

Spanish Colonial Architecture in the Philippines

JAVIER GALVÁN

The Spanish presence in the Philippines, more than three hundred years long, brought about an architectural heritage which can be considered as unique. This legacy has not been sufficiently studied as rigorously as it undoubtedly deserves. That would enhance the recognition of its value, and probably propitiate actions to preserve it.

In addition to its intrinsic cultural value, the strong touristic potential of the Islands, located in a huge economic growth region, must not be forgotten. The undeniable appeal of this heritage — unique in Asia — means a first magnitude touristic value, which could be converted into an important development factor.

A thorough study on the Architecture and the Urbanism of the Spanish Colonial period in the Philippines is yet to be completed. We barely can find studies on this subject in Spain, and the existing ones are almost confined to Manila. The Philippines appears in the general treatises on art as an “appendix” to Hispano-America, and in some cases not even that. On the other hand, the authors that have been concerned with the Spanish Colonial Architecture in the Philippines in a general way — as María Lourdes Díaz Trechuelo or Luis Merino — have an approach merely historiographic; therefore their works have value from the point of view of the historical data, of the events that were happening during the construction of the buildings, but they don't constitute a structured corpus of the architecture of that period.

In the Philippines there is not abundant bibliographical material on this regard; and the existing one cannot be considered as definitive.

In the last years some monographic studies have been published, as the one of Jose Regalado Trota on religious art, or that of anthropologist Fernando Zialcita on ancient domestic architecture, where these topics are deeply and rigorously analyzed, beyond the bare historical datum. It is a sign of the growing interest of the Philippine researchers in their artistic heritage.

However, I would like to insist on the lack of general works. This is an empty chapter of the history of the architecture that needs to be completed, not only in terms of the Philippine culture, but of the Hispanic as a whole, since it would complete the knowledge of a universal and amazing legacy which still remains undervalued.

There are several causes that explain why the study of the Spanish Colonial Architecture in the Philippines has not been undertaken in the same way as in America:

(a) In the first place, the distance of the ancient metropolis, with the consequent weakening of the links with the colony, particularly after its loss in 1898, motivates that those who could know better the roots of that architecture and therefore to tackle its study — Spanish historians and architects — had enormous troubles to approach. Suffice it to say that María Lourdes Díaz Trechuelo wrote her *Arquitectura Española en Filipinas 1565-1800* after an overwhelming task of investigation in Spanish archives, but without the possibility to having visited the Archipelago. In the encyclopedic work “*Ars Hispaniae*” the art in the Philippines is dealt with in a shallow way, as an appendix to the Latin America art. As the author, Marco Dorta, asserts, he knows this art not directly but by documental or photographic references. This means that those who have access to the archives and to the knowledge of the roots of that architecture, do not have the access to the architecture itself, and for those living in the Philippines, it is the same but on the contrary.

(b) In the second place, it must not be forgotten the American attempt to erase the traces of the former colonial power. Actually, the Americans implanted a new colonial system that made the culture reach layers of the Philippine society that had not been reached before by the Spaniards, for instances, by spreading the English language in an effective and systematical way. However, the devaluation, or even the annihilation of the Hispanic legacy — finally a Filipino heritage! — must be included in their debit. We can find an example of this in the destruction of Intramuros, the core of the Spanish Manila, during the

Second World War, due not only to the Japanese bombs, but also and specially to the “cleaning” works undertaken by the American troops: under the pretext of demolishing debris, they literally leveled the city, as it is referred by Pedro Ortiz Armengol in *Intramuros de Manila*. Another sample of this can be found in Vigan, the capital of the province of Ilocos Sur, where the Americans demolished the newly restored House of Government to build up the current building —the Provincial Capitol— in the official neoclastic Anglo-Saxon style of palladian evocations.

(c) Finally, and in spite of the magnificent examples of Architecture in the Philippines, these are not as spectacular as those in America, since the difficulties here were quite bigger than there: the distance, the shortage of means, and the lack of first order architects —rather religious and soldiers who constructed their buildings in the way they had seen in Spain or in Nueva España.

The concern for the colonial architecture in the Philippines is quite recent: the aforementioned Díaz Trechuelo's work is from 1959, and Ortiz Armengol's, from 1958. Previous to them, an article by Mallari, “Architects and Architecture in the Philippines,” in *Philippine Magazine* (1930); the “Plans of Architectural Monuments in America and Philippines existing in India's Archive,” by Diego Angulo were published from 1933 to 1939; and the “Planos de ciudades ibero-americanas y filipinas existentes en el archivo de Indias,” by Chueca and Torres Balbas, in 1951. In that year the painter Fernando Zobel began to be interested in the Spanish Colonial Architecture, and especially in the impressive churches in Ilocos, almost forgotten until then.

This lack of interest toward what is Hispanic reaches to the present. Two years ago I had the honour to open the first Seminar on the Heritage of Vigan, and one of the primary objectives of the Seminar was to make the Vigan population aware of the value of the Hispanic roots in their obviously Filipino legacy. The lack of awareness of the value of their own architectural heritage has remained as a main cause of the scarcity of attempts to study, to spread and to preserve it.

Phases and Factors

When the Spaniards arrived at the Archipelago, they did not find a society as evolved as the Aztec in Mexico, or the Maya in Central America, which might have produced structured urban groups, or buildings with a vocation beyond the mere utility.

This does not mean that the autochthonous constructions "*bahay na kubo*" did not have a great architectonic value. Perfectly adapted to the local conditions, standing on wooden stilts to be isolated of the ground, these were made with easy-obtainable materials, such as: wood, bamboo, nipa and cogon. With squared plan and high slope pyramidal roof, they can still be seen —perhaps not very different from those which were found by the first Spanish— in remote zones of the country, far from the urban centers, and where the population conserves its traditional way of life.

We could divide the Spanish colonial architecture in the Philippines in three stages, although this attempt could be considered as too schematic.

The *first* one would approximately refer to the last third of the XVIth century, conquest and territory-occupation time, when the most important cities were founded and traced, to be built up with the above mentioned materials that would be destroyed in many occasions by the flames. Suffice to recall the fire of Manila, subsequent to the invasion of the Chinese pirate Li-Ma-Hong in 1574, or the succeeding ones in 1579 and 1583, which nearly destroyed the whole city.

A *second* wide stage would comprise *grosso modo* the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, when the architecture of religious and military nature was mainly developed.

Finally, a *third* period, comprising the XIXth century, wherein a peculiar and refined domestic architecture will crystallize, as a fruit of the blend of some colonial types adjusting themselves to the local conditions, and thanks to the emergence of a middle class, which evolved in time of free trade and of easier communications, when the Philippines passed to depend directly on the Metropolis —after the independence of Mexico— when a big number of infrastructure works are tackled by the Overseas Ministry, converting Manila into a modern city, the most "European" of Asia, and when the construction started to be submitted to some professional and administrative controls, actually in a modern way.

The precarious defensive situation of the Islands, so far away from the Metropolis, even so far from Nueva España. The frequent invasions, of Chinese, Dutch or British —who conquered Manila in 1762, staying until 1764 when Spain got again Manila in exchange for territories in North America, as Florida— was making evidently necessary the construction of fortifications to be protected of continu-

ous threats. At the beginning (XVIth century) the Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas accomplished the walling of Manila —perhaps according to the drawings of Leonardo Turriano, a military engineer who fortified Canary Islands— constructing a walled enclosure, the mythical *Intra-muros*, which would blossom of magnificent stone buildings during the first half of the XVIIth century.

Outside Manila, magnificent pieces of this type of fortifications are preserved, such as the forts of the cities of Cebu and Zamboanga, which make us recall — even by their volcanic stone: *adobe* — the fortifications of the coasts of the Canary Islands, for example, the castle of *San Gabriel* in Lanzarote, or those of *La Luz* and *San Roque*, in Las Palmas.

Concerning the religious architecture, it must be taken into account the capital importance of the different Orders in the settling of the Philippines, especially the Agustinian and Dominican. In addition to the big churches and convents that they built up in the capital these Order would sow literally the Islands with a great number of monasteries and churches, some of them impressive, even in small villages. Many of them have endured the passing of time, wars, earthquakes and typhoons, surviving to nowadays, sometimes very mutilated and deteriorated. With no doubt, the baroque churches of the Spanish colonial period are the most significant elements of the Philippine Architectural Heritage.

Soldiers and monks colonized the Philippines; they created cities; they built up churches and monasteries, having as a model those which they knew in Spain or in Nueva España.

The presence of engineers and, above all, of architects in the Archipelago is of very late. Nevertheless, it might be interesting to consider a group of people, architects or not, who played a primary role in the construction of the first colonial buildings. The Jesuit Fr. Antonio Sedeño is considered as the pioneer of the constructions in stone. According to the historian Fray Juan de la Concepción, the plan of the first fortification of Manila —Nuestra Señora de Guía fort— seems to be his work. About Fray Juan Antonio de Herrera, a Lay Agustinian, it is said that he entered the Agustinian Order and left for the Philippines after having killed a man in a duel in Spain; it is also said that he was son —or maybe nephew— of the maker of *El Escorial*. This figure, whose arrival at the Philippines and his death, on duty, at the works —according to the legend when falling from a scaffolding to

which the cord of his habit had been hooked— is submerged in the haze of the legend; he was the first master of the church of San Agustin, in Manila.

Architects in strict sense or not, the names of these friars, with Father Campion —architect of the second church of *San Ignacio*, in the third decade of the XVII century, magnificent as we can know by written and graphic documentation— could appear close to those of eminent religious architects in the history of Spanish Architecture — perhaps without their deep stylistic and technical knowledge — such as the Jesuit hermano Bautista, Francisco Cabezas, and fray Alberto de la Madre de Dios.

For lack of “official” architects, and related to these builders friars, we must consider as main characters of this architecture, the so called “maestrillos” or “alarifes,” self-taught characters in most cases Philippine or Chinese, as Juan de Mazo. These builders worked as architects and engineers, probably until 1880, when regulations of control in construction were imposed; in many cases their works were as worthy as those of architects and engineers.

In 1711 the *Corps of Military Engineers* was created in Spain. From then on the presence of members of this corps in the Archipelago will be continuous. They were fundamentally devoted to improve the fortifications of the most important places.

Prior to that date, in 1705, Juan de Ciscara appeared in Manila; he was an engineer who had worked in Cuba, where he was born. He reorganized the defenses of Cavite, Iloilo and Manila, and in addition to this, he was the author of the plan of the Cebu Cathedral. It might be said that he was the first engineer — as this term is understood today — in the Philippines.

A factor that undoubtedly must be considered to understand the evolution of the Philippine architecture is that of the labor, constituted by indigenous, and fundamentally by sangleyes, that is to say, population of Chinese origin. These people had a peculiar way of understanding the orders given by their masters. At the same time they were interpreting patterns, forms and proportions based on the classical tradition.

This originated a characteristic miscegenation (*mestizaje*) or indiginity that, on the one hand, it separated forms and proportions from the classic canons; and, on the other, introduced a particular freshness and certain naif charm into this architecture.

Neither can this architecture be understood without bearing in mind the frequency and intensity of the earthquakes of the Philippines. If fire was the first enemy for the permanence of the buildings, when these were built with stone or brick and with tile roofs instead of thatch, the fire risk was obviously reduced, but the fate of the structures against the quakes was worsened. The earthquake of 1645 was a sad demonstration of that, destroying almost completely the first Great Manila, which had been built up by the Spaniards, in the European way, using already the stone from the Guadalupe quarries, or the marbles from Mariveles.

According to a method of trial and error, through the years, that architecture was accomodating to the requirements of the earthquakes, with massive walls and huge buttresses, as well as lightening the structures in their upper parts, and introducing reinforcements; trying, in fact, to recover some of the elasticity and response capacity of the light autochthonous constructions. Nevertheless, in the last century other two devastating earthquakes, in 1863 and 1880, would destroy large part of the City. As in a wide range of seismic zones in America, it is going to be developed a *mestizo* architecture, for whose definition the term created by Pal Kelemen: "earthquake baroque" has been successful.

The growing concern for the safety of the constructions, would be made particularly evident after the earthquake of 1880, when the Advisory Board of Public Works drafted the "Reglas para la edificación en Manila, dictadas a consecuencia de los terremotos de los dias 18 y 20 de julio" ["Rules for the construction in Manila, stated as a consequence of the earthquakes of 18 and 20 of July"]. This constituted a pioneer building code in this subject.

SOME EXAMPLES:

Manila

The plan of Manila was like that of the Hispanic American cities, in *damero*, chess board, with cord traced streets. The simple grid was easy to lay out on the ground, even by the soldiers, who were not very skillfull in urbanistic techniques. The grid made also easier the division of land into lots.

Such an abstract model was adapted to the border conditions of the site. This Hispanic settling urbanistic model would be system-

atized through the compilation of the so called *General Ordinances of Discovery and New Population* issued by Phillip II, which were commonly known as *Laws of Indies*. These ordinances constituted a comprehensive body of rules to organize the life of the new cities since the very early times of their foundation.

The topography of Antonio Fernández de Rojas, a pilot and cartographer from the Canary islands, in the cartographic section of the British Museum, is perhaps the most emblematic document of the ancient Manila. (The most ancient one still preserved is that of fray Ignacio Muñoz, known as the Centennial map). It was drawn from 1714 to 1720, only half a century after the famous Madrid's Teixeira plan. Probably it represents an idealized vision of the city, reflecting buildings already destroyed in the moment when it was accomplished. Something that calls our attention from the topography, is the *plaza*, square and not rectangular, as was prescribed by the *Law of Indies*; and especially, the "*compases*" or atria in the corner of the blocks to which the churches of the religious orders in the city opened.

Among these orders, the Agustinian, from a very early stage, would occupy a privilege position in the plans, thanks to the presence of Urdaneta and other four Agustinian in the expedition of Legazpi.

San Agustin, the only temple in Intramuros that has not succumbed to the ravages of invasion, fires and earthquakes, is really a myth, the flagship perhaps of all this architecture. The existing San Agustin is the forth one erected, after the destruction by fire of the three previous churches. Completed in 1604, in a great deal thanks to Herrera, it has been defined as a permanent miracle in stone, due to its endurance against the earthquakes that destroyed many other buildings in Manila.

For some writers the durability of San Agustin is purely a miraculous fact; for some others, in a more technical approach, it is due to its foundation, hypothetically made in the shape of inverted vault, that makes the building to behave like a ship. San Agustin is like a great box, where the aisle stands tied by the lateral chapels. Plan, section and volume could be taken as examples for a seismic construction handbook —and actually I did it when redacting the "Building Codes" for the cities of Baguio and Dagupan, within "*The North Luzon Earthquake Reconstruction Program*."

The plan and the remaining tower are very similar to those of San Isidro, the former cathedral of Madrid, which was built after San

Agustin. Both plans were designed according to the Jesuitic model by excellence: *Il Gesù* church, in Rome, by the architect Vignola. The towers follow a Herrerian model: this can be asserted watching the towers of *El Escorial* church or those of the cathedral of Valladolid. It is not obviously advisable to build belltowers in seismic zones, and San Agustin in fact has already lost one. Miracles are more complex if static laws are challenged.

It seems logical to consider a Jesuitic influence in this Agustinian church: the first church made in stone by the Jesuits in Manila, Santa Ana, was finished in 1596 "in accordance with the plan of that one which the Company owned in Rome," according to the chronicler, Father Diego Sánchez, who asserts that it is the best church of the Company not only in these Islands, but in all Nueva España. Surely Fr. Sedeño, the great Jesuit-builder played an important role in the construction of Santa Ana. San Agustin was probably influenced by this magnificent church. And its builders learned a lesson from the collapse of Santa Ana's vault, after the 1599 earthquake, when they made their plans.

San Agustin is a Baroque temple [but of the Austrias' severe Baroque], using a term created by the architect and historian Fernando Chueca that can be applied to those buildings which have *El Escorial* as a model. In a few words, San Agustin could be defined as a church with Herrerian sotocoro, nartex and towers within a Vignola's plan. Its pentagonal front, facing to the typical atrium in corner of Intramuros grid, can be related to that of *Patio de los Reyes* in *El Escorial* (Herrera), to that of *San José*, in Avila (Francisco de Mora), to that of *La Encarnación*, in Madrid (Gómez de Mora), to that of *Las Angustias*, in Valladolid (Nates), and finally to those of the Carmelitan churches.

Manila, as Warsaw, was literally leveled in the Second World War. It is a pathetic sight the shortage of monumental buildings, in a city full of them time ago. Few examples might be added to San Agustin: one of them, Malate church, outside the walls, has been compared by Marco Dorta with the *Aguas calientes* cathedral in Mexico. The spiral columns and the decoration in the facade make this baroque building very different from the sober San Agustin. If it might be said that San Agustin is Castillian, Malate would actually be rather Mexican. It had two towers, presently missing. This building as well as Binondo church, because of their being situated outside the wall, constituted a danger for the safety of Manila, serving potentially as a base for invaders.

Binondo church has remained well preserved. Described by Diego Aduarte as a very beautiful temple, in 1640, it deserves not to be masked by a jungle of wires and electrical devices upon one of its side facades. An engraving of the last century shows some changes in the upper part of the bell-tower, where the Chinese influence is quite clear.

Given the scarcity of buildings of the Spanish era that are still withstanding in Manila, the good number of constructions (mostly churches) scattered all over the Filipino territory takes an special importance as historical witnesses. The greater density and importance of these buildings, which are still mostly used as worship places, can be found in two zones: in Panay island, and in the northwest of Luzon: the territory that comprised the Agustinian province of Ilocos.

In Panay, the church-fortress of Miagao, one of the four regarded as World Heritage — with San Agustin in Manila, Santa Maria and Paoay in Ilocos — as in the nearby of San Joaquin, is made especially evident the miscegenation of the Philippine culture. Its peculiar captivation lays in the heterodox way of understanding some orders and proportions imported from another world.

The Ilocos Churches

As a result of some “raids of tourism-investigation” made by Fernando Zobel and some friends fond of the arts there appeared the work *Colonial Churches of Ilocos*, by Benito Legarda, of 1960, perhaps the first attempt — still not surpassed — to make know these buildings.

These churches, of great interest, and with their own characteristics, have been barely studied, even less than those in Manila. Some of the most interesting are ruins already, and others are about to be. They had a very simple plan, rectangular, with a unique aisle, big size and without transept, with some exceptions. They have outside staircases, which sometimes are at the same time buttresses and whose purpose was probably that of facilitating the access to the roof. In many cases they were a part of the Agustinian monastery complex.

Typical decorative elements in these churches are the Agustinian shield and some designs of Chinese origin, such as the “fu-dogs.” Normally they have flat head with buttresses, reaching huge dimensions in some cases, as in Paoay.

The most outstanding element of the Ilocano churches is probably the tower-belfry, appearing very often isolated, as the Italian "campanilles." These isolated towers can be found almost exclusively in Ilocos. The fact that the tower is separated from the church has an explanation, namely, to avoid the eventual falling of the tower onto the roof of the aisle during earthquakes. This arrangement would be effective as long as the tower crumbled on its foot, which usually happens; but if the tower falls in the direction of the aisle, the latter would be reached, since the distance between church and tower is usually shorter than the height of the tower. We wonder why this solution was not adopted in other seismic regions.

The origin of the exceptional character of these towers needs to be searched in the Asian architecture, bearing also in mind their potential function as watchtowers; this last alternative explanation is quite evident in some locations, such as in those of Bantay and Santa Maria.

The towers generally have three levels, separated by mouldings; the lower one has a squared plan; the upper levels are chamfered and set back, resulting therefore octagonal shaft towers, crowned by domes, and with round arches, in alternate sides of their perimeter. They are normally built in brick, covered with plaster. The described type is found, with light variations, in towers as those of Vigan, Bantay or Santa Maria, although in this last, the lower level is also chamfered.

In Paoay and Laoag all the levels have a square plan; each one setting back regarding the lower, according to the reducing thickness of the walls. That of Magsingal has four levels, all of them in octagonal plan and progressively decreasing, crowned by a pyramidal roof, built in coral stone, as that in Paoay.

The Ilocano church is constituted by overlapping elements: the front facade, as if protuding from the aisle behind, the buttresses, with their own life, the belfry tower; and in some cases the baptismal chapels, like the "posas" chapels in America, almost perfect cubes, topped by domes, that lean against the feet of the aisle, as in Magsingal or Bacarra. We could say that as a concept they are modern compositions, abstract, cubist rather than baroque. Legarda, in the aforementioned essay, suggests the possibility of an Ilocan Baroque — given the peculiarities of these buildings — quite more austere and simple than those of other Filipino areas, and of course much more than those of Nueva España.

A large number of buildings are still standing, although in pitiable conditions most of the time. Some of them are just a ruin, — ruskinian and imposing, as Dingras — showing magnificent brick panes, conceived to be covered by protective plasters. In some cases it has not been nature that has removed the skin of the buildings, but an aesthetic view of undocumented genuineness; a lot of monuments in Europe have been also victims of such a tendence, in the last decades. The Bantay and Bacarra towers are excellent examples of “campaniles” and also of ruins in good condition”.

The case of Paoay is highly worrying. In spite of being “one of the four” — World Heritage — the greenery grows between their beautiful coral stone ashlars. Its cyclopean buttresses have no function after the collapse of the roof. As replacement, a galvanized iron cover, carried by some studs, as if it were a warehouse rather than a World heritage church. The lack of verticality is obvious, reminding us of the Pisa Tower. Saying that it needs restoration is to say very little.

In not a few cases the buildings are not so damaged, thanks to the worship that with no break has taken place in them. Although non-desirable alterations, from the aesthetical point of view, have been produced during the churches lifetime, it might be asserted that many of these buildings which today can be admired, would have been definitely lost, if friars and priests — sometimes regarded as “uneducated” and devoid of “artistic” sense— would not have taken care of them.

If I weren't afraid to be considered arty, I would say that in Ilocos the “bell-towers” blossom as the *giraldas* in Andalusia. The tower of Magsingal (1676), in coral stone, is one of the most beautiful and best preserved. That of Laoag, located quite far from the church, is perhaps the most “Chinese” and hardest; that of Vigan, the most refined and “Spanish,” that of Santa Maria, watch tower, as that of Bantay.

In addition to the above mentioned, we should not forget the churches of Sinait (1591), Candon (1591), San Juan (1722) —which lost a tower recently—, Cabugao (1772), San Vicente (1795) —perhaps the most baroque “in a strict sense” with its curved facade—, Badoc (with great important buttresses, although not as bulky as those of Paoay), or Sarrat, with interesting brick vaults.

Other Locations

Given the vast fragmentation of the Philippine geography, and the extraordinary diffusion of the evangelical message, reaching nearly

all its corners, it is difficult to embrace such a scattered heritage, extended all over the archipelago.

Even though our objective is not to exhaust all the building of special interest, it would be unforgivable not to mention at least the Basilica of the Holy Child and the Chapel of the Holy Cross, both in Cebu; Fort San Pedro in the same city, or Fort del Pilar in Zamboanga, and Fort Santiago in Manila. Churches as that of Tumauini, in Isabela, with a peculiar round tower, very different from those of Ilocos; very ancient churches as those of Bohol; monumental as those of Rizal-Laguna; neither should it be forgotten the beautiful interior of Betis church in Pampanga, nor Daraga church in Bicol, nor those in Pangasinan, with towers as splendid and neglected in Binmaley and Lingayen. And so many others: it is an endless list.

Vigan: An Exceptional Case

I can't close these pages without some references to Vigan, the only remaining historical urban center in the Philippines. An urban center absolutely unique in Asia, which should be already considered World Heritage, and whose Rehabilitation Plan should be already implemented. This has not been yet possible, in spite of the efforts of some Vigan lovers, among whom I count myself.

If the urban center of Vigan is unique, it is due to the great unity of its urban fabric rather than to its monumental buildings, such as the cathedral and the archbishop palace, or the cemetery chapel with its magnificent bell-gable. The "*Bahay na kubo*" — stone houses — are lined in elongated blocks, producing continuous fronts facing the streets. The unity is achieved by means of a same pattern that is repeated: The ground floor, always in brick, of commercial use: the "bodegas" of the Chinese merchants; and the upper floor intended for housing, sometimes also in brick, sometimes in wood.

In the past, the roofs were all in tile, not advisable in seismic zones. At present, only fourteen buildings keep the tiles on their roofs, from some hundred eighty which compose the historical center, in some fifty blocks.

The domestic architecture of Vigan is perfectly suitable to climate and earthquake; nevertheless its proportions are elegant, not as those of the churches "earthquake baroque." The brick pilasters articulate and modulate the facades with great uniformity, creating at the same time a cozy and stately rhythm. White plasters, grids (evo-

cations from the Mediterranean south), very projecting eaves (evocations from rainy Spanish north), some autochthonous, some Antillian, some Asian, some Hispanic are blended with unusual harmony in Vigan, authentic cultures melting pot, fruit of the fusion and the miscegenation.

Conclusion

We have discussed a series of examples of old architecture in the Philippines. Some of them are in a very poor condition, bound for disappearance, as many others destroyed in the past, as an result of wars or nature, for lack of resources to maintain them, and also — why not to say it — due to human neglect. We can't afford going on missing pieces of our heritage, chunks of our collective memory.

We have noticed the links between the old buildings of the Philippines and those belonging to the Latin culture. They are not oddities, out of the blue. I often say that they are singular and universal. But they are undeniably Filipino, as Filipino as the jeepney, borrowing words from Augusto Villalon, regarding Vigan. And only if the Filipino society is aware of the wealth of this heritage, only then, this heritage could be considered as saved. Private initiatives may catalyze the process but they are not enough. Only when the administration, assuming the collective will, will take as a priority the conservation of this heritage, only then, will it be saved. Only then will it be possible to have good inventories, feasible rehabilitation plans, a legal frame to protecting, and sound resources to that purpose. I'm afraid — and I say it from my own experience — that this moment is yet to come.

The conservation of the real heritage can not be regarded only as cultural romantic matter, but as an item that can generate resources for the economic development, through the tourism incomes. Not very far from here, in Macao, where a handful of churches as well as a few civil buildings have been preserved, they have converted the ruins (just a facade!) of the ancient Saint Paul church into the symbol of the town. Is that ruin — rather an sculpture than a building, because nothing remains behind — just Portuguese? Is it just Jesuit? Not at all. It is the symbol of the town. □

Instituto Cervantes, Manila