Fr. Diego Cera and His School: Their Contribution to the Organ Culture of the Philippines

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Abstract: Diego Cera has been heralded as the builder of the Bamboo Organ of Las Piñas. This article explores how he passed on his technical knowledge to his apprentices, who after his death, continued building pipe organs during the middle of the 19th century. When all the organs he built and the social environment in which he worked are integrated in his life story, a new picture emerges with lessons for the future of church music in the country.

Keywords: *Diego Cera, Music in Colonial Philippines, Organs, Las Piñas Organ*

Something remarkable happened in Bonn (Germany), on February 18, 1975. A few weeks before the Bamboo Organ was flown back to the Philippines, Hans Gerd Klais, the restorer of the Bamboo Organ, organized an organ recital in his workshop for a selected group of guests. This recital got worldwide coverage. Several European TV stations and the written press (New York Times included) covered the event. An LP recording perpetuated the concert with Wolfgang Oehms of the Cathedral of Trier as organist. Since then some 60 acclaimed organists from 18 different countries[1] have been performing during the Festivals that followed.

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[1] Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Russia, Slovenia, S.Korea, Spain, Switzerland, U.K., U.S.A.

In just one moment, the exotic curiosity the Bamboo Organ had been until then, was suddenly elevated to the status Mozart gave to every pipe organ, calling it the "King of the Instruments."[2] It was quite an adjustment for "his majesty," to become the center of attention of a public, listening intensely to Spanish organ music instead of watching the material it was identified with. For the past decades, it had met hundreds of curious tourists who only came to look at its pipes made of bamboo, and to hear its so-called mellow sound: the glaring sound of the horizontal trumpets could have reminded the onlooker of its Spanish character, but these had been muted by decades of dust and dirt.

Organs built by Fr.Diego Cera

In Intramuros

1794-98 San Nicolas
1802-06 Manila Cathedral
1810-13 San Agustin

Outside Manila

1797 Las Piñas (*pequeño órgano*)
1814-16? Argao (Cebu)
1816-24 Bamboo Organ (Las Piñas)
18??-24 Baclayon (Bohol)

Organs built by the "School of Diego Cera" (1830-50):
Loay (1841), Dimiao, Loboc, and Loon.

A white lie saved the Bamboo Organ

Fig.1 The façade of the Bamboo Organ with clearly two sets of trumpets (32 on the left side, 29 on the right) reflecting the divided keyboard. Of the bamboo pipes, only the pipes of the three towers are speaking, or a total of (7 x 3 =) 21.

The organ and all its 23 stops had not been heard since the damage caused by an earthquake in 1880, followed by a typhoon two years later which blew away the roof of the church. It had eventually been reassembled by Fr. Victor Faniel CICM in 1917, so that at least some of the stops could be heard. He could rely on the skills of some locals who inherited the task to repair the Bamboo Organ from their father or grandfather: the

[2] In German, the language Mozart used, "die Orgel" is of the female gender. The literal translation would be "the Queen of the Instruments."

brothers Calixto, Pedro, and Bernardo Lara.[3] Tourists discovered the place, and it is also thanks to them that the organ survived, and together with it, we can now safely say the entire organ culture of the Philippines.

While everything Spanish was vilified by the American victor, this organ "cheated" on him, and therefore survived. It was hiding its Spanish character behind the Philippine bamboos which were indeed typical Filipino, and, behind the quote "the only one in the world," which it was not. That record lasted only for 33 years. In 1857, the French Jesuits had inaugurated an organ with bamboo pipes in the Cathedral of Tungkadoo located in the French Concession of Shanghai. It is unlikely that the builders were aware about a bamboo organ some 2,000 km away making the same claim. Even in 1928, guidebooks to Shanghai still mentioned the organ as "as far as we know, the only one of its kind in the world."[4] Nevertheless, the slogan attracted the tourists to Las Piñas, and the general public took this instrument for a "Philippine" musical instrument.

The critical mind however should have been puzzled. There were more metal pipes displayed on the façade than bamboos: 122 horizontal trumpets against 57 bamboos pipes. Nevertheless, the display of (muted) trumpets seemingly did not impress: the instrument was still called the "Bamboo Organ." Filipinos could identify with the bamboos, which were truly theirs. Eventually the Spanish character, including its builder, the Recoleto priest Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen, were forgotten. The white lie was worth it.

However, with the information we could gather during the past decades about Diego Cera,[5] a new picture of him has emerged. He is not just a "local hero," the builder of the Bamboo Organ. This one activity should not be disconnected from his other organ projects. We are even inclined to think that Diego Cera was sent to the Philippines, intentionally because Manila was in need of an organ builder. This did not prevent him from being a dedicated missionary and priest: one can be both, concerned for the spiritual and the artistic needs.

[3] Helen Samson-Lauterwald: *The Bamboo Organ of Las Piñas.* 2nd ed., revised and updated. Las Piñas: The Bamboo Organ Foundation Inc., 2006. p. 132. Calixto Lara is the great-grandfather of Cealwyn Tagle, CEO of the Diego Cera Organ Builders Inc, Las Piñas City.

[4] D. F. Urrows: "Pipe Organ Building and the Jesuits in China," MRI Forum 10 of the *Macau Ricci Institute* on January 25, 2005. Op.cit. p.15-16. This bamboo organ (9 stops) was built in the French style. The organ was destroyed during the cultural revolution in 1966.

[5] An extensive biography of Fr. Diego Cera was written by Helen Samson-Lauterwald, 21-92. This article is a contribution to complete the biography of Diego Cera. We are still in the dark about his training as an organ builder and organist.

Music, a tool to communicate the beauty of the new religion to the natives

Music had been part of the mission and vision of one of the greatest missionary undertakings in world history, since the day in 1508 when Pope Julius II had put the Spanish King in charge of the evangelization of their newly discovered territories, "to turn the *Indios* into Christians and Spaniards." Thus, the king of Spain became the *de facto* head of the church,[6] who had to design the strategy, appoint the bishops, was responsible for the expenses of the church, and administered the tithes and other offerings.

The importance of music for the conversion process was so well-recognized by Charles V, that he preferred to appoint those bishops and send those missionaries with musical skills. Spain was experiencing a Golden Age, and what better way to attract the *Indios* to the new faith than by the power of music composed by Morales, Guerrero and Vittoria: maybe, they could not apprehend Latin, but they were going to understand the beauty of the faith through the music of these composers.

Mexico

The experiment had been successfully tested in Mexico; the same method was to be applied later in the Philippines. Three Franciscans were the first to set foot on American soil, two years after the fall of the Aztec capital, in 1523. They studied the local dialect and established the first school of European learning in the *New Spain*. One of them was *Pieter van Gent* (Fray Pedro de Gante, c.1480-1572), a distant relative of Emperor Charles V, who had also been a musician in Charles' chapel. Ten years after his arrival, he sent the following report to him:

> I can tell your majesty without any exaggeration that there are already Indians here who are fully capable of preaching, teaching, and writing in behalf of the faith. And with singers among them who if they were to sing in your Majesty's chapel at this moment, would do so well, that perhaps you would have to see them actually singing in order to believe it possible. [7]

The driving spirit behind the importance given to music was the first bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga O.F.M., who was appointed in 1530. He requested the Emperor for more books and that church musicians would be given stipends. The reason given was that "more than by preaching, the Indians are converted by music." He also let a printer come over from Italy so that the works of Morales, Guerrero,

[6] The *Patronato real* underwent its first changes in 1622, when the Holy See took a firm grip on the evangelization by setting up the Congregation of Propaganda, a department of the missions.

[7] S. Tattershall: "Mexico – A Preface as Background to the 1980 ISI Congress," *ISO Information* 20, 1980, p. 7.

Orlando di Lasso, and Palestrina were available for the choirs.[8] Organ books arrived in Mexico cathedral as well. The plain chant was taught with ease, and the villancico tradition of Mexico cathedral quickly became the equal of any Spanish cathedral. Soon new compositions were created based on the European model because there was a need for sung masses, hymns for the Virgin and the Saints, in Spanish or in Nahuatl.

But at a given point too many were attracted to the music, looking also for "tax-exemption," which caused the next bishop of Mexico City, Alonso de Montúfar O.P., to issue an edict in 1556[9] forbidding the use of instruments inside the church, and urging the clergy to install organs instead. These restrictions imposed by royal decree were without success.[10] But this decision contributed to the development of the pipe organ, which integrated the sound of these "forbidden" instruments, as indicated by the names the stops are carrying. After 1650, the construction of the organs in Mexico did not change anymore. Even in the 19th century, the organs retained the characteristics of the baroque period, just like the Bamboo Organ which was built in the beginning of the 19th century with all the characteristics of a baroque instrument, with a divided keyboard, and toy stops such as the *pajaritos.*[11] There are many parallels between the first decades of the evangelization of Mexico and the Philippines. What had been successful in Mexico must have inspired bishops and missionaries on their way to the Philippines.

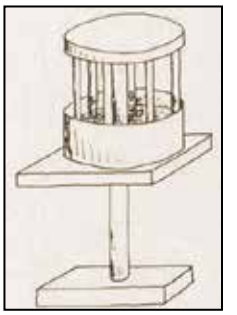

Fig.2 Pajaritos

The Philippines

Philip II continued the policy initiated by his father Charles V. He selected Domingo de Salazar O.P. as first bishop of Manila, based if not on his musical skills, certainly based on his talent to organize the music. [12]

Fray Domingo de Salazar O.P. had arrived in Mexico in 1541 and had worked for 40 years in the province of Oaxaca,[13] before becoming the first bishop of Manila, where he arrived in 1581. He brought with him not only a collection of music

[8] D. R. M. Irving: *Colonial Counterpoint. Music in Early Modern Manila.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 161.

[9] Tattershall, 17.

[10] Bishop Salazar himself brought with him music instruments, which makes us doubt about the effectivity of these *cédulas.*

[11] A stop imitating the sound of the birds. Water held in a container is set into motion by the wind coming from seven suspended pipes whose mouths end in the water.

[12] Music was of course not his only concern. There were other issues. Salazar had to fight the cruelties of the civil authorities. He was brought up with the humanist ideas, and came up in defense of the *Indios*.

[13] There are still more than 70 extant pipe organs in that province built by indigenous people in the 17th and 18th century. http://iohio.org.mx/eng/home.htm We presume that the organ the bishop brought with him came from Oaxaca.

Fig. 3 Portable organs could be used to accompany the choir, processions, or other public events

books, instruments, and a portable organ[14] to support the choir, but on top of this a *chantre* (choir conductor), Francisco de Morales, a diocesan priest. The intention was clearly to be ready with a choir of good standing within the shortest possible time. And indeed, already one year later, solemn masses with instrumental accompaniment were heard in the cathedral. The bishop wrote a letter to the king assuring him that his strategy worked:

> "with the boys of the choir, and others who know music, and with the organs and flutes [recorders] and shawms[15] that I brought with me, the Divine Office is celebrated on feast days as it could be celebrated in another more ancient and richer than this one."[16]

Alas, a few months later, the cathedral and part of the city burned down, and together with it the library with his music books.[17] Was it one of the reasons why Morales left in 1584? Who would not have been heartbroken? It was definitely a setback.

Another attempt to speed up the making of music was made in 1594. This time, not books or instruments, but a choir was imported, making "instant" music. A wealthy merchant Captain Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa donated "an ensemble of nine 'black slaves' (*esclavos negros*), who played recorders and shawms." They in turn helped in the formation of a choir at the Jesuit church of San Ignacio, who sang for the Mass and Vespers.

> (De la) Costa describes the catechetical instructions preceding the sung Vespers as being "so well attended that many people who could not squeeze into the church stood aside in the street and the plaza to listen…Noting the great delight the Tagalogs took in church music, Prat [vice-provincial of

[14] References made here to "organ" can indicate a "portable" organ (from the Latin "portare" = to carry) or the "positive" organ (from the Latin verb "ponere" = to place in position). Larger organs developed when more stops were added. They got a permanent place in a stone church. For lack of organs built in the 18th century, we are totally depending on written sources to define when the first large instruments were built in the Philippines. The oldest surviving "large" organ in the country is the one in San Agustin (re-built 1810-13) in Intramuros.

[15] The European ancestor of the oboe, used until the 17th century.

[16] Irving, 161. Letter dated June 18,1583. Bishop Salazar left Manila in 1591.

[17] W. J. Summers, William J. "The Jesuits in Manila, 1581-1621: The Role of Music in Rite, Ritual, and Spectacle," in *The Jesuits: Culture, Learning and the Arts, 1540-1773,* T. F. Kennedy, J. W. O'Malley, eds., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 660.

> the Jesuit Province from 1596] permitted all the Sunday Masses in which a sermon was given to be sung with choir and orchestra [that is, an ensemble of shawms and recorders]."[18]

This ensemble of slaves enabled the city to celebrate with dignity the arrival of a large collection of relics brought to Manila in 1597, which were going to be distributed for the dedication of the different churches in and outside Intramuros. By that time, the churches of San Ignacio and St Anne were already constructed with stones. Earlier in 1581, a Jesuit priest, Antonio Sedeño, had been assigned to the city and became its *de facto* city engineer. He was the architect to create the buildings in which the music was going to sound. He discovered the adobe stone he needed, rowing up the Pasig river to San Pedro, Makati. Later they found better stones. Together with the Chinese, he improvised the local manufacture of lime from sea shells and the use of clay for bricks and roof tiles.[19] A safe city and strong buildings were conditions to establish a musical life. By 1610, eight major stone churches had been or were being constructed.[20]

Elaborate festivities were organized again in 1611, when the news reached Manila of the beatification of Ignatius of Loyola. A remarkable account was left by the Jesuit provincial, Gregorio López, which Summers shares in his entirety in the original Spanish.[21] His purpose is clearly to bring the facts of the musical life in early Intramuros out of its obscurity, so that we get to know our past. Summers writes: "One's breath is nearly taken away by imagining the scope of the preparations that must have preceded it." We quote his own summary of this report:

> To summarize only some of the points dealing with music, the celebration began with the initiative of the governor and the Archbishop Diego Vasquez de Mercado, who ordered the ringing of bells and the playing of loud wind instruments, *chirimías,*[22] *clarines*, and small bell instruments *in alternatim* with the singing of canzonettas, motets, and *villancicos.* In the Jesuit church of St Anne the music continued with organs, harps, and other instruments. Later, in their church, the Dominicans sang a polyphonic *Te Deum laudamus* accompanied by instrumentalists. A gathered assembly of seven groups of three chirimia players each led the procession the next day, interrupted by the ringing of the bells. On the next night many of the same people returned to the Jesuit church and were greeted with beautiful music in the form of *villancicos.* Multiple choirs of both native and Spanish

[18] Quoted in Irving, p. 180.

[19] R. Zaragoza, Ramón. *Old Manila,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 6-7.

[20] W. J. Summers: "Listening for Historic Manila: Music and Rejoicing in an International City," *Budhi,* II, 1, 1998, p. 206.

[21] Summers 1999, pp. 672-679 (Appendix 2).

[22] Oboe was introduced by the Spanish clergy in the 16th and 17th century in Latin America, Mexico, and the Philippines.

> populations performed together, new works were composed by the Augustinians, and polyphonic music was performed for mass, Vespers, dramatic events, and so on.[23]

To make clear that Diego Cera did not arrive in a vacuum-without-music, we could provide here a timeline with stories collected from the writings of Summers and Irving, to be the flesh and spirit to bring the dead skeleton of our musical past back to life. We will refer only to two historical facts to help us understand the little information a chronicler in Las Piñas left us about the activities of Diego Cera.

What we learn about Diego Cera from written sources

We have close to no document written by Diego Cera, telling us about his organ projects, no references to the place where he learned his skill, no plans of any organ he built. We only have the organs he built, and some lines written in the archives of the Las Piñas parish, long after he died, which we can only understand if we refer to the historical context of the "capilla" and the tradition of singing the "villancicos."

In the "*Libro de cosas notables*," we have the following entries in chronological order:

> - 1796 [24] Aficionado a la música y maestro en al arte, enseñó a cantar y formó una pequeña orquestra de violins y bajos de cuerda, con todo lo que dio al culto el realce y esplendor que podían desearsa en un pueblo come el que administraba.[25]
>
> - 1797 Dotó a la iglesia de un pequeño organo.[26]
>
> - 1798 Un baguio destrozó parte de la iglesia antigua y descompuso el órgano, desperfectos que se repararon a fines del mismo año.[27]

My interpretation at first sight was that Diego Cera, in view of his plans to build a Bamboo Organ, wanted to prepare an organist ahead of its completion, so that immediately after it would have been installed, the Bamboo Organ would play. It was a practice organ. The orchestra on the other hand was for me kind of a rondalla he organized to get the community involved.

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[23] Summers 1999, pp. 663 and 672-679.

[24] Only a few months after Diego Cera's arrived in this new parish.

[25] "A music lover and a master of the art, he taught a group of singers and formed a small orchestra of violins with string basses, providing for everything that gave the cult the enhancement and splendor one could expect in a town like the one he administered."

[26] "He provided the church with a small organ."

[27] "A typhoon destroyed part of the temporary church (he had built). Also, the small organ was damaged. But all of this was repaired by the end of the same year."

The text becomes more intriguing if we are aware that we are dealing here with a chronicle, not a diary. The '*Libro'* is not a diary written by Diego Cera: it was written 70-80 years later. In 1874, the provincial of the Recoletos ordered that each parish should keep a record of the noteworthy events under the administration of the Recoletos.[28] After 1874, the parish priest will report the events at times month after month, till 1913, ending with the last entries by Fr. Philip Beck, when the parish was turned over to the Belgian Fathers,[29] who discontinued the practice.

The primary sources for these data therefore must have been some elderly locals. Amazing is that these events (a small organ and a small orchestra) were not lost from the memory of the community, more than 70 years after they happened. A possible explanation is that the generation following next to this "ensemble of singers and instrumentalists" still remembered this, or more probable, that this ensemble with organ and choir was still existing.

Two facts which are part of the music history of the Philippines, will help us understand the function of this "pequeño *órgano*," which was probably available in many churches. (1) It was to accompany a choir, not the community, one of the reasons why these organs sound rather weak in the large churches of Bohol. (2) It was used to accompany the "villancicos," devotional songs in Spanish, which were part of the official liturgy.

Fig.4 The Otorel organ in Dalaguete (Cebu) sufficient in size to accompany the "capilla."

The existence of the 'capilla' in every parish

We have forgotten that during the Spanish era every parish had a minimum of 4 cantores. Municipalities with over 500 tributes could have 8 cantores. The group could still be enlarged by volunteers. These cantores were "tax-exempted," spared from hard labor or working at the "bukid" to be

[28] Martínez Cuesta 1985, 297, footnote 47. Cuesta refers to "200 Years of Las Piñas" (p. 5). See Juan Palazon (ed.): *200 years of Las Piñas*, Manila, Historical Conservation Society, 1962. We quote: "This book was started in 1874, when in the course of one of the periodical visitations, the Father Superior of the Recollects noticed the absence of such a book. He immediately ordered the parish priest to make a compilation of past events in the parish since the year the town was created, 1762. And to put it up to date, year by year."

[29] The CICM-fathers (Congregation Immaculatae Cordis Mariae) founded by Fr. Ferdinand Verbist in 1862 in Scheut, Brussels, arrived in the Philippines in 1907. They were entrusted with the Parish of Las Piñas in 1913 until it was turned over to the diocesan clergy in 2000.

able to cope with rehearsals, memorizing, and performing during the liturgies. Cantores were *malapit sa pare* which gave them a high status in the community. It was a position many were eager to obtain. Consequently, families would see to it that the position remained secured within their clan. The many musical families we find in so many municipalities may have their roots in these *capillas*. They helped shape what we now call 'Filipino music,' and are therefore part of our music history:

> (Consequently) there was a significant number of professional musicians throughout the country. We can make a mean estimate on the basis of Delgado's ecclesiastical survey of 1750-51, which offered details for 529 parishes in the islands. Even if, for argument's sake, half of these parishes were regarded as "small" (and thus appointed only four cantores), a simple calculation would reveal that in the mid-eighteenth century, around 3,500 cantores would have been exempted from tribute in exchange for their provision of musical services in parishes throughout the Philippines.
>
> This is a comparatively small percentage of the entire pacified and Christianized population; Delgado estimated at the time that the number of Christian Filipinos over the age of seven was 904,116. But it is a relatively large and symbolic number in musical terms, for in no other territory of early modern Asia could there be found such a substantial corpus of professional ecclesiastical musicians literate in European musical practices and Roman Catholic liturgy.[30]

Certain reports give an amazing description about the quality of the liturgical music in the provinces. The Franciscans excelled in the training of their *cantores*. They had an influential center for liturgical music in Lumbang. And if ever missionaries were occupied by evangelizing work, Filipinos took over the training and the leading of the music. In a report, the Franciscan Juan de Jesús in 1703 describes how perplexed he was to hear polychoral music performed with five choirs, during the Vespers for the feast of Corpus Christi he attended in Pila, Laguna in 1686, "without faltering." That this assessment appears in a document that otherwise attacks and criticizes Filipino culture, makes the evaluation even more credible, concludes Irving.[31]

Villancicos

What motivated Diego Cera within the first year of his arrival, to organize a string ensemble ("una pequeña orquestra de violins y bajos de cuerda")? And one year later, he was ready with a small organ he had built, to become part of this ensemble.

[30] Irving, 191.
[31] Irving, 118-119.

This was the standard formation of an instrumental ensemble during the baroque period,[32] used to accompany the vilancicos. A few words are needed to explain the importance of this genre in the Spanish-speaking world.

They were devotional songs using the vernacular, sung as part of the official liturgy (which was in Latin). Villancicos are, since the late 19th century, identified with Christmas carols. That was not the case in the 17th century. They were sung on all major feasts, like the Immaculate Conception, Epiphany, Corpus Christi, Ascension, Assumption, and the feasts of many important saints. They were inserted at the end of the Vespers, part of the Matins, sometimes during the elevation of the Mass, or at the end of the ceremony exposing the Blessed Sacrament. Their popularity spread all over the Spanish colonies.

The purpose was clearly to attract people to go to church, at least once a year. Someone noted: "There are some people who miss all the Masses of Obligation, because they are too lazy to get out of bed. But let it be known that there will be villancicos, and there is no one more devout in the whole place, no one more vigilant than these people, for there is no church, oratory, or shrine that they will not visit, not do they mind getting up in the middle of the night in the freezing cold, just to hear them" (Naples, 1613). That the Simbang Gabi is still attracting the masses, has a long tradition, rooted in the expectation during those days that the radio did not yet exist, to hear tunes inspired by popular music.

The *Book of the Ceremonies of Salamanca Cathedral* (ca.1700) tells us that on Christmas a total of 13 villancicos were sung, eight during the matins proceeding the midnight mass. The chapter decided that three new villancicos had to be composed, which explains their huge number. In Latin America, villancicos were sung even before the service started to attract people to attend the midnight mass which must have lasted between 4 and 5 hours.[33] Villancicos were already part of the liturgy in the Philippines since the early 1600s as was mentioned earlier.

There is an interesting story based on a letter (dated 1665) discovered by Fr. Horacio de la Costa S.J. in the archives of the Jesuits in Rome, which the Australian musicologist Dr. David Irving narrates in his book *Colonial Counterpoint*. San Ignacio was a very popular church in Intramuros: it attracted people because of the villancicos. New instructions arrived issued by the General Superior in Rome declaring that "the Creed, the preface, the Pater Noster, and all other parts had to be

[32] This short description refers to the set up of an instrumental ensemble during the baroque period. The heart of the ensemble was the *basso continuo*, the bass together with the organ to play the harmonies throughout the piece (therefore: continuo – continuous, throughout) .

[33] Tess Knighton and Álvaro Torrente, (eds.) *Devotional Music in the Iberian World, 1450-1800: The Villancico and Related Genres.* Burlington, Ashgate, 2007, p. 141.

sung in an un-abbreviated form." Now the civil authorities became reluctant to attend mass in San Ignacio because of the prolonged length of the services. This became a concern for the Jesuits, and therefore, the Provincial decided to bring the problem to the attention of the General Superior in Rome.

> His Excellency the Governor and the gentlemen of the Royal Audiencia are most reluctant to attend our feast days because at the solemn Mass, two villancicos are usually sung, lasting almost half an hour; and now, by order of your Paternity, the creed, the preface, the paternoster, and all other parts of the Mass so designated by the rubrics must be sung too; all of which, added to the sermon, which is usually of some length, they find very hard to sit through. In the Cathedral they intone the creed, but they go on with the Mass without waiting for the choir to finishing the singing. They do not sing the paternoster nor the Pax Domini nor even the preface, because it is very hot in the country.
>
> The General Superior did not allow the adoption of the shortcuts proposed by the Cathedral. Instead, he wrote: "The solution is simple: omit the villancicos or make them shorter."[34]

The villancicos even influenced the stop-list of the organs in Mexico, and likewise in the Philippines,[35] according to the American organ builder Susan Tattershall. She also explained why eventually not so much music was written for *solo* organ playing. We quote this excerpt in its entirety:

> Villancicos became part of the 17th and 18th centuries celebrations of Feast days (they were by no means restricted to Christmas), and as they presuppose orchestral accompaniment, one may assume that the organ took part, if only as continuo instrument; or perhaps, as these villancicos can be quite theatrical, as a provider of special effects, utilizing the pajaritos, tambors, campanas, or cascabeles with which the Mexican organs are routinely endowed. Otherwise, very little literature for organ solo has come down to us…. Of the hundreds of works listed as being in the Mexico City Cathedral archives, most all are for "voces, violins, clarin, oboe y bajo."[36]

We may conclude that the *pequeño organo* had a practical function within the liturgy of those days. Cera wanted to introduce as early as possible the tradition of performing villancicos on special feasts. This was expected from a new parish. He had the musical skills to teach the choir, to teach violin and the double bass, and to build himself the keyboard instrument this ensemble needed. And here I have to correct

[34] Irving, 180-181.

[35] These accessory stops for theatrical purposes - the *pajaritos* (bird), *tambor* (drum) , *campanillas* or *rueda* (Zimbelstern) - are found in all Spanish organs in the Philippines.

[36] Tattershall, 14.

myself: Filipinos took the violin and the double bass in their hands, they sat behind the keyboard, and... started playing the music.

What we learn about Diego Cera from his activities

We have no document to prove that Diego Cera was sent "to the Philippines" by his superiors. But they must have been aware that Manila was in serious need of an organ builder because of the damage caused during the occupation by the British (1762-64). And when a candidate entered, who had already undergone training as an organ builder, it was evident to send him to Manila.

There was great excitement around Cera's arrival in the Manila port on July 5, 1792. The Provincial Council of the Recoletos expressed during their meeting of October 29, 1793 their great satisfaction about his exceptional talent which allowed him even to build a *forte piano ' no haber otro igual en España ni en Inglaterra'* (transl.: without an equal in Spain nor in England). The Governor-General suggested that this instrument would be a worthy gift to the Queen. The provincial then sent a letter to the Queen requesting her to accept this instrument as a humble gift.[37] He allegedly constructed this *forte piano* while building his first organ in the Philippines: San Nicolas.

I agree with Prof. Helen Samson[38] that the instrument never could have reached Spain, considering the duration of the trip, and the 500 km long stretch over land from Acapulco to Veracruz. Diego Cera had travelled that road, and knew that it would be impossible to bring a *forte piano* safely to Spain: the wooden frame[39] would have broken on the way under the tension of the strings attached to it by pins.

But there is more to be said. It is rather doubtful that Diego Cera built a *forte piano* at all. It would be surprising that on top of being an organ builder, he was as good in building an instrument that was still being developed in Europe. Diego Cera was "only" an organ builder: he could not build just any music instrument like a violin, and certainly not a *forte piano* (which included making the hammers, the sounding board, the frame, looking for the tools), and all of this within the first year of his arrival?

The deception is still very common up to our days (the organ is called a 'piano'), because both the piano and the organ have a keyboard in common; but all the rest is different. What motivates people to write an official letter is never clear. In

[37] Samson-Lauterwald, 59-60, and Martínez Cuesta 1985, 288-289.

[38] Samson-Lauterwald, 61.

[39] Stanley Sadie (ed.): *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, New York, MacMillan 1988, p.39. The steel frame of the piano was introduced only in 1820.

this case, it could have been: to send a message of goodwill or gratitude for whatever purpose, to the extent of promising the arrival of an extraordinary gift, which they knew, would never arrive anyhow.[40] It was definitely an extraordinary (almost crazy) way of expressing their happiness, talking in their excitement about something they did not really know, possibly only had heard of.

The three organ projects waiting for him in Intramuros

1. The Order of the Recoletos needed an organ for their mother church in Manila: San Nicolas. It was the first appointment he got. He allegedly constructed this organ between 1793-94,[41] and stayed in Intramuros, so that he could supervise the apprentices assisting him. If during the same period, he had to organize his workshop, had been experimenting with bamboo pipes for one stop of the organ, and allegedly built a *forte piano* (see earlier), it would be safer to extend the period with a few years.[42]

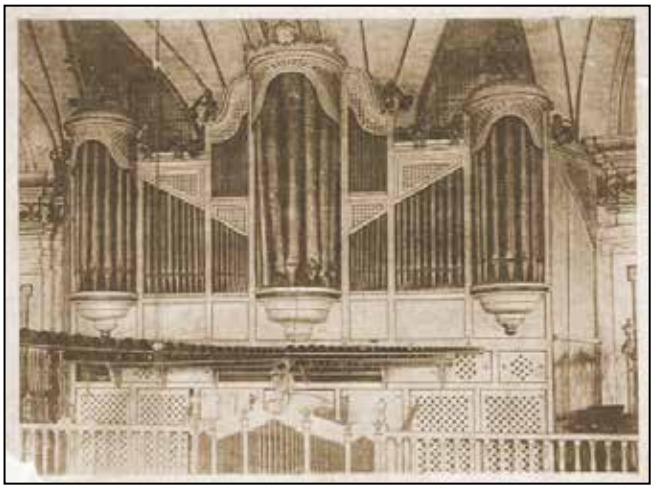

Fig. 5 The organ of San Nicolas in Intramuros, with 33 stops, one with bamboo pipes. (date of picture unknown)

Here is a possible scenario. On June 9, 1794, he is assigned to Mabalacat (Pampanga), and returns to Manila less than one year later (in May 1795) where he resumes his work for the construction of the organ in San Nicolas. Then he is assigned to Las Piñas six months later where he remains for the rest of his life. His logistical problem is solved, without any doubt.

It was not necessary for him to stay in Intramuros for the construction of an organ in Intramuros. What he needed was access to supply of good lumber, and was looking for good carpenters. And Macalabat could not provide what he could find in Las Piñas, and there he finally completed his first pipe organ.

[40] An inquiry was made through the Spanish Embassy in Manila; Madrid replied that there was no such instrument listed in their catalogues.

[41] Fr. Martínez Cuesta admits "No consta la fecha exacta de su construcción" (1985: 283, footnote 24).

[42] The two other organs he built in Intramuros took some 4 years each. San Nicolas, Cera's first undertaking in a country still foreign to him, could not have been completed within 2 years.

And, one last question: if the organ in San Nicolas was completed in 1794,[43] why would the Cathedral have waited for 8 more years, until 1802, to start with the construction of the "large organ,[44] which had started already way back in 1752?

2. The 5th Manila Cathedral[45] designed by Fr. Giovanni Uguccione and resembling the church of Il Gesù in Rome, had been inaugurated in 1760. Attempts to build an organ "worthy of a cathedral" were undertaken by a "expert organ builder,"[46] who could eventually build small organs, but not the large ones. This story may refer to one of the first attempts to build a large organ in the Philippines, located in a fixed place. The so called "expert" could eventually manufacture smaller organs used to accompany the choir, but not the larger ones, which deal with problems of voicing, air pressure, size, and the personnel needed to assist the master builder.

Fig. 6 The façade of the 5th cathedral (1760-1852). Taken circa 1792.

It was finally a real expert, Diego Cera, to build the organ, between 1802 and 1806. During that period, he left Las Piñas[47] and resided in Intramuros where he was appointed as chaplain at the *Real Colegio de Santa Potenciana.*[48] It is conceivable that he brought his apprentices with him. This could have been an appointment to provide him with a higher salary, and understandably, to speed up the project. He returned (there is no re-appointment) to Las Piñas to resume the construction of the parish church he started in 1797.

We have no picture of the instrument in the Cathedral. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 1863, that took place during the Vespers, which buried 3 singers and 4 choirboys under the rubble.[49]

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[43] Fabián Otamendi, Fabian Fr. OAR. "El órgano de nuestro Convento de Intramuros (Manila)," *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolas de Tolentino de Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos*, Año XV, 174, 1924, p. 339. This organ was destroyed during the Philippine revolution in 1898.

[44] In the eulogy held during the funeral of Archbishop Rojo del Rio (on June 7, 1764), it was mentioned that he had paid for the construction of " that big Organ" (Irving, 164). "An expert master [organ builder] and the only one in the islands" had begun the construction of an organ "worthy of a cathedral" in 1752. (Irving, 163).

[45] Ruperto C. Santos. *Manila Cathedral.* Manila, The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, 1997, pp. 49-54.

[46] Irving, 163-64.

[47] Martínez Cuesta 1985, footnote 49.

[48] Martínez Cuesta, 304-312.

[49] Santos, 58-59.

Fig. 7 The organ of San Agustin (Intramuros).

3. In the church of San Agustin, they experienced the same problem with the (same?) organ builder they had contracted about the same time as in the Cathedral: he (too) was not up to the job. After the destruction inflicted to their convent and church during the British occupation of Manila (1762-64), the Augustinians had to acquire a new instrument. We presume that their organists wanted that the small organs taken by the British would be replaced by a larger one, following the trends in Mexico and Spain, befitting their church. The organ they got deteriorated within a few years.

The master organ builder behind the present organ remained anonymous in the records, and was given the title *maestro organero*. Historians agree that the only competent organ builder present in Manila during that given time that it was built (April 1810-December 1813) was Diego Cera.[50]

Conclusion of the Intramuros-period: craftsmen were needed to assist Cera.

It took us some time before we could establish the fact that three organs in a row were built in Intramuros. Step by step, each time that another organ was added to the list, we came to the conclusion that Diego Cera could not have worked without assistants.

In 1985, Cuesta confirmed that Diego Cera built the Manila Cathedral organ; in 2000, Fr. Galende and Regalado T. Jose suggested that Cera was most probably the anonymous *maestro organero*. With these historical facts, the first lines of a history about Filipino apprentices assisting Diego Cera could be written. Their training started with the organ of San Nicolas, after Cera had arrived in Las Piñas as its first parish priest. The "*pequeño* órgano" he gave to the parish in 1797 became at the same time an instruction tool for the apprentices he had selected.

[50] Pedro Galende and Regalado T. José: *San Agustín, Art & History, 1571-2000.* Intramuros: San Agustin Museum, 2000, pp. 138-139.

Our search for Filipino Organ builders

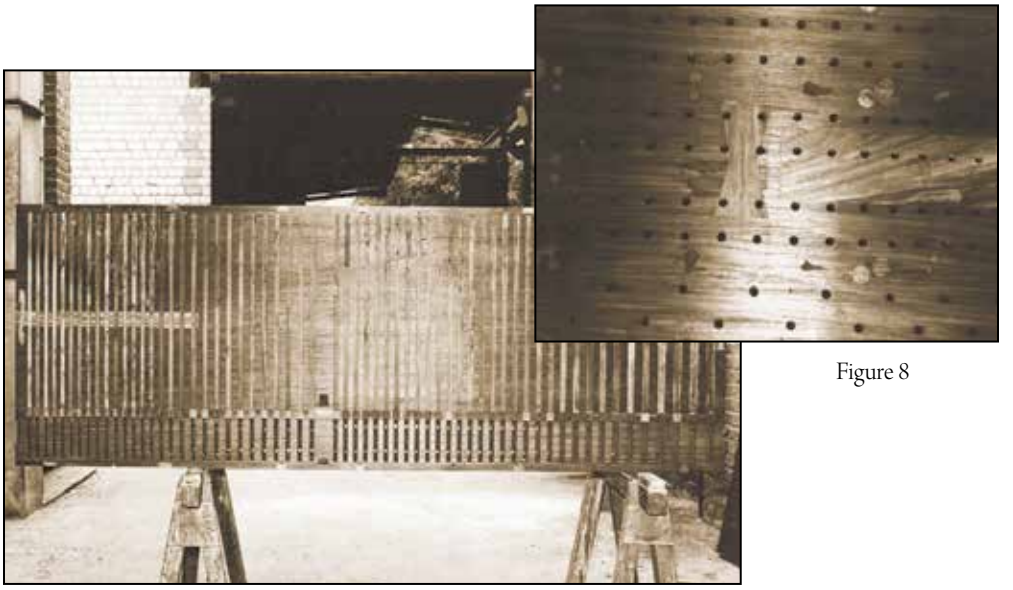


Figure 8

Fig. 9 Picture of the under side of the windchest of the Bamboo Organ, showing the cut-out channels. It is one piece of narra, measuring 237.1 x 87.2 x 6.7 cm, and is covered with parchment to make the channels airtight.

Fig. 8 (on the right) shows the upper side, on which the pipes are placed. The holes, when following the vertical direction, are lined up on top of the channels.

(these pictures could only be taken during the restoration in Bonn, without the parchment covering the channels).

The first time the apprentices of Diego Cera got into the limelight, was during the unveiling of the windchest of the Bamboo Organ in the Klais organ factory. When the Bamboo Organ arrived, the attention did not only go to the pipes, but also to the windchest.[51] When they removed what was left of the parchment covering the under side, the channels appeared. And what they saw amazed everybody. Klais said:" I thought the work had been done by a machine, so perfect!" It was probably the nicest compliment one of Europe's finest organ builders could have given to the skills of the apprentices trained by Diego Cera.

Klais elaborates:

> For me, as a European, it was always astounding to see with which simple, not to say primitive methods the local craftsmen were able to build works of art which have endured through time. In the business of organ building these skills have unfortunately become lost; in the field of wood- and

[51] The bamboo pipes had been sent earlier by air freight to Japan, to the Klais-trained organ builder Yukio Tsuda, at that time a member of the firm of Yamaha, in order that some small missing pipes of the Corneta stop could be supplied.

> metalwork, these craftsmen use even today – in our eyes – medieval work methods to make products of the highest artistic quality. In the villages I visited the carpenters did not have any workbenches or clamps; in order to keep their hands free for carving they held the object they were working on by their feet. Their knives finished in a small iron furnace were of great hardness and sharpness.[52]

A workshop in Las Piñas: halfway between Intramuros and the Hacienda of San Nicolas (Bacoor, Cavite)

We discussed earlier, that Cera, while working on the organ of San Nicolas, was still looking for a permanent workshop. That Cera, a Recoleto, was assigned to one of their own parishes, in Mabalacat in Pampanga,[53] was normal. This would not interfere with his first assignment: the construction of an organ for the mother church. There is no need for the organ builder to work on the site. Pipe organs are not built on location, not like bells which (because of their heavy weight) are casted near the site where they will be used. The organ builder will inspect the site, test the acoustics of the building, take measurements, and can do all the work in a place most convenient for him, where he keeps his tools and where the craftsmen work.

Still new in the country, he was depending on the decision of his superiors, who assigned him in one of their parishes, closest to Intramuros.[54] But sooner or later, he could see that Mabalacat was too far away from the haciendas owned by the Recoletos, that provided him with the good lumber[55] he needed for the construction of the organ. The Hacienda of San Nicolas (Bacoor) or the Hacienda of Imus (Cavite) were located on the opposite site Intramuros, in the south. It was he himself to visit this place, and to select the narra tree, from where he would get the good lumber needed for the manufacturing of the windchest for this organ. We can imagine that one of his confreres told him about the vacant parish of Las Piñas, halfway between the haciendas and Intramuros. No parish priest had been assigned there since its erection in 1775, 20 years earlier. Seemingly, nobody was interested in a parish with

[52] H. G. Klais, "Philippinische Orgeln aus dem 18. und 19.Jahrhundert," *Acta Organologica* 13, 1979, pp.75-76.

[53] From June 9, 1794 till May 22, 1795, he resided in Manila (with the project of the San Nicolas going on) until he was assigned as first parish priest of Las Piñas on November 17. The town had been erected in 1762, and it became a parish only in 1775. It was as if the position was kept vacant till the arrival of Diego Cera (!). The complete story is narrated in: Samson-Lauterwald, pp. 62-63.

[54] In the 18th century, the Recoletos were assigned to the provinces of Zambales, Mindanao, Palawan, Romblon, Masbate, and since 1713 some mission stations like Mabalacat (Pampanga) and Bamban (Tarlac). After the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, Recoletos replaced the Jesuits in Bohol, Marianas Islands, and the southeastern part of Mindanao. Cfr. Martínez Cuesta: *The Augustinian Recollects: Arrival in the Philippines and Spread of Missionary Activities*: Faithnotes Series, Vol.1, no.1, Quezon City, Recoletos Communications, 2006, pp. 35-40.

[55] Between 70 and 80% of the organ is made of wood.

only 350 taxpayers, which was way below the 500 normally required for the creation of a new parish.[56]

This was exactly the parish the Recoletos were interested in. Not only did it fit in their vision to serve the poor: they themselves were looking for some parishes to be present in the vicinity of Intramuros, not only in the provinces. And simultaneously, they could solve the problem of Diego Cera. A formal request was submitted to the archbishop of Manila and to the governor general. In October 1795, the parish of Imus was established, and the next month they entrusted the parish of Las Piñas to the care of the Recoletos.[57] Had the provincial, the archbishop or the governor-general acted otherwise, the history of Las Piñas would have been a totally different story.

Cera now had a permanent place for his workshop. His superior understood that this assignment to Las Piñas would please Diego Cera, the organ builder. The order supported him financially, and never removed him from that place. It is another proof that Cera was sent to the Philippines as organ builder. Becoming the first parish priest, his creativity was challenged in another domain: architecture. The church he built for a small community is a lovely building, with three naves, with a retablo in stone (not in wood) and a baptismal font made of one piece of adobe among the artifacts he provided.

In view of the next projects in Intramuros which were waiting for him, the training of the carpenters was now a priority. Filipino master organ builder Cealwyn Tagle[58] attests, based on his own formation in Europe, that continuous proximity with the master is needed to learn the craft of organ building with all its aspects and problems. It is impossible to get a training "on-line" or with occasional instructions given by the master while passing by. Moreover, one cannot become an organ builder within a few years: he then can only assemble parts he buys from an organ factory.

Tagle is sure that the apprentices who were capable to build the organs in Bohol after Diego Cera's death were trained under his close supervision for more than 5 years. Cera's occasional visits to Bohol would not be sufficient to train local craftsmen over there. Tagle therefore concludes that someone from Las Piñas must have moved to Bohol as organ builder.[59]

[56] Samson-Lauterwald, 62.

[57] Martínez Cuesta 2006, 40; Martínez Cuesta 1985, 289-296. (Official correspondence related to Cera's assignment in Las Piñas).

[58] Tagle studied with master organ builder Helmut Allgauer (Grünbach-am-Schneeberg, Austria), specialized for 6 months with Klais Orgelbau (Bonn, Germany), and attended a 2 month-long course for young organ builders organized by the European Union in Alden Biezen (Belgium) from August 1988 to February 1994.

[59] This can be affirmed the moment a name from Las Piñas appears in the official books of baptism, matrimony, or burial, in any parish of Bohol.

Discovering the organs in Cebu and Bohol: the beginning of an inventory by organ builder Klais

Up to the late '70s, almost nobody in Manila was aware of a concentration of pipe organs in the Visayas. Music circles showed little or no interest in old organs, not only because they were defective and far away from Manila, but because they were outdone in power by the new organs imported from Germany and Holland: for the Manila Cathedral, the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Mary and St.John in Q.C. , San Carlos Seminary, and Espiritu Santo in Tayuman, among others, all with electro-magnetic action, which allowed the console to be placed away from the organ case.

In Bohol, the people over there knew about their church organs (some were still being played), but not about their importance. The recent restoration of the Bamboo Organ resounded up to their places. As a result, they called these instruments "bamboo organs," not to boast their status I believe, but because the word "pipe organ" (which would be more accurate) simply does not exist in the Filipino vocabulary.

Hans Gerd Klais had heard from a German SVD-father that there were "bamboo organs" in Cebu and Bohol. He organized a study trip, and requested me to join him to take notes. Klais was fascinated by the possibility that there could have been a tradition in the Philippines of pipe organs using bamboo as material for the pipes, instead of the usual metal or wooden pipes. The trip took place in October 1977. We first visited Argao, to find out soon enough that the "bamboo organ" was a generic name, distinguishing the existing pipe organs from the electronic instruments which were becoming their substitute.

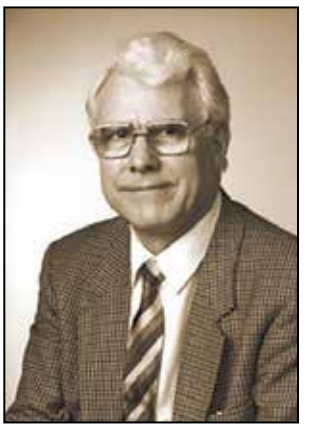


Fig.10 Hans Gerd Klais, 3rd manager of Johannes Klais Orgelbau, founded in 1882.

It was only years later that I realized when this guided tour by one of Europe's most prominent organ builders had turned my interest in the pipe organ into a passion. What was initially an "error" turned into something of historic importance—the beginning of an inventory of the Philippine organ patrimony. Klais published his findings in a German magazine dedicated to the pipe organ, one year later. It was an inventory with technical data, but without the history and the origin of the different instruments. The inventory did not guarantee that these organs were saved. Soon enough, we could see that we were slowly losing the rescue operation: the little that was left of the organs in Antequera, Duero, and Cortes in Bohol, disappeared a few years later.

Here are some interesting observations made by Klais, explaining how some of the organs he inspected provided valuable information about the relation between the Spanish missionaries and the local craftsmen. This was written in 1977, when he was still in the dark about the builders of these instruments.

> One can learn a lot from these instruments about the cultural history of the country even if only little has been passed on from earlier epochs.
>
> …. One can conclude that during the time in question, namely in the 2nd half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, a lively exchange of knowledge must have taken place between the missionaries, which were versed in the organ culture, and the local craftsmen. The former supplied the knowledge about the musical instrument and the music, and the latter their skills as craftsmen particularly regarding climate and insect infestation. Both complimented each other, which led to considerable achievements, …
>
> With the second generation, which can be dated to the middle of the 19th century, particular construction characteristics that take climatic and insect damages into account got lost. Iron for example is being used for the organ controls [mechanism for pulling the stops] even if this material gets ruined relatively quickly due to the prevailing humidity and high temperatures. Also the position of the windchest is no longer uniform, … [other observations follow] … It remains to be proven if my final conclusion is justified, that around this time the close contact between the missionaries and the population was coming to an end.[60]

A scholarship program from Johann Trummer saved the Spanish organs

All Spanish organs in the Philippines would slowly have disappeared[61] if the country was always going to depend on outsiders. If all historic organs had to be brought to Germany in order to be restored, the cost of such undertaking would have been prohibitive, and sooner or later, nobody would remember their existence anymore. If it was Klais who restored the Bamboo Organ, which triggered in turn a renewed interest in the Philippine organ culture, it was going to be Johann Tummer whom we have to thank for having saved the historic organs of the Philippines.

Dr. Johann Trummer, who was heading the *Institute for Church Music* in Graz (Austria), had visited the 6th Bamboo Organ Festival in 1981 as a tourist. He observed the musical tradition of the parish: having a boy's choir of good standing,

[60] Klais 1979, 77-78 (translated by Mogens B.Jensen).

[61] Alone the organ case in the San Agustin church in Intramuros would have survived as a museum piece, but would not speak anymore. Two attempts were undertaken, which failed, before the restoration by the Diego Cera Organ Builders in 1998.

Fig. 11 Fr. Johann Trummer (1940-2019).

an above average piano department in the parochial school, and a yearly Festival. He arranged a scholarship for Armando Salarza to study church music in Graz, after which Armando earned a scholarship to proceed to study organ performance in Vienna with Herbert Tachezi. His regular visits familiarized Trummer with the needs not only of the parish of Las Piñas, but of the country as a whole with regards to church music.

He arranged that Cealwyn Tagle, a former member of the Las Piñas Boys Choir, could study in Austria in a family-owned organ workshop, where he could learn all the different aspects of the craft from beginning to end: from selecting the tree to preparing the invoice. Trummer's initial objective was to secure the future of the Bamboo Organ, so that in case of any major disaster, there would be no need to ship the organ to Europe. Tagle showed great competence of becoming a full-pledged master organ builder, so that the objective was no longer limited to the maintenance of the Bamboo Organ, but included the restoration of the Spanish organs in Bohol, Negros, Cebu, and Manila, and building new organs. Cealwyn left in 1988 and returned in 1994, to establish his company named after Diego Cera.[62]

His first contract was the restoration of San Agustin in Intramuros (1998). It was a risk Fr. Pedro Galende OSA, then the museum director, was willing to take entrusting this work to a local and young organ builder. Two previous attempts had failed, the first one adding bass pipes, and the second "electrocuting" the organ, meaning: the mechanical action was removed, and replaced with an electro magnetic action. Tagle discovered the windchest for the second manual in the carpenter's shop where it was used as a workbench. To assure his sponsors that this restoration met the standards, Fr. Galende invited a Spanish organ builder to assess the work. Federico Acitores (of the *Organería Torquemada*) attested that he could not have done a better job.

One year after San Agustin, it was the organ of Loay that was restored. And with every restoration we learned more about Diego Cera and his school, because we could now see the inner side of each organ, what until then had been hidden for the eyes.

[62] DCOB stands for: Diego Cera Organ Builders Inc. (with 18 craftsmen, located in Brgy. Talon, Las Piñas City).

Discovering the "School of Diego Cera" in Bohol

Guido Dedene (1956-2016), who was combining an IT-professorate at the *Katolieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL)* with his hobby as organist, in coordination with the Diego Cera Organ Builders, prepared a website[63] listing all extant pipe organs of the Philippines (as of 2010).

The list of the Historic Organs (built during the Spanish era, and pre-war 20th century) is as follows:

City/ Province	*Church of*	*Year Built*	*Builder*	*Year restored*
Manila	San Agustin	1814	*maestro organero*	1998
	San Sebastian	1914	E.F. Walcker	
Las Piñas	Bamboo Organ	1824	Diego Cera	1975
Cebu	Argao	1816(?)	Diego Cera	2017
	Dalaguete	1880(?)	Otorel	2016
	Boljoon	1880(?)	Otorel	2016
Negros Oriental	Bacong	1894	Roques Hermanos	2009
Bohol	Baclayon	1824	Diego Cera	2008
	Dimiao	*1835-50*	School of D. Cera	
	Garcia Hernandez	1894	Roques Hermanos	2021
	Loay	1841	School of D. Cera	1999
	Loboc[64]	*1835-50*	School of D. Cera	2003
	Loon	*1835-50*	School of D. Cera	
	Maribojoc[65]	1890(?)	Otorel	
Zamboanga d. Norte	Dapitan	1892	E.F. Walcker	
Misamis Occidental	Jimenez	1894	Roques Hermanos	2011

[63] See ORGANOGRAPHIA PHILIPINIANA at www.orgph.com.

[64] Dismantled after 2013 earthquake, and drowned by floodwaters in December 2014.

[65] The organs of Loon and Maribojoc were never restored; all parts of the two organs were retrieved and safely stored in a bodega.

The historic organs were classified in 4 groups:

1. It was easy to detect the builder of the organs in Garcia Hernandez and Jimenez, each carrying the logo of *Roques Hermanos*. These organs were pre-fabricated, not built for a particular church, and sold by an agent in Manila. It was not difficult to include the organ of Bacong in this group with the same design. The restored organ of Garcia Hernandez is being installed as we write. The restoration has been paid entirely by the parishioners.

Other non-extant organs built by the Roques Hermanos were in Duero (Bohol), Dumaguete and Hinigaran (Negros), and Miagao (Iloilo).

Fig. 10 The organ of Bacong (Negros Or.), restored in 2009.

Fig. 11 The organ of Garcia Hernandez (Bohol), restored in 2020.

Fig.12 The organ of Jimenez (Misamis Or.) restored in 2011.

2. The organs of Maribojoc (Bohol), Dalaguete and Boljoon (Cebu) were built by the Otorel family, who were based in Palencia (Spain). One of the three sons of José Otorel was active in the Philippines. The organs they built in the Philippines have twins in Spain, as illustrated below with a picture of the organ of Maribojoc in the middle, flanked by its twins in Spain.

Fig.13 Otorel organ in Palencia (Spain).

Fig. 14 Otorel organ of Maribojoc (Bohol).

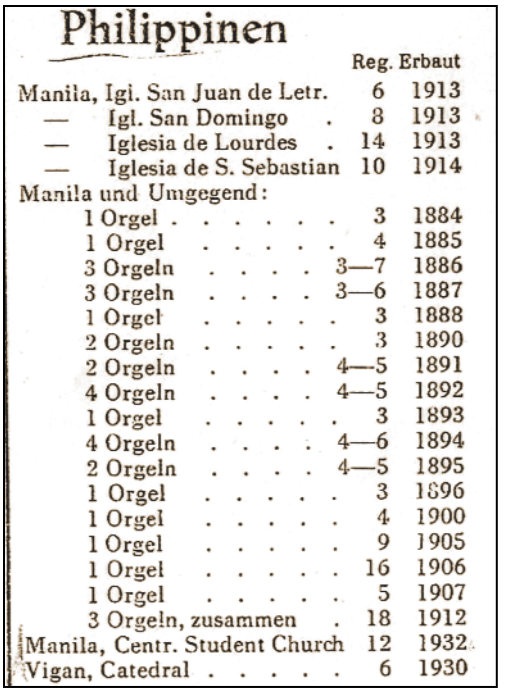
Fig. 15 Otorel organ in Vegafria, Segovia (Spain).

Other non-extant instruments built by the Otorel family were in the Basilica of the Sto Niño in Cebu, the Manila Cathedral (1880), Naga, Lipa, Antipolo, and Cavite. The Otorels followed for a long time the traditional style of organ building, and were reluctant to introduce the "romantic innovations" prevailing in neighboring France.

3. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, world trade changed. Already by the middle of the 19th century, Manila port together with other Asian ports opened up to foreign trade, so did Cebu (1855) and Iloilo (1865). It was the West that most avidly desired it.

Organ companies in Europe manufactured instruments which were ready-made for the missions: they became a vital part of the new missionary movement of the 19th century. Orders came from all over South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay), Asia (India, Japan, Manschukuo (Manchuria), Philippines, Polynesia, Turkistan, Turkey) and Australia. This is based on the catalogue of the German organ E.F. Walcker & Co. of Ludwigsburg, (founded in 1820).

Fig. 16 Walcker organ of San Sebastian Basilica in Quiapo, Manila.



Philippinen

	Reg.	Erbaut
Manila, Igl. San Juan de Letr.	6	1913
— Igl. San Domingo .	8	1913
— Iglesia de Lourdes .	14	1913
— Iglesia de S. Sebastian	10	1914
Manila und Umgegend:		
1 Orgel	3	1884
1 Orgel	4	1885
3 Orgeln	3—7	1886
3 Orgeln	3—6	1887
1 Orgel	3	1888
2 Orgeln	3	1890
2 Orgeln	4—5	1891
4 Orgeln	4—5	1892
1 Orgel	3	1893
4 Orgeln	4—6	1894
2 Orgeln	4—5	1895
1 Orgel	3	1896
1 Orgel	4	1900
1 Orgel	9	1905
1 Orgel	16	1906
1 Orgel	5	1907
3 Orgeln, zusammen .	18	1912
Manila, Centr. Student Church	12	1932
Vigan, Catedral	6	1930

On the left is the page from the Walcker's catalogue referring to the church organs delivered to the Philippines.[66]

Between 1884 and 1986, 25 organs were sold through an agent, still during the Spanish time. Between 1900 and 1930, 7 were sold by an agent, 6 were installed in a church, the largest having 16 stops,[67] among them the organ in the (now) Basilica of San Sebastian, Quiapo, Manila. (see fig.16)

While there was apparently a need for church organs, the local organ builders could not compete with the imported instruments, and soon got out of work. It is not impossible that foreign missionaries doubted the quality of the workmanship by Filipinos organ builders, or that the latter did not know how to promote their business. Nobody was aware that they existed, and soon the local production of organs came to an end.

4. The fourth group were the organs built by Diego Cera and after his death (1832), by his "School." They will be discussed after we explain what brought Diego Cera to Bohol. The name "School of Diego Cera" was coined by Guido Dedene.

Diego Cera's link with Bohol

When Hans Gerd Klais made his study trip to Cebu and Bohol, not one moment did it enter in his mind that it was Diego Cera whose Bamboo Organ he knew as no one else, who was behind the organ in Argao and the 5 others in Bohol. How could these organs be linked to Diego Cera? Diego Cera was a Recoleto missionary. His order arrived in Bohol, between 1768 and 1770, after the expulsion

[66] With this list we can trace the delivery of x number of organs with x number of stops, the year of delivery, sold by an agent (if no destination is mentioned) or built for a specific church (with name of the church mentioned). This catalogue was published in 1938. We could not find a catalogue from other companies: it could give us a lot of information about the organs shipped to the Philippines during the first part of the 20th century.

[67] The organ in San Sebastian needs restoration. The organ of San Juan de Letrán was transferred to the UST Conservatory of Music, and re-built as a practice organ.

of the Jesuits in 1767. This took place while Francisco Dagohoy with thousands of followers was leading a rebellion against the Spanish government.

In 1985, Fr.Angel Martínez Cuesta, O.A.R, the official historian of the whole Recoletos Order, published an article titled *Florilegio Documental sobre el Padre Diego Cera (1762-1832)*,[68] containing all official documents and events, related to Diego Cera. Based on the information he gathered, Fr.Cuesta presented a timetable with the following references to Cera's appointment as "prior vocal" of Baclayon (Bohol):

17.IV-1815	*El capítulo provincial le nombra* prior de Baclayon *(Bohol) sin residencia y con derecho a voto en el próximo capítulo provincial.*[69]
11-14.IV.1821	*Asiste al capítulo provincial y es nombrado* prior vocal de Baclayon *(Bohol).*[70]

The task of the prior vocal was to represent the Recoletos from a particular province in the next chapter which elected their new provincial superior. This assignment was given 6 years ahead of the chapter. Diego Cera was assigned *prior sin residencia* (without residence); in other words, he was not to stay in Bohol. There was a reason why an outsider like Diego Cera was to represent the community of Bohol. During that time, the Recoletos were short of personnel. The number of members in the Philippines "had dipped from around 95 members at the beginning of the century to only 58 in 1820."[71] Of the 95 members, 13 were assigned for the entire island of Bohol. Thus, the Order could hardly afford to select a prior from among the members working in Bohol. Diego Cera was the solution. He had visited the place on a regular base to discuss the plans of constructing organs in different churches of Bohol. He got to know them, their views and needs, and was qualified to represent them.

The organ of Argao

There could have been another reason that brought Diego Cera to Bohol. Then we can explain also what a pipe organ, marked with all his fingerprints, is doing in Argao, a town facing the island of Bohol.

[68] A copy was sent to Frs. Mark Lesage and Leo Renier, CICM, with the following dedication to them, "que con tanto cariño y competencia guardan y honran la memoria del P.Diego. El autor. Roma, 15.XI.1985."

[69] *The provincial chapter appointed him* prior of Baclayon *without residence and with the right to vote in the next provincial chapter.*

[70] *He attended the provincial chapter and was assigned* prior vocal *of Baclayon.*

[71] Martínez Cuesta 2006, 46.

Prof. Guido Dedene opines that Fr. Mateo Perez OSA, parish priest in Argao between 1803 and 1836 and a lover of music, had heard about Diego Cera building the organ in San Agustin in Intramuros. Now he saw a chance to provide the church he was rebuilding (after a fire had destroyed it) with an organ. His family back in Spain had wide musical influence, up to the Royal Court and its organ builders. Did Mateo Perez and Diego Cera know each other, way back in Spain?[72]

We can presume that, when Diego Cera was working in San Agustin, Mateo Perez, an Augustinian himself, went to see him and was able to convince him to visit Argao. Cera traveled to Argao, saw the place, and made use of the opportunity to visit his colleagues, maybe some classmates in Bohol. This could have brought up the idea of building organs for some parishes in Bohol, as part of the wider plan: to pacify the situation on the island.

It also could have been the other way around: the Recoletos had made a plan to provide the parish churches of Bohol with a pipe organ, as part of their attempts to pacify the Dagohoy rebels. They had already replaced some of the wooden churches built by the Jesuits with stone structures; they introduced the portico-façade for many churches and extended the choir-lofts.[73] Another way to bring peace was through music and to install pipe organs. This project became feasible since they now had a specialist in the person of Diego Cera who was equipped with the manpower to build these instruments.

At the same time they concluded, considering the lack of personnel in Bohol, that Diego Cera could be the one to be assigned as *prior vocal* of Baclayon and to represent the community of Bohol in the next provincial assembly, instead of sending one of them. From Baclayon, on his way back, he passed by Argao, to answer a call from Fr. Perez.

[72] The early, unexpected demise of Prof. Dedene prevented me from getting more details about this information.

[73] Regalado T. José. *Visita Iglesia Bohol. A guide to historic churches*, Manila, NCCA, 2001, p. 9.

The dates for the construction of the Argao organ can be placed between 1813 (completion of the organ in San Agustin) and 1816 (cutting of the bamboos in Las Piñas) which allow the manufacturing of an organ with 20 stops. Remarkable is that the same wood was used as for the Bamboo Organ: narra, tindalo, molawe, and yakal (like in Baclayon). As to the quality of the craftsmanship, organ builder Tagle attests that when he restored the organ of Argao, he was amazed (like Klais) about the perfection of the straight cut-out of the channels in the windchest. When we visited Argao for the first time in 1977, there was still an organist and the organ was playable, which was quite amazing! Locals had been taking care of the organ which was then already 160 years old.

The School of Diego Cera

Argao

Baclayon

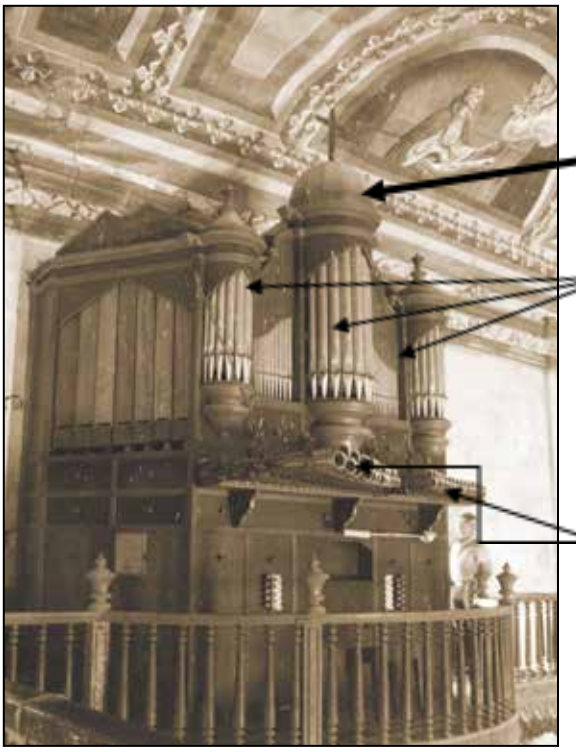
Dimiao

Loon

Loboc

Loay

The common characteristics point at one and the same origin.



The organ of Loay (1841)

1. Strong similarities in geometry (and size)
2. All towers are covered with a headcap
3. Three towers with 2 flats in between
4. Bass pipes of the pedal in the side wing
5. Chromatic organization of the chamades (trumpets)
6. The divided keyboard is typical for all Spanish organs

The pictures of the six organs can help the reader to recognize the similarities. They are classified into two groups: those built before his death in 1832, and those after.

1. Of the six organs, 2 were built while Diego Cera was still alive: the organs of Argao (built probably between 1814 and 16), and of Baclayon which has an inscription that it was completed in 1824, the same year as the Bamboo Organ of Las Piñas.

Fig. 17 The inscription with the year the organ of Baclayon was completed.

2. Of the four remaining organs built after the death of Diego Cera

(1832), the organ of Loay is the only one with an inscription of the year it was constructed: 1841. At least one organ is definitely built after the death of Diego Cera in 1832.

SE HISO ESTE ORGANO
EL AÑO DE 1841[74]

3. We will know more about the organs of Dimiao and Loon after their eventual restoration. The age of the wood can then be defined through a laboratory test. Loboc will undergo a similar test.

The significance of the "School of Diego Cera"

The pipe organ was, together with the mechanical clock, considered the apex of technology before the invention of the steam engine in the late 19th century. With the pipe organ and the mechanical clock, technology had reached its peak, in the same manner as we think now about the computer. Diego Cera shared his technological knowledge with Filipinos; this was not withheld from them, and it made them more independent.

To be fascinated by the mechanism of the organ, one needs to *see* the inside of the organ. Here is one example to illustrate this: the distance between the one key pressed by the organist, and the pipe making the sound, which can be between one to ten meters or more. And when the organist opens many stops, as many pipes will sound at exactly the same time. The connection is done by trackers, rollers, squares, rods to transfer the action of the key to the valve which allows the air to enter the pipe without any delay. The valve closes immediately (with the help of a spring) when the organist lifts up the key. We will not elaborate the issues involving the wind pressure, which is coming from the same source (the bellows) for the largest pipe (max. 10 m) as well as the smallest (1 cm).

Diego Cera shared this technology with the Filipinos. They in turn could now build larger pipe organs by themselves, which were as perfect as the ones built by their master. That is what these instruments are telling us, and what makes these instruments so important beyond their musical value. Diego Cera is one more example of a friar, who, according to Nick Joaquin,

> …planted crop after crop with no thought of how this might be to the benefit or detriment of the mother country on the other side of the world.

[74] "This organ was made in 1841."

> He was not thinking of the mother country, he was thinking of "this republic" … "Esta corte" and "Esta república" resound repeatedly from his pages. He was – consciously or not – creating the idea of an independent realm…Those crops he planted created economic independence. (p.137)

> All the things that the Javanese and Chinese and Siamese and Arabs could have brought us, could have taught us, we had to wait for Spain and the friar to bring us, to teach us. If we had relied on the Javanese, Chinese, Siamese or Arabs to help us advance, we might still be – as indeed the highlanders of the North and even the Moros of the South still are – in a pre-wheel, pre-stone, pre-trade, and pre-book culture.[75]

Diego Cera and his School in a wider historic context

Little has been written about the history of the pipe organs in the Philippines: if anything at all, it was limited to the Bamboo Organ. Already in 1977 the Parish of St. Joseph of Las Piñas, Metro Manila, commissioned Prof. Helen F. Samson to research on the Bamboo Organ and its builder. This resulted in the first edition of a book as tribute to Fr. Diego Cera. A second, revised and updated edition followed in 2006.

It was the Swiss organist Guy Bovet to place the Bamboo Organ in its proper context in 2011. He looked beyond the Bamboo Organ and included other historic organs in a recording for a CD box under the title "Historical Organs of the Philippines," linking us to the Iberian organs of Spain and Portugal, Latin America, and Mexico.

So far, this article may have given the impression that the organ history of the country can be reduced to the instruments built by Fr. Cera and his School. Much research is still needed to get a more complete picture. For one, we still know too little about the contributions of the other religious orders: the Augustinians, Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans. How did they address the musical needs in their parishes all over the country? It is very well possible that they too had among their members an organ builder as capable as Diego Cera, who himself could have undergone the same fate as them. Truly enough, without the Bamboo Organ, Diego Cera too would have been lost in anonymity. It was his pipe organ with bamboo pipes, which would earn him a place in the history of organ building.

To prevent giving the impression that the history of organ building started only with Diego Cera, allow me to refer to a few important facts, with the help of David Irving's standard work: "Colonial Counterpoint."

[75] Nick Joaquin, *Culture and History.* Mandaluyong, Anvil Publishing, 1988, pp. 131 and 137.

Fig. 18 Historical Marker by the Philippine Historical Committee at the Church of Lumbang, unveiled in 1939.

The first one hundred years of organ building in the Philippines was dominated by the Franciscans who arrived in the Philippines in 1577. They followed the methodology of their first missionary experiment in Mexico, giving the highest priority to music. They established many Tagalog parishes and the majority of the parishes in the Bicol region. Around the year 1600, they started an influential center for music in Lumbang, which not only provided training to the *cantores* but taught people how to build instruments: organs, lutes and shawms, used to accompany the *capilla*. In the absence of an organ, other instruments were used as well. The organ could easily get out of order for a longer period, considering all the possible treats: a fire (caused by lightning), typhoon, earthquake.

Here some glimpses to offer more content to a vacuum of 300 years.

- An organ[76] is mentioned to be in the second cathedral, which was destroyed in 1600.[77]

- In 1612, an organ is ordered by the Cofradía devoted to Nuestra Señora del Rosario (linked to the Dominicans).[78]

- A document dated 1662 informs us about an organ for the C*apilla Real* in Intramuros.[79]

- On February 7, 1666, Archbishop Poblete solemnly blessed the church (of Ermita): he had spent personally for the organ.[80]

- A document written in 1703 by the Franciscan historian Juan de Jesus provides us with the name of the first Filipino organ builder. He states that

[76] When referring to an "organ" in these documents, it is never clear whether it is imported or locally made.

[77] Irving, 161-162.

[78] Irving, 185.

[79] Irving, 182.

[80] Ibid.

> "it is not very easy to make organs, but a Filipino from Camarines named Alonso made the organ of our Monasterio de Santa Clara, and another which our brother fray Lucas Eskuan took to China. There is another Filipino who is in [*here the manuscript has a blank space*] who also makes organs, and in Nagcarlan this year of 1703 another Filipino restored the organ to an almost new condition, and the same year another Filipino did likewise to the organ in Lilio."[81]

All of these organs mentioned above, built during the 17th until the middle of the 18th century, were almost surely portative organs, like the one brought in by Bishop Salazar in 1581. Diego Cera arrived at a time when larger organs were in demand, following the standard-type back in Spain: these organs had a fixed place in the building, usually placed on top of a "swallow nest" which was hanging within the nave.

The musical style changed around the middle of the 19th century in the Philippines, quite late compared to the developments in Europe, where the concept of the organs developed accordingly.

Information about the organs comes to us not only from documents, but can suddenly appear when working to clean the environment. It happened to us, when we moved to Silang in 1998. We decided to clean the creek beside our lot which was used to flash with every typhoon all the dirt of the barangay in the direction of the Manila Bay. Among the items I discovered was an 80 x 10 x 5 cm piece of wood which had been used as post for a chicken house. Special was that there were holes carved at a regular distance in two straight lines seen on top, while an opening was carved at the side leading towards a canal. It just happened that the one to find this piece of wood (me) immediately recognized the wooden piece as part of an organ positive. Normally, it would have ended up one day as firewood. I heard that one parish priest of Silang had relatives in our barangay. Is this sufficient a proof that there was also a pipe organ in the parish church of Silang?

The extra-support, needed to save these organs

The rescue operation to save the historic organ patrimony of the Philippines involved many people. In February 2011, the Swiss organist Guy Bovet, a world-

[81] Irving, 55.

renowned authority on the Iberian organ culture, who had been a regular performer at the International Bamboo Organ Festival since 1985, did a recording of three organs in Bohol: Loay, Loboc, and Baclayon. This was done with the help of the Swiss Embassy who contacted in turn some Swiss companies operating in the country to sponsor the project. Bovet ended up with a set of 4 CD's, including the Bamboo Organ, the organ of San Agustin, and the Roques Hermanos organ in Bacong (Negros Oriental) which was distributed worldwide by the Swiss recording company VDE-GALLO.

Such a recording had also its effect locally. The organs were from then on recognized as an important part of our cultural history by executives working in the different departments and commissions of our government. Allow me not to talk in the abstract about the contribution of the Department of Tourism, the National Museum, and the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, but to point at the people inside these institutions who made a difference in protecting our endangered organ patrimony.

The DOT, through Usec. Daniel G. Corpuz had co-sponsored the recording of Guy Bovet. After this, I turned again to the DOT trying my luck with a request which had little to do with tourism. My worry was that, if these organs were not going to be played after their restoration, their future would still be threatened. I discussed this with Fr. Ted Torralba and submitted to the undersecretary a proposal[82] to start with a training program for piano teachers in Bohol, who would familiarize themselves with the mechanical action of the organ, who then in turn could teach others. This method had been proven successful in Las Piñas.[83] To my biggest surprise, the small project (with a small budget) was approved. My wife Donna who conducted the sessions sharing her own experience, had 6 meetings with 4 candidates in Baclayon, till the course was abruptly ended on October 15, 2013,[84] when a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Bohol . The day after, to my biggest surprise, I received a call from the undersecretary, asking me:"Do you have any news about the organs?"

[82] Renier. Letter dated May 23, 2012.

[83] The restoration of an organ is only completed when there is an organist who can demonstrate the unique colors it can produce. This is the more difficult second stage of the restoration. Las Piñas was fortunate to have a music teacher (bachelor in music education, minor in piano) in the person of Donna Ofrasio Renier, who took a few lessons from the visiting organist Wolfgang Oehms to switch over from piano to organ. She brought her best piano students to the organ, the moment they were playing the short pieces of Anna Magdalena Bach. In April 1978, they had their 1st Organ Students Recital. One of them was Prof. Armando Salarza.

[84] The remaining balance of the awarded grant was returned to the Department of Tourism as the training project had to be terminated due to the devastating earthquake that hit the province on October 15, 2013.

One year later, I was invited to attend an international conference held in Cebu and Tagbilaran preparing a Master Plan to restore the affected sites, organized by the National Commission of Culture and the Arts. I interpreted this invitation as an expression of trust in the "organ movement" launched in Las Piñas with its yearly festival, and in the establishment of a Filipino organ factory. An earthquake of this format, without a local organ builder, would have signified the end of the organs in Loboc, Maribojoc, Loon, and Baclayon.

Fig. 19 The organ of Loboc was leaning forward after the earthquake. To prevent it from collapsing, bamboos were placed beneath. (Picture taken before it was dismantled in 2014)

The churches of Maribojoc and Loon, closest to the center of the earthquake, were transformed in rubble within 30 seconds. In Loboc, the organ was leaning forward, without falling apart, as what happened with the retablo at the back of the altar. The organ of Loboc had been restored in 2003 by the Diego Cera Organ Builders. Organ builder Tagle had foreseen that earthquakes do happen in the Philippines, and therefore had all the joints (dove-tails[85]) glued. Only the longer metal pipes had bent because of the shakes. It was decided to dismantle and remove the organ, and to store it in a bodega to prevent dust to enter into the pipes. Unfortunately, a few months later[86] the Loboc river rose and all crates (together with vestment and books) got submerged in the water. This means that a second restoration is needed to bring it back in condition.

It was the National Museum to whom the most devastated churches were entrusted: Loboc, Maribojoc, and Loon. Their work took understandably more time. It needed the attitude and patience of Prof. Angel Bautista, an archeologist, to sift through the rubble and recover all the parts of the organs in Maribojoc and Loon. During an early visit to the sites, it was clear to me that the team of Bautista did not know what they had to look for: what they had recovered so far were only the pipes. A short meeting with them was sufficient to explain the wooden parts: organ case, windchest, mechanical parts, wooden pipes. All parts have been recovered. They are stored in a safe and dry bodega, waiting for their first restoration.

Argao had been my point of entrance when I visited the organs in the South together with Hans Gerd Klais. It had been a dream for him to have this one organ restored. But instead of a restoration, the news reached me that the organ pipes

[85] Organ builders never use nails!
[86] December 30, 2014.

were disappearing. It was time to do something. I discussed the issue with Fr. Brian Brigoli to have the organ of Argao dismantled and have it brought to the workshop of the DCOB in Las Piñas before it was too late. It would be practical to include the smaller organ of Dalaguete, only some 30 km farther south. The project costing about P/800K was approved by the DOT. Dismantling and shipment took place the first two weeks of September 2015. It had taken almost 40 years since the visit of Klais before the organ was restored.

We approached Prof. Maris Diokno, then the Chairman of the NHCP. Because she believed in the historical value of these instruments, the Board approved a budget which included the restoration of the Boljoon organ as well.

The continuous threat: our tendency to forget

More research needs to be done in order to know our music history during the Spanish time, which is not yet considered in some circles a part of our national history, rather "part of Spain's history in the Philippines." Consequently, there is still a school of thought that the Bamboo Organ may be indeed a remarkable invention and truly a cultural phenomenon; still they will insist that organ music has no roots in Philippine traditional culture.

Indeed, what is left of the organ culture is not very impressive. Many facts about the pipe organs are completely forgotten. We mentioned earlier the *pequeño órgano* Diego Cera built when he arrived in Las Piñas. Such a simple keyboard instrument was essential for the performance of the villancicos during the baroque period. Add to this the existence of "capillas" in each of the five hundred and more parishes, and it will be hard to imagine that Las Piñas would have been the only "capilla" with a positive organ(!). The consequences are serious. Here is one example.

Fig. 20 In Majayjay (Laguna), only the swallow nest on which the organ was placed is left. Nobody remembers.

Not a single pipe organ is left or known in the Camarines region and the parishes where the Franciscans were assigned, while music was essential in their strategy to spread the faith. I visited some years ago the church of Majayjay (Laguna) with its impressive balconies on both sides of the nave. On the left side, when facing the altar, the balcony is larger, obviously reserved for something special. I asked the *sacristan major* who had been friendly enough to let us enter after 12 noon, if he

knew what that place was for. The straightforward answer I got was: "This was the place where the parish priest was praying."

That this so called "swallow nest" was once the place for the organ had been completely erased from the social memory. We may have forgotten our organ culture, but one cannot conclude that therefore it does not exist. It becomes a real problem, when a person is already convinced that there is nothing to look for. Reviving and restoring historical facts are therefore imperative.

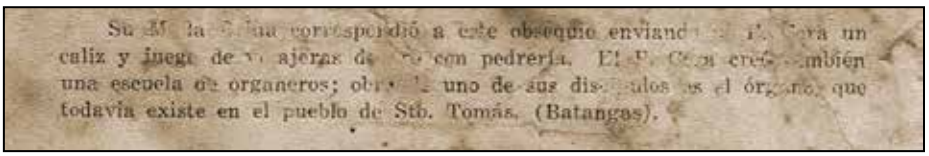
A pamphlet of 1926 reveals the existence of the "escuela de organeros"

Fig. 21 Pamphlet with a picture of the Bamboo Organ in the center. The text is at the reverse.

And suddenly, we find a piece in this puzzle, which fits in the picture we are trying to reconstruct. In 1926, in commemoration of the first Madrid-Manila-flight by Loriga and Gallarza, which was considered a gesture of reconciliation between two former enemies the Recoletos published a pamphlet as an *obsequio* (gift, present) with the Bamboo Organ as center (see the crown and some pipes in the center). Probably, the Bamboo Organ was an instrument that, although Spanish, the Americans could appreciate, a symbol of reconciliation.

At the back appears the classical information about Diego Cera. Surprising was to find the name used by Prof. Dedene to tag the apprentices of Diego Cera as "School of Diego Cera, *escuela de organeros*":

"…El P. Cera tambien creó una escuela de organeros; obra de uno de sus discipulos es el órgano que todavia existe en el pueblo de Sto. Tomás (Batangas}."[87]


Su M. la Reina correspondió a este obsequio enviando al P. Cera un caliz y juego de vinajeras de oro con pedrería. El P. Cera creó también una escuela de organeros; obra de uno de sus discípulos es el órgano que todavia existe en el pueblo de Sto. Tomás. (Batangas).

[87] (transl.): *Fr.Diego Cera founded also a school for organ builders; the work of one of his apprentices still exists in the town of Sto. Tomas (Batangas)* - The reason why a reference is made to an organ in Sto Tomas is because the Recoletos had been in charge of Sto Tomas from 1877 till 1898: they knew about this organ and who built it. (from a conversation with Regalado T. Jose)

The "School of Diego Cera" whose existence we suspected by studying the organs built by them, had been mentioned in this pamphlet, published in 1926 by the Recoletos. This particular enterprise however got lost in the later biographies of Diego Cera. The organ in Sto. Tomas referred to can be added to a list of forgotten instruments which is increasing by the time.

What is the contribution of Diego Cera to the organ culture in the Philippines?

Let us now return to the title of this article, a promise to describe the contribution of the Bamboo Organ to the organ culture of the Philippines, which is *de facto* the contribution of Diego Cera. He obviously built several pipe organs of the highest quality, the most important being the Bamboo Organ. There is no need to repeat that it was this instrument that has been surviving in a time when anything Spanish was to be forgotten. It has been burning during that period like a single vigil light, until after its restoration, it shone and gave light to our musical past. This process is still on-going. Just like Latin-American and Mexican baroque music have been brought back to life, one day we will talk about "Philippine baroque music." It is the Bamboo Organ, a retro-18th-centiry Iberian-style instrument[88] and its festival, that celebrates the music of that period.

Diego Cera is more than a "local hero." We learned that he shared his technical knowledge with local craftsmen, who in turn were able to build larger organs for the use in parishes of Bohol. Filipino organ builders who learned their craft in the 17th century, did not have a master to introduce them to the more complicated aspects of building a larger instrument. We may conclude that Diego Cera was the first one who did this. The organ builders who came from abroad during the 20th century were not here to train Filipinos but to set up their own business or to represent a foreign company.

We had to wait for the visit of Fr. Johann Trummer in 1981 who arranged for a grant by the Austrian government, so that the craft of organ building would return to the Philippines. It was the second attempt after Fr. Diego Cera's to establish the craft of organ building in the country. Trummer's move saved our historic organs for generations to come. Without him, they would have been lost for ever.

The company which proudly carries the name of Diego Cera, since its foundation in 1994 built some 40 instruments here and abroad, and restored 10 historic organs in the country. Come to think of it, Diego Cera still had a hand in establishing this company, considering that the contact for the scholarship was established thanks to the yearly festival celebrating the gift of the Bamboo Organ.

[88] Urrows, 17.

The influence of Diego Cera through the organ he built in Las Piñas is still felt in the present. Permanent is the identity the Bamboo Organ gave to the people of Las Piñas. It became the rallying point of the community: it unleashed so many activities in the parish with a committed laity. In the field of music and the arts, the following can be mentioned:

- The yearly International Bamboo Organ festival turned Las Piñas into a center of music making in the southern part of Metro Manila, with his own niche: the performance of Baroque music. The festival's resident choir – the Villancico Vocal Ensemble - specializes in the performance of baroque music. Such choir existed already in many capitals in this region, except Manila. The V.V.E. has been established under the direction of Eudenice Palaruan, who in 2017 was succeeded by Beverly Shangkuan-Cheng.

- The international contacts the festival established were at the origin of the Diego Cera Organ Builders Inc., who are restoring the historic organs of the Philippines, and constructing organs for the local and international market. They built organs in the Philippines, and exported to Austria, Belarus, Lithuania, Germany, UAS, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vladivostok (Russia) and S.Korea, proudly "made in the Philippines."

- The church built by Diego Cera was entrusted to our National Artist for Architecture, Francisco "Bobby" Mañosa for renovation, in order to give a decent home to the restored Bamboo Organ. It has become a landmark loved by festival goers and visitors for its beauty, simplicity, and use of native material.

His emphasis on training the next generation: the importance of investing in education

Probably the most important lesson we learned from Diego Cera is the importance of investing in educating the next generation. Hundreds of young boys, alumni, and members of the Las Piñas Boys Choir grew up around the Bamboo Organ. They identify with the Bamboo Organ in a unique way. It is of no surprise that organ builder Tagle and organist Salarza developed their interest through their many contacts, either singing with or playing on this instrument.

The Bamboo Organ is more than a museum piece to be admired because of the special materials used. It is not only an instrument to accompany a singing congregation as well as their silent prayer of praise and supplication. It does something every piece of art does: it challenges. But it challenges not just an individual as what

a painting does: it does challenge the community it serves to find organists without whom it will feel useless. It is the community through its teachers and parents who have to discover the hidden talents the good Lord has distributed so generously. When they stop doing this, the organ will be muted again. Luckily for us, that even when silenced, the organ (fixed on one play) stubbornly refuses to be removed as if it is a piano or an electronic organ.

Sometimes, people have the impression that it is quite normal, even expected, that there are many organists in Las Piñas, as if they grow on trees. No, it is hard work. Las Piñas was only fortunate to have Ms. Donna Ofrasio, a piano teacher who was employed in the school, and who was interested to learn how to play the Bamboo Organ. A few lessons with the guest organists were sufficient, plus hours of practice. She brought her best piano students to the organ, as soon as they had reached the book of Anna Magdalena Bach. Some 40 students were trained to play during the Sunday masses over a period of 20 years. In 1977 she organized the first Organ Students Recital. One of them was Prof. Armando Salarza. He in turn is now teaching the next generation.

The key to the solution to bring solemnity to the liturgy is in the hands of the piano graduates who are also willing to learn to get used to the keyboard of the mechanical organ, and to make their talent useful for the church community .

Constructing mechanical organs: use clean air instead of electronically amplified sound

Finally, the clear sound of the Bamboo Organ has also an environmental message to our present time. This generation has already been successful in regulating the smoking of cigarettes: we want clean air. Still, our air is polluted by noise, more than the human ear can tolerate. So called "concerts," where rhythm and spotlights overtake the music, have set the tone. Loudspeakers used for events in the malls are deafening; background music during weddings and other social functions makes any attempt to converse and socialize impossible. The volume is set louder and louder, so that one wonders when we will reach the limit.

And our churches are not spared. On one occasion, I heard the pipe organ, choir and orchestra with trumpets and tympani still being amplified "because people like them to be loud." The result is a cacophony. The large space of a church built to bring a community together can provide the acoustical support to make people enjoy to sing together and to feel as one voice. The Bamboo Organ, or should I say, Diego Cera, reminds us that the best partner of the human voice is (not the electronic sound but) the pipe organ: both sing with the air which gives life.PS

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