Christopher wearing a local dress with his pant legs rolled up above the knee. The juxtaposition of the folk ornament and Baroque design is acculturation between the indigenous tradition and contemporary European style.

Four theories can illuminate further discussions of the Miagao facade ornamentation: (1) cultural heritage, (2) the spirit of place, (3) collective memories and (4) ornamentation.

Theoretical Backgrounds
Cultural Heritage
Cultural heritage (tangible-intangible) is not restricted to tangible monuments and objects but widens to intangible traditions or living expressions. Towards globalisation, intangible heritage can enhance intercultural dialogues and mutual respect for human behaviour. Knowledge and skills transmitted through generations facilitate the social and economic value to everyone.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention explains intangible cultural heritage: (1) Traditional, contemporary, and living simultaneously: Diverse cultural groups' inherited traditions and modern practices. (2) Inclusive: Similar expressions of different groups conceive identity and continuity. (3) Representative: Its value thrives on the foundation in communities with knowledge of traditions, skills and customs through generations or other groups. (4) Community-based: Recognised heritage by the communities, groups or individuals who produce-sustain-transmit it.

An intangible asset of collective memory examines social remembrance, while a tangible place expresses specificity and locality with a spirit to provide identity presence and actions. A border between the intangible and tangible becomes blurred; thus, its interdependence can safeguard cultural heritage, mediating cultural diversity and sustainable development.

The Spirit of Place

People invent a place out of space by naming it, endowing meanings, and blending events and attitudes into a whole (Tuan 1977). The spirit of the place evokes a sense of belonging and well-being due to its meanings and emotional connotations (Norberg-Schulz 1980). It bears atmospheric quality, which generates a sense of place. Identifying this quality with the spirit of place creates people's individual-shared perceptions of a specific landscape (Relph 2009).

The sense of place consists of four (emotional, cognitive, behavioural, social) elements: (1) Place attachment: the emotional element connects to an environment. (2) Place identity: the cognitive element contains the individuals' values, attitudes, and beliefs about their surroundings, affirming one's identity. (3) Place dependence: the behavioural element refers to a functional reliance on an environment in offering goal achievement. (4) Social bonding: a social element that proposes environments to become meaningful through social relationships and shared experiences (Kyle *et al.*, 2004). Place identity can be enhanced through people's experiences, memories, and activities. Its structure is drawn up through reflections of these social structures (Butina Watson & Bentley 2007).

Collective Memories

The phrase "collective memory" emerged in the second half of the 19th century, coined by Maurice Halbwachs, a sociologist and student of Emile Durkheim. It examines social recollection as a foundational structure. Halbwachs, in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), analysed the notion of collective memory and suggested it as a possibility of construction, sharing, and passing on by any size of social groups, communities, nations, and generations. All individual memories are recorded through the filter of their collective and social memories, built within social structures and institutions.

Individual memory is understood through a group context, and collective memory develops further as people hold their history. Symbols, architecture, and literature are references for binding people to past generations and affecting their memory. Every collective memory depends on specific groups designated by space and time. The group builds the memory; the individuals do the work of remembering.

The "present" concept of Halbwachs' collective memory is elaborated by Hakoköngäs (2017) because it impacts the social constructions of memory. Ongoing issues and understandings formulate collective memory, and groups take different memories to interpret them. To illuminate the present, groups reconstruct a past through a rationalization

process in selecting events to remember or take away. Once this action is over, they rearrange events to conform to the social narrative. Connerton (1989) maintains the deliverance of various collective remembering and commemorations to a shared past. Families have narratives of their childhood or ancestors' life. Nations carry stories of the country's origin, myths or the National Days for citizens' shared historical roots.

The theory of Halbwachs (1980, 1992) casts two issues. (1) Collective memory has relied on the context of remembering. In dealing with this, a group seek reassurance for their decisions from the past. By doing it, collective remembering brings a choice of narratives responsive both to present and future needs. Pennebaker, Páez & Deschamps (2006) believe that the past thoughts in memory and their significance for the present are under discussion at multiple levels of the social environment. (2) Collective memory paves a group or a community a way forward to the future.

Ornamentation

The Renaissance architecture historian Leo Battista Alberti (14C) proclaimed that ornamentation conveys the authority of God and persuades the believers' emotions toward God through its splendour. The 19th-century's moral critic John Ruskin expressed that ornamentation is God's pleasure, praising faithful Gothic artisans, despite their lesser quality in adorning sacred buildings. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Ruskin questioned whether the carver was happy during his stonework because thoughtful and happy artisans made the Gothic carving true and noble.

The term "ornament", whose origin was the Latin *ornamentum*, refers to the grace of ceremonial objects with embellishment. Today, as an addition to their surroundings, things of no particular use that give pleasure are called "ornament" (Bloomer 2002). In the broadest sense of the landscape, a city is an ornament (Smeets 1975). Therefore, a general definition of ornament as symbolic or aesthetic needs understanding its origin in later artistic forms.

Ornament is how aesthetic beauty or symbolic significance imparts to the utility. Symbolic ornaments are elements for significance; aesthetic ones for beauty (Heath 1909). Its meaning has changed with cultural development and conditions. Ornament incorporates an inherent utilitarian form and acts as a visual system of configuration to grasp and unite multiple meanings (Focillon 1942).

Conclusion

All discussions so far raise a notion of culture as a whole. Why so? According to the famous anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), culture consists of behavioural explicit-implicit patterns, forming the distinct achievement of human groups. Acquired and transmitted by symbols, it bears traditional ideas and their attached values. Culture systems may be productions of action or conditioning influences upon further action. As a visual language, it embodies the landscape and monuments.

As a cultural asset, a church is a symbolic place and an everlasting manifestation of the divine project as a part of the universe. Believers entering the sanctuary perceive a harmony of a world governed by God and the eternal life that awaits them. Collective memories cooperate with a place possessed by the spirit, which endows identity to that place: intangibility and tangibility are interdependent, even merged.

Returning to the World Heritage Philippine Baroque churches, a commonality among the four churches is the construction against earthquakes, while its difference is the level of applying ornamentation. Moreover, compared with the orthodox Baroque churches in Europe, they are less grandeur, elegant, refined, and luxurious.

Above all, the author can argue that regionalism, acculturation, and syncretism across time and space contributed to the Baroque churches in the Philippines in terms of cultural heritage, the spirit of place, collective memory, and ornamentation. Accordingly, anyone standing in front of the sacred buildings has received God's hospitality and will be. It is a charm of culture, and the four churches in the Philippines have known this gift.

> Regionalism looks for sustaining spiritual forces and refuses to accept that a tradition is a fixed set of devices and images… The aim is to unravel the layers, to see how indigenous archetypes have been transformed by invading forms, and in turn to see how foreign imports have been adapted to the cultural soil… Beyond the particular, the regionalist tries to see the type, the general law, the originating principle (Curtis 1985: 74).

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